

Advocating for Peace and Justice

"I have often regretted my speech, but never my silence." The day this quotation from Publius Syrius (whoever he is, a Roman perhaps?) appeared on my page-a-day calendar of motivational quotations, my immediate thought was, "But I *have* often regretted my silence."

Certainly there have been times when I've wanted to retract something I said, or wished I would have said something differently. However, given my natural reserve, I am generally more inclined to be afraid to speak up, to worry about whether what I say will make someone uncomfortable or angry, to fear that I won't be able to respond effectively if what I say is challenged. Then when I think back on the situation, I regret not having gathered up the courage to speak—especially when justice is at stake, and my silence helps maintain the status quo. After all, there is also the other familiar saying, "Silence means consent"—and often my silence most definitely does not mean consent, but apathy, fear, busyness, or any number of other excuses for not speaking up when I should.

A couple of months ago, my husband and I went with another couple to see the movie, "United 93," about the airliner that crashed in a field in Somerset County,

Pennsylvania, on September 11, 2001. The movie was quite intense, and as I watched the passengers, under extreme duress, plan their attack on the cockpit, I wondered to myself how as a pacifist I would have responded had I been on board that plane. My internal conclusion was that I could not fault anyone on the plane for their choice to fight back, and I honestly don't know what I would have done. Afterwards, as we talked about the movie with our friends, one said to me, "What does this movie say about the peace position?" I shared what my thoughts had been during the movie, and not much more was said.

Later, however, I was kicking myself for not saying more. I wished I had probed the meaning of the question: Was my friend suggesting that situations like 9/11 throw into doubt the validity of nonviolent responses to evil, or was he merely pondering how to apply belief in nonviolent peacemaking in such an extreme situation? While a friendly evening out was perhaps not the time to engage in what could have been a lively debate on the efficacy of nonviolent responses to evil, I regretted having let the matter drop so easily and not at least reaffirming my foundational commitment to peace and nonviolence, regardless of

the complexities inherent in extreme situations like the September 11 terrorist attacks. I regretted my silence—silence that came at least in part because I was unwilling and even afraid to stand up for a belief that does not seem to be widely held these days.

Another quotation from that same page-a-day calendar by Abraham Lincoln summarizes why I believe advocating for peace and justice is so important: "The possibility that we may fail in the struggle ought not to deter us from the support of a cause we believe to be just." Mother Teresa once said, "We know only too well that what we are doing is nothing more than a drop in the ocean. But if the drop were not there, the ocean would be missing something." Supporting just causes publicly is what advocacy is all about, even when it seems like our advocacy is just a drop in the great ocean of injustice. The Bible promises that Jesus will be our advocate with God, because we in our own powerlessness need an advocate; similarly, people in our world whose situations have rendered them powerless need us to speak out for them, to speak out on behalf of justice and peace, to do something. 🌱

Harriet S. Bicksler, editor

The Sixth Commandment's Implications for Peace Advocacy

By Eric A. Seibert

A Sunday school teacher was discussing the Ten Commandments with her five and six year olds. After explaining the commandment to “honor” thy Father and thy Mother, she asked, “Is there a commandment that teaches us how to treat our brothers and sisters?” Without missing a beat one little boy . . . answered, “Thou shall not kill.”¹ While I doubt this application of the command was foremost in the minds of most Israelites, it certainly fits.

At first glance, the sixth commandment seems relatively easy to understand and obey. From time to time, I have had the opportunity to teach a course at Messiah College on the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament. When we get to the book of Exodus and deal with the ten commandments, one of things I ask students to do is to write each of the commandments in their own words. They are then to comment on which commandments they find easiest and most difficult to keep and to explain why. The responses I receive indicate that the more difficult commands for my students involve

things like honoring parents and not coveting. As I recall, no one ever indicated that keeping the sixth commandment was particularly difficult for them. I suspect the same is true for most of us here this morning. But if that's the case, then why devote an entire message to a seemingly unambiguous command which most of us are unlikely to break?

I suppose the easiest answer to that question is that when you do a sermon series on the ten commandments you can't just skip over one. But the more significant reason is that this commandment, like all the rest, is not quite as simplistic as it first appears. There is more here than meets the eye.

Translation

Part of the challenge of dealing with this particular commandment is related to the way it is translated. Traditionally, in translations like the time honored King James Version and the Revised Standard Version, Exodus 20:13 has been translated as “You shall not kill.” Yet something rather peculiar has happened in the last fifty years. Nearly every major translation produced in the second half of the 20th century, including the New International Version and the New Revised Standard Version, have rendered this verse as “You shall not murder.” Why this change? That is the question Wilma Ann Bailey set out to answer in her recent book, aptly titled, *You Shall Not Kill or You Shall Not Murder?*²

Initially you might think, “What's the big deal? To kill, to murder, it's virtually the same thing.” But there is actually a significant difference between these two words. Murder is a much narrower term that includes only certain kinds of lethal activity. Killing, on the other hand, is much broader, including things like abortion, capital punishment, and killing enemy combatants in war. So then why this linguistic shift from not killing to not murdering?

One of numerous reasons Bailey gives is that this change reflects the Church's attempt to accommodate the biblical text to its acceptance of practices like war and capital punishment.³ As many sectors of the Church have grown to accept and

even strongly support this kind of state sponsored killing, the translation “do not kill” became problematic. Changing the translation to only prohibit murder eliminated this problem. According to Bailey, “Interpreters narrow the prohibition to what relatively few people do, a criminal act—a person illegally killing another person—while allowing for the bulk of killing that takes place in the world to continue.”⁴ At least at some level then, this change in translation was made for “pragmatic” reasons.⁵ “People want to kill people,” writes Bailey, “and they want biblical permission to do so. The translators of the NRSV and other translations of the late twentieth century gave them that permission.”⁶

Yet despite this trend in modern translations, a study of the Hebrew verb in question reveals that murder is too narrow a translation. Instead, as numerous interpreters have argued, the traditional translation, “You shall not kill,” is actually more accurate. Since the commandment is a command against killing, more generally speaking, we need to think broadly about the meaning and application of the sixth commandment. To do that, I want to describe several different kinds of killing in order to see the far reaching implications this command has for us. Doing this will also help us determine how this command might be applied in our lives today. Admittedly, many of the categories I am about to describe go beyond the way ancient Israelites would have understood this command. Still, following the example of Jesus in the sermon on the Mount, it seems reasonable to reflect on this command more broadly than it might have been understood in ancient times.

[Here Eric describes three kinds of killing: actual, non-physical, and virtual. The fourth is negligent killing.]

Negligent Killing

The fourth and final kind of killing I will describe is rather different from all the rest. It is what we might negligent killing. In a certain sense, this kind of killing happens by doing nothing! The person guilty of negligent killing is the one who has the means and ability to save someone's

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life but who fails to act. This is one of the ways Martin Luther, the great German Reformer of the 16th century, understood the sixth command. In his comments on this commandment Luther wrote, "If . . . you send away one that is naked when you could clothe him, you have caused him to freeze to death; if you see one suffer hunger and do not give him food, you have caused him to starve. So also, if you see any one innocently sentenced to death or in like distress, and do not save him, although you know ways and means to do so, you have killed him."⁷ We run the risk of violating the sixth commandment when we fail to care for those who are at risk in our community.

That puts the sixth commandment in a rather different light and raises some very disturbing questions. It forces us to grapple with the question, who is my brother and sister? For whom am I responsible? If tens of thousands of people die each day of preventable diseases—which they do—and I do absolutely nothing to prevent them, am I in some way responsible for their deaths? Or if my country is engaged in a war that results in the deaths of tens of thousands of people, mostly innocent civilians, and I do nothing to stop it, do I have blood on my hands as well? I ask these questions not to increase our collective guilt, but to raise our awareness of the breadth and depth of the applicability of this command when it is taken seriously by followers of Jesus.

Each of the four kinds of killing we have explored, actual, non-physical, virtual, and negligent extend the reach of the sixth commandment in different directions. So how should we as Christians respond to this commandment today? How can we apply the message of this command to our own lives? To answer these questions, it may be helpful to begin by restating the commandment positively.

Stating the commandment positively

If we rewrote the sixth commandment, changing it from a "You shall not" to a "You shall," how would it read? As it now stands, this commandment forbids us from taking life. Stated positively, this commandment might read, "You shall protect life." At the heart of the sixth commandment is a recognition of the sanctity of human life. It is a recognition that, as one scholar has noted, "life belongs to God" and is not ours to take.⁸ Rather, it is ours to protect. As Brethren in Christ we

understand the importance of emphasizing the sanctity of life. One of our ten core values states that, "We value all human life and promote forgiveness, understanding, reconciliation, and nonviolent resolution of conflict." As members of the BIC Church and as followers of Jesus we are called to reject killing and protect life. As Glen Stassen and David Gushee write in their recent book *Kingdom Ethics*, "The good news of the gospel brings life and invites us to participate in bringing life and resisting death."⁹

Yet sometimes as Christians we send mixed messages in this regard. We might protect life when it comes to an issue like abortion, yet abandon that principle when it comes to the death penalty. We may object to physician assisted suicide but support killing in warfare. Such inconsistencies in our witness about the sanctity of life must surely seem curious and confusing to those outside the Church. As followers of Jesus, we are called to promote life in every arena.

In his book *God's Politics*, Jim Wallis recounts the following discussion that took place while addressing a group of students at the University of Notre Dame. He writes,

One young student at Notre Dame passionately reminded the group that a legal practice that kills four thousand unborn children every day is an urgent moral imperative. But she was then reminded that nine thousand people each day now die of AIDS, thirty thousand children perish every day because of hunger and diseases mostly due to poverty, and as many as half a million are lost each year in international conflicts and wars. All agreed that a more consistent ethic of human life is sorely needed.¹⁰

That is what the sixth commandment calls us to—develop a consistent ethic of life in which we actively do what we can to promote life and stop every kind of preventable death. We do so because we recognize that every person on the planet has been created in God's image and is of infinite worth. Admittedly, this is sometimes difficult to remember when we think about certain people. Yet as Richard Mouw reminds us,

Every human being is a work of divine art. . . . I can learn a lot about how to treat an unlikable person with reverence if I keep reminding myself of

the value the person has in the eyes of God.¹¹

If we see people as God sees people, if we remind ourselves of the value all people have in God's eyes, we must do all that we can to seek their well being. Each individual is a person for whom Christ died, and each one must be treated with dignity and respect.

The Church's witness to the world should be clear and consistent when it comes to our position on killing. The world should know that followers of Jesus do not kill. Rather, we live in the same spirit as the one who came that we might "have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10). The world should recognize us as a community that promotes life and protects life without discrimination.

But how do we do that? What does it look like to keep the sixth command? There are many different ways of expressing our obedient to this command. Allow me to simply suggest a few examples to get you thinking. For some, keeping the sixth commandment might mean giving up violent video games. For others, obeying this command might involve taking steps to eliminate anger and hatred you've been harboring in your heart toward a co-worker or family member. We also keep faith with the sixth commandment when we encourage our elected officials to enact just policies that will protect lives at home and around the world. Additionally, we protect life when we become intentional about stopping hunger and addressing poverty. As we come to understand that our inactivity makes us complicit in the deaths of those who die from preventable diseases and malnutrition, we can choose to get involved with organizations like Bread for the World and Mennonite Central Committee that are already actively engaged in these issues. We can partner with them as they work to resist death and promote life. Or perhaps your response of obedience to this command involves protecting the lives of the unborn. You may decide to volunteer at a crisis pregnancy center or may consider providing monetary contributions to organizations which provide financial assistance to women deciding to carry their baby to term. These kinds of actions—and many others—which reject killing and promote life are consistent with the spirit of the sixth command, and these kinds of actions that should be characteristic of people of faith. 🌱

Eric Seibert is associate professor of Old Testament at Messiah College, and a member of the Grantham Brethren in Christ Church. This article is excerpted from a sermon he preached in October 2006 at Grantham as part of a series on the Ten Commandments.

Notes

¹ Original source unknown. I received this in an email from Michael Cosby, faculty member at Messiah College, dated 6/30/04.

² Wilma Ann Bailey, "You Shall Not Kill" or "You Shall Not Murder"? The Assault on a

Biblical Text (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2005).

³ Bailey, pp. 46-47, 59. Note to reader: I may have somewhat overstated Bailey's claims in this paragraph since she does not state this quite so baldly. See her comments in the final paragraphs on pp. 46 and 59.

⁴ Bailey, p. viii.

⁵ Bailey, p. 46.

⁶ Bailey, p. 52.

⁷ "The Ten Commandments," The Book of Concord, §190. Accessed Oct 2006 at http://www.bookofconcord.org/largcatechism/3_tencommandments.html. I am indebted to Bailey ("You Shall Not Kill" or "You Shall Not

Murder"?, 49) for pointing me to Luther's comments on this commandment.

⁸ Walter Harrelson, *The Ten Commandments and Human Rights* (OBT 8; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 110.

⁹ Glen H. Stassen and David P. Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context* (Downers Grove: Ill.: InterVarsity, 2003), 147.

¹⁰ Jim Wallis, *God's Politics: Why the Right Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005), 301.

¹¹ Richard J. Mouw, *Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World* (Downers Grove: Ill.: InterVarsity, 1992), 24-25.

For Such a Time as This: A Case Study in Advocacy

By Harriet Sider Bickler

The story of Esther in the Old Testament is many things, including an example of how one woman spoke up and advocated for justice for people who were being oppressed. The Jewish people had been systematically oppressed, and then to make matters worse, Haman plotted to have them all killed. A Jewish woman, Esther had already won King Xerxes' favor to become queen, placing her in a position of influence. When her uncle, Mordecai, became aware of Haman's plot against the Jews, he approached Esther and asked her to go to the king to advocate for the Jews, her people. Given the way things were traditionally done, Esther didn't know how her request would be received.

Mordecai told her: "Do not think that in the king's palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. For if you keep silence at such a time as this, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another quarter, but you and your father's family will perish. Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this?" Esther responded, "Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will also fast as you do. After that I will go to the king, though it is against the law; and if I perish, I perish" (Esther 4:13-16). There are several lessons to be learned from the story of Esther that can be applied to one contemporary situation of oppression and incredible injustice: the genocide in the Darfur region of Sudan in northeastern Africa.

1. Advocacy is sometimes a life or death situation. In the story of Esther, Jewish lives were at stake, and Esther's advocacy was absolutely critical in reversing the decision to destroy the Jews. Similarly, today our advocacy can mean the difference between life and death. Just one example will illustrate this lesson. So far, at least 400,000 people have been killed in Sudan, and about 2.5 million displaced to refugee camps and elsewhere. In the face of such misery, it's hard to know what to do, and yet the misery and devastation are precisely the reason we need to do something to stop the killing.

2. Advocacy can be personally costly. Esther's own life was at risk when she went to Xerxes; if he did not hold out his scepter to her, therefore rejecting her, she would be put to death, no questions asked. While most of us don't risk our lives when we engage in public advocacy, we do sometimes risk being misunderstood and maligned not only by those to whom we advocate (for example, governmental officials), but even by Christians who disagree or who don't believe that public advocacy is ever appropriate.

In the case of Sudan, there are at least two areas of controversy and possible misunderstanding: 1) how do people who believe in non-military solutions to conflict situations promote with integrity interventions in places like Sudan by United Nations peacekeeping forces, who use military methods to do their "peacekeeping," and 2) how do we acknowledge the good efforts by the United

States government to provide significant material relief to Sudanese refugees and to speak out against the genocide in such venues as the United Nations General Assembly, while still confronting the fact that other U.S. interests (national security) tend to keep us supporting Sudanese leaders who are responsible for perpetuating the killing? Still, people are dying and being tortured, raped and maimed, and compassionate individuals who care about peace and justice should not stand idly by.

3. Even though there are no guarantees of success, doing nothing is probably less effective and certainly less courageous than speaking out. Esther successfully averted a major catastrophe for her people when she summoned the courage to go before the king. But she clearly recognized the danger, and the possibility that her advocacy would fail. She traded certain failure if she did nothing for the possibility that her words to the king would make a difference.

For the past three years, the genocide in Sudan has continued almost unabated, despite a peace agreement signed in May 2006. The Bush administration has publicly acknowledged the genocide (as recently as President Bush's speech to the United Nations General Assembly earlier this fall), but as the killing and displacement continues, more must be done. Mennonite Central Committee and other organizations have urged advocacy in the form of letter-writing to urge governmental officials to enforce and

strengthen actions that have already been taken. In these letters, MCC suggests making the following requests to our own national leaders as well as to the Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan:

- Use all possible diplomatic and economic means to encourage all warring parties to stop the violence and bring security to civilians in Darfur.
- Support the African Union and the United Nations in their attempts to solve the conflict.
- Strengthen an arms embargo against all involved, and to provide humanitarian aid to those who have been driven into crowded camps by the violence.

- Ensure that perpetrators of human rights abuses in Darfur be prosecuted for their crimes under international law.
- Continue to support and encourage the peace processes in place for the conflict in Southern Sudan.
- Call the party who signed the Darfur Peace Agreement to cease aiding the government of Sudan in its war against those remaining rebel groups that refused to sign the peace agreement.

As with Esther, there is no guarantee that our advocacy will end the killing, but at least we will know we have not done nothing; we will know that we have not by our silence implied consent.

“For such a time as this,” Esther was called to advocate for her people. For such

a time as this, we can advocate for the people of Sudan, hundreds of thousands of whom are living in refugee camps and want nothing more than to live in peace and without fear. Just as Esther advocated for her people with the king, so we can advocate for the people of Sudan and for others in our world who are oppressed and powerless in the face of great evil.

More information about Sudan and how you can help is available on the following web sites:

- Mennonite Central Committee: www.mcc.org/sudanconflict/
- Evangelicals for Darfur: www.evangelicalsfordarfur.org
- The Save Darfur Coalition: www.savedarfur.org ☺

The Passion Center for Children: Caring for the Whole Child, in the Whole Community, for their Whole Life

By Eric Sythoff

For anyone who has ever lived in, visited or cared for Africa, the pervasive reach of the HIV/AIDS pandemic is almost too large to comprehend. Faceless statistics and the enormous scope of this scourge make it all too easy to lose sight of the individual communities, families and children that are marred by this plague. Though it is encouraging and important to see many organizations and celebrities advocating for multi-national assistance, debt relief, and better governance, it's amazing to report that a real difference can immediately be made when concerned and motivated individuals team up with national believers in taking tangible steps to help break the cycle of death, pain and hopelessness.

The Passion Center for Children in Malawi, Africa is one example of a grassroots effort that is working to make a spiritually strategic difference in the villages surrounding the Mulunguzi area of Malawi. Known as the “Warm Heart of Africa” and located in central southeast Africa, this beautiful country is staggering under the weight of the growing pandemic of HIV/AIDS. The cruelty of this deadly

disease is stealing the future of the most vulnerable—the orphans. Many estimates put the orphan population of Malawi at well over one million. Health studies project that number to grow by 70,000 every year for the next ten years.

As partners in a new church plant with the Pacific Conference of the Brethren In Christ (BIC), the core members of Crest Community church felt compelled to reach out with God's resources to a geographic area impacted by AIDS. Believing they should try to make a real difference to alter the course and future of so many voiceless children, they hoped to partner long term with like-minded national believers in Malawi.

In June 2004, two members from Crest traveled to this small country hoping to build upon contacts made while Pastor Eric Sythoff served there as a missionary. The church prayed for an opportunity to come alongside a community-initiated effort where they could partner

with men and women of integrity and faith. With the aid of local leadership a community was identified with high needs in the district of Zomba. Under the direction of Pilira Chibwana (a BIC graduate from the Evangelical Bible College of Malawi), and with the assistance of several community volunteers, a feeding and support program was started that focused on caring for children orphaned due to AIDS. In 2005 another trip was made that built on the efforts now under way. Relationships with village chiefs and





elders were strengthened, training was conducted for local schoolteachers and with the guidance and assistance of Rev. Ephraim Disi, (National Director for the Brethren in Christ Church in Malawi), several parcels of land were purchased for future use. In September 2005 a kitchen/multi-purpose room was built, and today a Residency Center nears completion that will provide a safe home for those who are totally abandoned or who live in abusive situations. The national leadership quickly identified sustainability as a key goal. Presently, three plots of land are under cultivation. Irrigation, fertilization

and crop rotation have been introduced as well as 400 egg laying chickens and 10 goats.

Now, just two years after the project's inception, 100 children receive daily food, medical care, clothes and encouragement and hope in Jesus' name. Efforts are under way to develop a Community Center that will house a vocational training site, a library, and a computer and education center so orphans, widows and the poor can learn skills and trades that

will help break the chains of poverty, pessimism and misery.

Though much has happened, the Passion Center is much more than buildings, meals, and projects. The five full-time staff members—Pilira, Joseph, Ellen, Titi, and Ireen—do a wonderful job of setting the spiritual climate at the Passion Center. The emphasis is on grace, love, and hope. These strong and caring men and women of faith have dedicated their lives to helping the children and their communities in the name of Jesus. In spite of the daily challenges and stark realities of working

with AIDS orphans, they unwaveringly communicate the overcoming power of God's love and the resilient hope that comes in following Jesus. It is humbling to see all the progress that has taken place and to see hope, joy and faith emerging in the lives of orphans who until only recently didn't expect that their lives could have a meaningful future.

There are so many encouraging stories to tell of lives changed as well as clear indicators that hope is taking root in the hearts of orphans as well as the people of Mulunguzi. There are also heart-wrenching accounts of abuse and witchcraft activity, as well as so many more AIDS orphans who need a caring person in their lives and others who are hoping one day to become a Passion child. I challenge you to find a way to help rescue those who are suffering, to act now to help restore hope, or to even initiate an effort to extend the tangible life and hope of Jesus to AIDS orphans around the world. 🌱

Eric Sythoff is the co-pastor of Crest Community Church, a Brethren in Christ church-planting in Riverside, CA. Contact Eric if you'd like to be involved or join the next trip to the Passion Center in Malawi in June 2007.

The Passion Center Mission

The mission of the Passion Center for Children is to care for the whole child, in the whole community, for their whole life. This is done by focusing on:

Health for Life: Helping children grow up healthy & strong by providing for their most basic needs such as food, clothing, medical care, etc.

Love for Life: Creating a warm, loving environment where children can experience the healing power of God's grace that can overcome the stigmatism and shame attached to their orphan status, and receive adoption into the family of God.

Knowledge for Life: Improving the quality of education by training and empowering teachers and administrators.

Skills for Life: Providing quality vocational training and opportunities for higher education to equip children for a secure future free from poverty.

Belonging for Life: Developing strong, healthy community ties to remove the stigmatism associated with AIDS orphans and to ensure the children's full participation as valuable members of the larger community.

Empowering for Life: Equipping children with the grace, compassion, truth, and wisdom of God in the hope that they will one day become leaders for positive change in their country. 🌱

Editor's Notes

Subscription renewal:

The 2007 subscription renewal letter will be mailed early in the new year. During 2006, contributions to *Shalom!* have been less than expenses, but because we have enjoyed a balance from prior years, we have been able to continue publishing as usual. As editor, I thank you all for your generosity in 2006, I very much appreciate your support for the ministry of *Shalom!*, and I invite you to consider how you can help ensure that it will continue.

Topics for 2007:

Winter, "The Persecuted Church"

Spring, "Profiles in Peacemaking"

Summer, "Focus on Africa"

Fall, "Women in Ministry and Leadership"

Except for the Winter edition, these topics are tentative. If you or someone in your congregation has something to contribute to any of the topics, or if you have suggestions for topics you'd like *Shalom!* to address, please contact me at 717-795-9151 or bickhouse@aol.com. 🌱

Some Thoughts on Advocacy as I Consider Israel/Palestine

By Andrea Saylor

It's January 2006 and I am visiting a Palestinian refugee camp in the West Bank with a friend. A young man points to pictures on the wall of a community center; sepia tones remember the destruction of his village and the evolution of his refugee camp from a fenced-in tent city to a crammed quasi-town of brick and mortar. He has never seen his village. A child of the refugee camp, he longs to return to the home his family knew. He repeats the story of troops pushing them out of their homes in 1948 and shows pictures of his family's exile. He knows that my friend and I know little of this history, so he recounts it for us. We eat pita, hummus, and olives, and ask the perennial question: Now that we have this information, what should we do?

A television plays BBC news in the background. He glances at it skeptically. "We are not asking you to come here, leaving your families. But we want you to tell the stories, tell the truth to your countries. American media, Western media, are a joke. They don't tell the truth about us."

I tell this story for several reasons. The first is a tiny act of fulfilling the responsibility Jihad left us with after our refugee-camp tour, because the act of telling the story is, in and of itself, valuable. (The young man's name, Jihad, means "strive" or "struggle" in Arabic, and in Islam refers to different kinds of spiritual struggle. It does not necessarily refer to military struggle, though mainstream North American media focuses on this definition).

I also tell this story because I believe the foundation of our thinking and acting towards peace must be humility. Our prideful human nature, our far-reaching news cameras, and, for Americans, the power of our government lead us to believe we can figure out "the answers" because we have the stories of wars, governments, and peoples neatly summarized. Somehow, I have to realize that this is not true, while acknowledging the truth of the stories I do know. I must acknowledge both that I can never fully understand the situation in Israel/Palestine, and that a guy named Jihad and his family suffer, and that I have a responsibility to respond.

Here are the suggestions I have for myself and for others as I consider my response.

Suggestion #1: Consider news media thoughtfully.

Jihad claims that Western media has forgotten his story. When are news stories incorrect, or untold? What assumptions and generalizations do journalists make? What do they fail to report? What voices do we not hear? We cannot all be media watchdogs, but we can all consider the news we intake thoughtfully, especially since, for most of us, peace advocacy means responding to far-away places, and we rely on the news to understand them. For considering the case of Israel/Palestine, I suggest reading Haaretz, an Israeli newspaper, or the Electronic Intifada, an online journal reporting news from a Palestinian perspective (see web addresses listed below). (Intifada means "shaking off" in Arabic and refers here to the uprising, which has existed in both violent and non-violent forms, of Palestinians against unjust practices of the Israeli government.)

Suggestion #2: Visit, or talk to someone who has.

I realize this option is expensive and unrealistic for most, but I want to reinforce that Israel/Palestine is a Real Place. Usually we think of it as a War Zone or a Region of Conflict tinged with some Holy Land Mystery. I think that's unfortunate, because it means we dehumanize the people who live there, and when you meet people and see the land, it's harder to dehumanize. Those interested in visiting can check out alternative tours that focus on everything from olive-picking to meeting rabbis or Christian bishops, or alternative housing like the Ibdaa Cultural Center (where I met Jihad). And Christian Peacemaker Teams organizes short-term delegations that take non-violent action.

Suggestion #3: Take it to the Lord in prayer.

The old hymn I quote suggests happier days with the practice of prayer, but I suggest a changed and more constant heart, physical results notwithstanding. For those of us living in distant comfort, remembering to care can be hard. For those of us who identify with one


"side" of a conflict more than the other, remembering the inherent worth of every person on every side can be challenging. Perhaps a discipline of prayer will give us opportunity to grow in compassion and commitment (I say "perhaps" because I'm very undisciplined.).

Suggestion #4: Letters and Protests and Money and Stuff.

I recognize this as a controversial subject and I can't tell you specifically who to write to and what to say, what movement to support, what group to join, or where to send your donations. To a degree, I am cynical about all of these things because they do not often seem to "work." But, as with prayer, I think that some action can serve as an important discipline to keep our hearts and communities alive to the suffering of others and the suffering of God in the poor and war-torn of the world. And despite my cynicism, from time to time, social movements do bring about significant change.

I hope you can tell that I wrestle with the need to act and the need to acknowledge our finitude and propensity for selfishness and error. Somewhere between the two lies faith. As the problems we face are very large, let us not lose hope because of their vastness but act in full knowledge of our smallness, remembering the words of Mother Theresa, who said that we cannot do great things, "only small things, with great love."

Web site resources:

- I brushed up on my definition of jihad at www.wikipedia.com.
- Alternative News Sources: www.haaretz.com, www.electronicintifada.com.
- Alternative Tours: www.atg.ps.
- Ibdaa Cultural Center: www.dheishhe-ibdaa.net.
- Christian Peacemaker Teams: www.cpt.org 

Andrea Saylor spent a year in Cairo, Egypt, with Mennonite Central Committee, and now lives and works in Harrisburg, PA, where she attends the Harrisburg Brethren in Christ Church.



Mennonite Central Committee

From the West Bank to Washington

by J. Daryl Byler

Chris and Tim Seidel—graduates of Messiah College—are MCC peace development workers in the West Bank city of Bethlehem. There, they network with Palestinian and Israeli groups who are seeking peaceful ways to work for justice in the region.

On a recent home leave visit to the United States, the Seidels spoke in a number of BIC and Mennonite church and college settings. They also traveled to Washington, D.C. to talk with U.S. lawmakers about the situation in Israel-Palestine.

Representative Betty McCollum, who represents Minnesota's 4th congressional district, asked probing questions about life in the West Bank, and listened attentively as Chris and Tim spoke about how Israel's separation wall directly affects the lives of their Bethlehem neighbors.

McCollum was interested in how U.S. policy could help improve the situation. At the end of an hour-long conversation, she thanked the Seidels for sharing their insights and for what they are doing to help build bridges of understanding.

Chris told Rep. McCollum, "When I go back to Bethlehem this fall, I will be able to look my neighbor in the eyes and say, 'I told your story on Capitol Hill.'"

History

For nearly 40 years now, MCC workers like the Seidels and Pierces have brought on-the-ground voices from our global neighbors to policymakers in Washington.

MCC's Vietnam experience was a major factor leading to opening a Washington Office. In the summer of 1966, then MCC Board Chair C.N. Hostetter, Jr. (former president of Messiah College and Brethren in Christ bishop and pastor) and Executive Secretary William T. Snyder wrote to

President Johnson, calling attention to MCC's 12 years of service work in Vietnam and expressing concerns about the impact of U.S. policy in the region:

"We have felt increasingly. . . a contradiction and paradox in our efforts, trying to help the people on the one hand while at the same time our government was engaged in an escalating war that was devastating the countryside and creating enormous tragic suffering for the civilian population. The time has come when we can no longer maintain faith with the homeless, the hungry, the orphaned and the wounded to whom we minister unless we speak out as clearly as we can against the savage war in which our country is engaged."

Maintaining faith

Indeed, advocacy to government is an important way to maintain faith with MCC's global partners, who welcome MCC's presence and material aid, but who increasingly want MCC to speak to U.S. lawmakers as well. As the world's dominant military and economic power, the United States has a major impact on other nations. Policies adopted in Washington affect lives in the West Bank and around the world.

Several years ago, Colombian Mennonites issued an urgent appeal to U.S. Anabaptists, pleading for them to intervene with governing authorities about the large amount of U.S. military aid being sent to Colombia. This aid is fueling that country's civil war. For the Colombian people, it's a matter of life and death. Colombian church leaders wrote:

"We plead with you, just as Esther did, to call together all believers and to fast and pray for the Holy Spirit to change the mind of your governors,

and to give strength and wisdom to members of Colombian churches so that we might console, offer hope and continue to take a message of life and peace from our Lord Jesus Christ to this people and this suffering church."

Is it effective?

Does MCC's advocacy on Capitol Hill dramatically change the outcome of U.S. policy? Rarely. Still, there are some "success" stories across the years.

A Vietnam Orphan. In May of 1972, the MCC Washington Office arranged a meeting between Rep. Don Fraser (D-Minn.) and Johannah Gehman from eastern Pennsylvania. Gehman brought along her adopted Vietnamese orphan, Bo Cau. As a result of the meeting, Rep. Fraser introduced the first war time aid for war-orphaned infants in Vietnam. On the day the bill passed, one of Fraser's aides called the Washington Office to underscore the part that Gehman's story and the presence of the two year-old Bo Cau played in Rep. Fraser's decision to introduce the bill.

450 Nuns and an MK. In 1977, Patty Erb, daughter of missionaries in Argentina, came to Capitol Hill to talk about her experience of being kidnapped and held in an Argentine prison that used torture tactics taught at the U.S. Army School of the Americas. Nuns from across the United States were in Washington and agreed to give up their lunch break if Patty could be squeezed in to their seminar schedule. Based on Patty's story and voluminous background materials on the situation in Argentina, the 450 nuns fanned out across Capitol Hill for appointments with congressional offices on June 21st. Eight weeks after the House voted not to cut off U.S. military training aid to Argentina, it changed course on June 22, by a margin of 42 votes. Floor speeches by several members of Congress, which focused on Patty Erb's experience, buttressed the turnaround.

Two letters. In the late 1970s, MCC workers Linda and Murray Hiebert met with seven members of Congress to urge the release of U.S. food aid to first drought-stricken and then flood-ravaged Laos. These members of Congress responded by gathering the signatures of 27 colleagues for a letter to President Carter. According to a presidential aide, the decision in April 1978 to release the first post-war humanitarian aid to Laos was triggered

by two factors: 1) the letter from 27 House members, which was drafted by the Hieberts; and 2) a letter culled from the volume of White House mail for President Carter to read. Written in shaky handwriting, the letter from an elderly woman urged that post-war food aid be sent on the basis of observations by "Our Mennonite workers in Laos."

In more recent years, Washington Office work has contributed to debt cancellation for poor countries, raised awareness about the devastating impact of U.S. sanctions on Iraq, and helped lawmakers consider the possibility of restoring diplomatic relations with Iran.

Often, though, the "results" of advocacy are neither readily apparent nor immediate. Still, advocacy is one of the ways that we seek to love neighbor as self.

Anabaptist approaches

Based on more than a decade of public policy advocacy in MCC's Washington Office, I would suggest four criteria to guide the public witness of Anabaptists:

1. *Rooted in our faith practice.* Our primary witness is simply to be the church — a visible alternative community that receives God's grace and follows the teachings of Jesus. Our witness to governing authorities has the greatest credibility and power when it grows out of our daily lived experiences. If the church fails to first model a Christ-like way of being and acting in a broken world, its witness to governing authorities will seem hypocritical, or tepid at best. How can we expect governing authorities to act justly, sacrificially and courageously if the church is not willing to do so?

On the other hand, when we put our lives on the line to build peace in places like Iraq, we have moral integrity to call upon governing authorities to pursue diplomatic means rather than war.

The United States severed diplomatic ties with Iran in 1979. For the past eight years, MCC has had a student exchange program with an educational institution in Iran. As a result, trust and mutual respect have grown between American and Iranian participants. MCC has pointed to this model in urging U.S. government officials to consider the benefits of restoring diplomatic relationships with Iran.

2. *Offered in a spirit of humility.* We do well to avoid the harsh rhetoric and

strident positions often associated with politics. The BIC Articles of Faith and Doctrine state: "The church recognizes the place God ordains for government in society. As Christians, we pray for the state and those who are in authority" (Section 5).

Our advocacy must grow out of personal concern for public officials and a proper understanding of the legitimate role of government. Policymakers work with complex issues and must make hard choices. Governments will never fully live up to the teachings of Jesus. But even the church falls short of this high ideal. So there is ample room for humility in addressing the shortcomings of governing authorities. Self-righteous judgments are never helpful.

3. *Principled, not partisan.* In developing principled positions, we do well to draw the best ideas from both conservative and progressive values rather than taking a straight party line. Jesus, not the Democratic or Republican party, is our standard bearer.

As Christians, our confession of Jesus as Lord means that his life and teachings are the standard by which we judge what is good, right and true. In his Sermon on the Mount, as in his life, Jesus emphasized those behaviors and attitudes that help create shalom — justice (Matthew 5:20), reconciliation (5:21-26), fidelity (5:27-32), truthfulness (5:33-37), generosity (5:38-42), love for enemies (5:43-48), humility (6:1-6, 16-18), forgiveness (6:12-14) and trust in God alone (6:19-34).

Of course God's reign will not be legislated into being. Still, we need not apologize for calling governments to create laws and policies that undergird life — especially for those who are most vulnerable.

4. *Relational.* Anabaptist faith is best expressed in the context of relationships rather than in distant declarations. Whenever possible, we do well to build relationships with elected officials. Given their busy schedules, this is not always possible. But when it happens, these pastoral-prophetic relationships can be powerful conduits for public witness.

It is more likely that one can develop a relationship with a legislator's staff member. When I've taken time to develop a friendship, staff members will sometimes

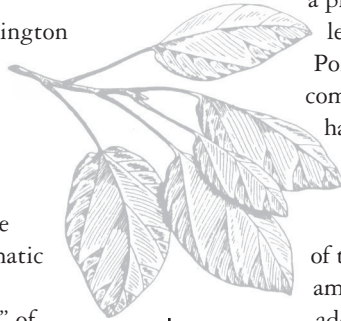
take the initiative to ask my opinion about an issue their office is considering. Some years ago, at a time when Congress was planning to add \$13 billion to the U.S. military budget, one congressional aide called to ask how MCC would spend \$13 billion to make the world more secure.

While personal visits with congressional offices are the most effective form of communication, phone calls, faxes and emails are also valuable ways of expressing your opinion. (In a post-anthrax environment, first class letters are no longer a preferred form of communication, given the sometimes lengthy delays in processing congressional mail.)

Whatever the means of contact, state your views clearly, respectfully and succinctly. Focus on one issue about which you have some personal experience or knowledge. Ask questions. And don't forget to listen to your legislator's concerns.

Engaging government is not our primary form of witness as Christians. But the church can have a faithful *and* effective witness when it is rooted in our faith practice, offered in a spirit of humility, principled not partisan, and relational. ☺

Daryl Byler is the director of Mennonite Central Committee's Washington Office. In late 2007 he and his wife will move to Amman, Jordan, where they will serve as MCC's regional representatives for Jordan, Iraq and Palestine.



Honest Dialogue and True Community

by Rachel Petersen

I'm relatively new to the Brethren in Christ denomination. I can't play the "name game" that I hear every time an Ebersole, a Brubaker, or a Frey wanders into my church. Nor have I mastered the harmony to Hymn #5 (for those of you with different hymnals, that's the three-page so-called "Mennonite Doxology" that every "BIC-er" seems to know by heart). As a transplant from the world of non-denominational Evangelical Christianity, I initially regarded my attendance at a Brethren in Christ church as something of a cross-cultural experience—a religious extension of my move from New England to central Pennsylvania. But instead of making me feel like an outsider, these unfamiliar experiences enticed me to dig my roots into the Brethren in Christ identity.

Having grown up in churches that lacked a strong sense of denominational history, I was understandably drawn to the rich Anabaptist heritage I discovered within the Brethren in Christ tradition. The more I learned of Anabaptist theology, the more it challenged me to rethink my own assumptions about what it meant to be a faithful follower of Jesus. Not that I was particularly interested in deconstructing my faith system and finding new lenses through which to read the Bible. On the contrary, I resisted any hermeneutic that took at face value those troubling passages of scripture which my own tradition had taught me to spiritualize.

I doubt that academic exposure to Anabaptist thought alone would have changed my "I've-got-Christianity-figured-out, thank-you-very-much" attitude. But as I formed relationships with people who embraced and lived out the peace witness of their Anabaptist heritage, I became increasingly open to Brethren in Christ teachings on peace and social justice. The testimony of Christians committed to living out "kingdom values" in the here and now—rather than waiting for Christ to make all things right in his second coming—struck me as radical, but remarkably in line with Christ's teachings and therefore deeply compelling.

I suppose it's no surprise that my new

community transformed my understanding of Christian discipleship. From the time that I was little my mother warned me that the people I surrounded myself with would determine the person I'd become. Sure enough, participating in a community of Christians who acknowledge their own involvement in the systemic sins of violence and oppression—and who seek to counter these evils by living in accordance with the subversive teachings of Jesus Christ—challenges me to do the same. This, it seems to me, is the church living out its mission in the world.

Which is why I was so surprised to learn that many Brethren in Christ churches—and even many Mennonite churches—no longer corporately address matters of peace and social justice. I certainly understand our hesitation to dialogue about controversial current events in church. My own upbringing has taught me that politics and religion are often a dangerous mix, and I'm convinced that any conversation involving political affairs should be approached delicately—if at all—within the church.

Furthermore, if we can't agree on whether or how God calls us to be peacemakers in our world, we can at least agree that God calls us to be at peace with one another—as much as we are able. If our primary goal is to maintain peace within our congregations, then it makes sense to focus our attention on what we share in common: our need for redemption; our salvation through Jesus Christ; our baptism in the Holy Spirit; our communion with the larger body of Christ... (thanks be to God, the list goes on). Just as we find unity in the midst of our ethnic, racial, and social diversity, so too must we seek unity in the midst of our theological and spiritual diversity.

Given the goodness and rightness of this goal, I think I can begin to understand how and why the Brethren in Christ denomination has moved away from its identity as a "Peace Church." But understanding why we've moved in this direction does not answer the pressing question of whether or not we ought to reclaim our peace witness.



As a newcomer to the Brethren in Christ Church, I certainly don't have the answer. But it seems to me that backing away from an issue just because it's too difficult to talk about is not the answer. Peace and unity within the church are godly and worthy goals, but not if they cost us our authenticity. Allowing the theological identity of our denomination to shift out of fear of upsetting the apple cart is not only cowardly of us, but also demonstrates a disturbing lack of faith. Perhaps, rather than trying to manufacture the end product of a unified church, we should concentrate on the honest dialogue necessary for true community, and leave the rest to God. 🍷

Rachel Petersen is director of housekeeping at Paxton Ministries in Harrisburg, PA, and a member of the Grantham BIC Church, where she sings in the choir, co-directs the junior choir, and serves on the Missions, Peace and Service Commission.

The White: The Unavoidable Theme of Violence

By Lois Saylor

The White, by Deborah Larsen, is a fictionalized account of the true story of Mary Jemison's life, a young Irish settler, who was abducted in the Gettysburg area of Pennsylvania by a Shawnee raiding party in 1758. In the novel, she was sixteen; and her family, all but a younger brother, is brutally murdered and scalped. She and her brother are soon separated never to see each other again. The story follows Mary's life from this early violent tragedy to her life as an old woman having survived two husbands and some of her seven children. In her life, which intersects with various Native American tribes, she is called "the white."

The book touches on multiple themes such as the meaning of belonging to a tribe or culture or race; the human response to extreme tragedy and loss; and religious evolution or syncretism. The one unavoidable and undeniable theme, however, is violence.

The utter brutality of the violence in the novel is intensified by the low key yet descriptive language. It is not gory; it is just unthinkable. It is almost unreadable. If it were a film depiction, most viewers would turn away instinctively. The author reveals details of scalping in several scenes and what one assumes is a tanning process afterward. Mary as a young girl travels with her captors and must endure the sight of the scalp of her mother's auburn hair as the Indians (the historical name used in the book) carry it with them.

The tales of horrific violence continue throughout the book amid the more domestic and life affirming scenes. The violence is perpetrated by both white and Indian, but it is the Indians' violent ways that are highlighted both towards the whites and other tribes. Perhaps giving a real feel for Mary's life, the reader's much hoped for peaceful conclusion to the violence is denied. Violence and life continue together with no resolution.

Mary lived side by side with violence and love. Her adopted Indian sisters cared for her. In turn, her husbands also loved and cared for her. But she only acquired her sisters and husbands because her birth family, her family of 16 years, was

murdered, if not by these individuals then by the same larger tribe. Underscoring this truth is the fact that Mary's second husband was a great warrior whose tales of aggression, which match Mary's own repelling experiences, are his pride. One wonders how she copes with her life.

In her old age Mary endures another intrusion of violence with the murder of her sons. She reflects on what it means to "know" violence. Her shared thoughts are:

I had been touched by, I had recoiled from many acts of violence in my life, but until the deaths of my sons I had not known what violence was. Just before our capture, an older friend had told me, out of my parent's hearing, that to "know" in the Bible meant to "sleep with."

To have one's sons kill each other?

How could I have stopped it? Until now I had in some way or another managed almost everything.

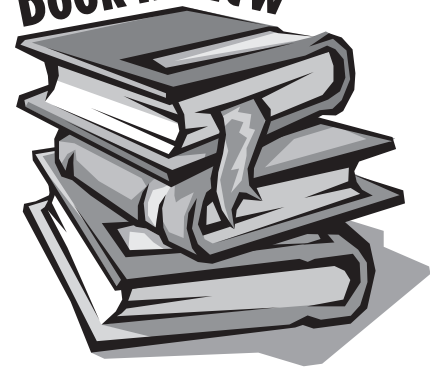
Now, in my old age, have I slept with violence.

Mary shook hands with violence every time she witnessed a violent act or heard the boastful retellings of her warrior husband and other Indian men. But she did not feel intimate with violence; she seemed able to somehow distance herself, until the needed, life-sustaining distance was impossible to keep in the wake of the murders of her own sons by their brother. Whatever defenses Mary had constructed to help her live failed. Again one wonders how to cope with such extreme and intimate violence.

Another aspect of the violence in *The White* that is so unnerving is its excess. There is no reason or possible excuse for it, which is reminiscent of a lesson from an Old Testament story.

The story of Abigail, Nabal, and David is told in I Samuel 25. As David was on the march to kill Nabal and all the males in his household, one commentator notes that it was Abigail who challenged him to "avoid unnecessary violence in the treatment of opponents."¹ That sums up the reaction one has to the violence in this historical fiction. So much of the violence is unnecessary. Not in the book, but in

Book Review



the historical real life it depicts. Violence like this cannot be defended as protecting others or defending one's self. It is not even always revenge. It is simply cruel. The infliction of pain and the human trophies of scalps are a source of triumph and pride, a good day's work, a good story to entertain company.

This small story of the exploits of Native Americans and white settlers could have used an advocate for peace, or at least less violence, like Abigail. Even Mary with all her life experience does not speak out when given a chance. She regrets her missed opportunity.

In the end the book may be read as the triumph of the human spirit over evil. The triumph comes not in overcoming, but in acceptance. Mary was powerless to stop the violence committed against those she loved. In the aftermath, her choice was life or a sort of non-living existence, a total submersion of emotions and self. Along the way, however, Mary keeps choosing life with its beauties and rewards even while continuing to discover that life is also a sharp scalping knife or a husband's tomahawk. She can make peace with violence only by accepting its existence; she does not find a way to stop it. Violence continues. This seems to be the story's unavoidable lesson. ❧

Lois Saylor serves on the Shalom! Advisory committee and the leadership team for the Brethren in Christ Council for Women in Ministry and Leadership, and is a member of the Harrisburg BIC Church. She reviewed The White, by Deborah Larsen (Vintage Books, 2003). The book was selected this year as the common reading text for all first-year Messiah College students based on the novel's themes of transition, transformation, acceptance and community.

¹ The Message of Samuel, by Mary J. Evans.

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Living Advocacy

By Jill Thompson

I lead a double life. The life that earns my keep is that of a high school librarian. I catalogue books, recommend books, and get kids to read books. I also administrate budget, support curriculum, and teach others to be effective users of ideas and information. It's what I do.

The life I lead simultaneously with librarianship is that of a follower of Jesus Christ. I enjoy worship, fellowship, and heavenly citizenship along with others in the Brethren in Christ family. I believe in prayer, in God's gift of salvation, and in the Bible as God's revealed truth. It's what I live.

I suspect that there are others too who lead a double life, those not in Christian vocations, but working in secular vocations as a Christian. In these cases, our faith is not the reason for our work but the context in which we work our faith. So when we hear the call for advocacy on behalf of those who need our support, or if we're alerted to support a particular point of view as Christians that is crucial in providing justice or peace to those who need it—we're inspired, and willing. But how can we find the time to do advocacy, to be not just hearers of the Word, but authentic doers?

Turn your eyes upon Jesus. The town in which Jesus lived was semi-pagan, which pretty much describes the communities in which we live today. Jesus' father was a carpenter, and possibly he himself was too (Mark 6:3)—a secular vocation. The writers of the Gospels portray a Jesus that, like

us, is a part of this world. Yet in the midst of it, Jesus is of unmistakable otherness. In the every day life of Jesus, the reality and authority of God is directly present and fulfilled in Jesus' interaction among the people. And the main instruments of Jesus' activity were his spoken word and his helping hand. In Jesus' advocacy for the sinner, his attitude toward and influence on different people, was simple, direct, and in accordance with the kind of people he encountered. Oh that we could be like Jesus!

So it is that I, as a Christian in a public high school library, support teenagers in a variety of ways that reflect Jesus' sovereignty in my life. I am an advocate to the welfare of young adults when I choose to purchase appropriate reading material, when I provide resources for teenage moms and moms-to-be, and when I offer homework help beyond the school day. It's simple, it's direct, and it's authentic to the kind of people I encounter in my work. I don't do extracurricular advocacy. I live it on the job.

Bill Dick, my Brethren in Christ brother, also leads a double life. He's a Christian and a lawyer. His profession is advocacy oriented, providing legal help for all, even to those that can't afford it. Yet, as a follower of Jesus Christ, the main instruments of his ministry are his word and his legal knowledge. Among the many ways Bill has exemplified Jesus, his support of children's rights through our local organization of Child Evangelism

Fellowship demonstrates the best in authentic advocacy. By providing legal information on tape, Bill's words can be sent to school districts to assure them that they may indeed allow students to leave school for a time of Bible study and still be in compliance with Supreme Court laws.

Bill also provides a legal service for Brethren in Christ pastors by preparing their wills free of charge. It is obvious that as a member of the legal profession, Bill's advocacy is adjusted in accordance with the kind of people he encounters—much like Jesus.

In whatever way we can advocate for the "least of these" (Matthew 25:40), we should wield our influence through what we do as our God-directed professions. Even when we're home by choice or by divine design, we can come along side the relevant causes according to our daily life. It's when we're tempted to over-do for good causes that we should remember Galatians 2:20. "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." For the really brave Christians among us, advocacy is not what we do, it's what we live. 🌱

Jill Thompson is a high school librarian and the author of the soon-to-be-released book, Soul Battle: It's Not Against Flesh and Blood. Wife and mother of five grown children, she is a member of the Fairview Avenue BIC Church, Waynesboro, PA.