

The Witness

Volume 80 • Number 1/2 • January/February, 1997



Jubilee economics

Responding to the Right

THANK YOU FOR PUBLISHING YOUR wonder-filled magazine. Articles by Chung Hyun Kyung speak to my mind and my heart. I've been waiting for her message and teachings for years and years — maybe all my life. I'll be 80 in the year 2,000! That's a long time to wait for a woman to speak in a way I can understand. Perhaps I was not truly ready to see and comprehend all she writes. And there are others who have helped along my way and most have been loving, wise, elder women. For each of them I am grateful to God.

Thank you for keeping *The Witness* alive.

Janet Miriam Wallace
Northport, MI

THANK YOU SO MUCH for your conversation with Jim Wallis. I am where you are and have grown increasingly uncomfortable with *Sojourners'* shift, taking "leadership" with a national program and the abandonment of a rich heritage from the Left.

I think that we must all be open to discernment, growth, change, evaluation and the leading of the Spirit — yet I find that I cannot follow where *Sojourners* is going.

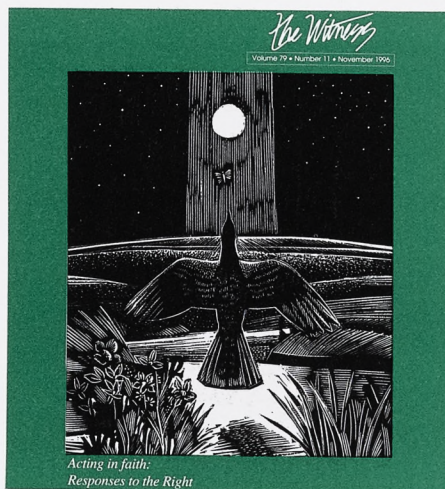
Thanks too for the Stringfellow reprint. I appreciate deeply every issue of *Witness* that comes to our home.

Willie Righter
Dayton, OH

CONGRATULATIONS AND THANKS for your conversation with Jim Wallis.

Your Lefty *compadre*, saved by the Sandinistas,
Pio Celestino
Harlingen, TX

[Ed. note: A decade ago, Pio Celestino was severely injured in a truck accident in Nicaragua. The Sandinista government provided medical treatment.]



LAST NIGHT I READ THE CONVERSATION between Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann and Jim Wallis. I have been thinking and thinking about it today.

In the interview, I felt that *The Witness* sounded defensive, as if you were holding to a label for dear life, fearing that your identity would somehow change if you let go of this boat we call "the Left." I understand why, but I would encourage you to reconsider.

What is the real mission? Isn't it to live and proclaim a radical Gospel on behalf of all who are oppressed — and to communicate that message to as wide an audience as possible? In my opinion, most of our political labels — be they Right or Left, liberal or conservative, have lost their original meanings. You did a good job of explaining who you recognize as the Left, but I sense that this community has much more meaning to you than it does to the people you are trying to serve. Furthermore, identifying *The Witness* in this way, may actually do more harm than good by polarizing your position and alienating those who you most need to reach and engage.

I don't agree with all of Jim Wallis' views, but he is completely correct in saying that the people in trouble want to talk about issues and solutions. The strength of *The Witness* is its willingness to engage in debate on behalf of the oppressed. I believe that if we truly follow Jesus, this debate must lead us to a place which is beyond any political or ideological boundary, and which continually transcends all institutions and affiliations — even the church. It takes great courage to leap into an unknown, murky place where the former la-

bels no longer serve and old friends are not at our side — yet that is exactly what I believe we are called to do. Your voice is needed there — I hope you will go courageously and unencumbered.

Elizabeth Adams
Hartford, VT

In need of a labor movement

TREMENDOUS! It is great coverage! Could you tell me how to reach the ACORN organization referenced in it?

Joseph Kujovsky
Lebanon, PA

[Ed. note: ACORN's national office can be reached at 739 Eight St., SE, Washington, D.C. 20003; ph. 202-547-2500.]

Witness praise

KEEP MY VERY FAVORITE PUBLICATION coming in my mailbox! What a delight it is to see a copy of *The Witness* when I pick up the mail. Have looked at the Table of Contents before I unlock my front door!

Elsie Kalenius
Des Moines, WA

THANK YOU for your personal note on my receipt. It made me feel like I still belonged to the mission of *The Witness* after almost 50 years. It has always expressed my ministry as a priest of the Episcopal Church. I changed my ministry in 1938 from Evangelical and Reformed (now UCC) to Episcopal because of the CLID.

In the 1940s Bill Spofford asked me to join the Editorial Board. I left it when I was called to be Episcopal Chaplain at Syracuse University; and Rector of Grace Church at which parish I was consistently "inclusive" till I retired in 1977.

My retirement has been in a southern situation where I could continue my calling to reconcile those unreconciled to each other and to God in Jesus Christ. Thanks to God's grace, Marie and I continue to try.

Please send *The Witness* for one year to each of our daughters.

Marie and Walter Welsh
Yaupon Beach, NC

P.S. Needless to say, *The Witness* is a paragon of reality. Among the myriad reli-

Letters

gious claims of loyalty and devotion you must make God sigh with relief.

EVERY ISSUE OF *THE WITNESS* shouts that it is in the faces of those desperately in need, that Christian presence and love shine most clearly. Right on!

Orlando Barr
Grahamsville, NY

THANK YOU VERY MUCH for the four issues of *The Witness* you sent and which arrived today in fine shape (the envelope was not much to look at, but the magazines are OK).

I plan to show them to our rector on Sunday and see if we can make them available on our church book table. God bless you in all that you are doing.

Art Funkhouser
Bern, Switzerland
<100602.260@CompuServe.COM>

LOVE THE MAGAZINE — it's "doable" and compassionate and challenging.

Nancy Cogan
Iowa City, IA

Family history

AS EPISCOPAL CHAPLAIN working at an ecumenical campus center, I have struggled with defining ecumenism and integrating the meaning of that into my ministry for the past three years. Your recent issue on family reunions was enlightening.

Every year, for over 50 years, my husband's family has been gathering on Memorial Day for a reunion. The event is held in a tiny white frame church in the middle of the Missouri woods.

One leaves the curving asphalt ribbon of rural highway long before reaching the destination. A gravel road winds through miles of

Nice connection

Detroit News striker, Kate DeSmet, spoke to the machinists union in Minnesota this fall and was greeted by a man who had just read *The Witness* labor issue [9/96]. He told her that his father had sent him the issue and that he had cried when reading the profile about her.

a National Forest thick with native oaks and pines introduced to Missouri by the impoverished workers in the Conservation Corps of the 1930s. May apples and Virginia creeper cohabit with poison ivy and feathery wild dogwood in tangled triumph.

A sudden clearing announces church property. The late model cars of earlier arrivals seem anachronisms.

The cook in every family carefully carries specialties of the house to the common buffet; a long table set up under a huge oak that has been a faithful observer to the gathering from the beginning. Best efforts are proudly displayed: fried chicken, potato salad, baked beans, deviled eggs, vegetable casseroles, fruit salads, homemade pies, cakes and cookies.

Family members decorate the headstones of relatives long gone in the little graveyard directly behind the church. It is truly a time that the living and the dead are in communion as old stories are retold and memories shared.

Then grace is said and all go through the buffet. However, that is where participation with the whole ends. The meal is shared with one's immediate family. Some families bring folding tables and chairs, others bring blankets and sit on the ground. A few stand under the great oak. There is something special about that immediate family unit, the one with whom tradition, customs and quirks have been shared for each member's lifetime. It's a comfort level, knowing what's expected and what to expect, a greater sense of belonging.

And now I feel a greater understanding of ecumenism. As Christians, we are like my husband's extended family. We celebrate our unity, sharing the rich heritage of salvation through Jesus Christ. The baptism, crucifixion and resurrection of God is our common history. And like my husband's immediate family, we claim our diversity in faith traditions. We sit at table with those most like ourselves. We cling to the rituals, customs, values and traditions of the denominations we grew up in or adopted as our own.

The rich and intricate fabric of Christendom would be so less colorful without the various threads of each faith tradition, and those many hued threads would be worthless fragments if not woven into the greater cloth.

Susan Carrell
Springfield, MO

Classifieds

Episcopal Urban Intern Program

Work in social service, live in Christian community in Los Angeles. For adults 21-30. Apply now for the 1997-98 year. Contact: The Rev. Gary Commins, 260 N. Locust St., Inglewood, CA 90301. 310-674-7700.

Vocations

Contemplating religious life? Members of the Brotherhood and the Companion Sisterhood of Saint Gregory are Episcopalians, clergy and lay, married and single. To explore a contemporary Rule of Life, contact: The Director of Vocations, Brotherhood of St. Gregory, Saint Bartholomew's Church, 82 Prospect Street, White Plains, NY 10606-3499.

Nonviolent Alternatives

Nonviolent Alternatives will offer three 1997-98 programs, including four weeks in India in June/July, three weeks in Lakota communities in June, and four weeks in India in Jan., 1988. Contact Nonviolent Alternatives, 825 4th St., Brookings, SD 57006; 605-692-3680 or 605-692-8465.

Bishop Spong at Kirkridge

Bishop John Spong will lead a workshop on "The Story of the Cross Viewed Through Jewish Eyes" Feb. 14-16 at Kirkridge Conference Center, 215-588-1793.

Classifieds

Witness classifieds cost 75 cents a word or \$30 an inch, whichever is less. Payments must accompany submissions. Deadline is the 15th of the month, two months prior to publication.

If you have liked the Church Ad Project ads which appeared in the November and December issues of *The Witness*, you can obtain a catalog by calling 800-331-9391.

The Witness

Volume 80 • Number 1/2 • Jan./Feb. 1997

Editor/publisher	Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann
Managing Editor	Julie A. Wortman
Assistant Editor	Marianne Arbogast
Circulation Coordinator	Marietta Jaeger
Magazine Production	Maria Catalfo
Book Review Editor	Bill Wylie-Kellermann
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The church has a role to play in U.S. land reform, an issue usually thought to be relevant only in the third world.

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People of faith around the world are rediscovering the biblical understanding of jubilee — a cycle of release for captives, land and stored money.

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The crippling consequences of third world debt are familiar to us all. What are justice advocates asking of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank?

Five Times of Singing



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A new organization is linking church people with working people's need for union representation and a wage they can live on.

Cover: Kateri Tekakwitha of the Iroquois (1656-1680), by Robert Lentz whose images are available through Bridge Building Images, 211 Park St., Burlington, VT 05401.

Back cover: Practice Random Kindness by Sara Steele, Syracuse Cultural Workers, Box 6367, Syracuse, N.Y. 13217; 315-474-1132.

The Witness offers a fresh and sometimes irreverent view of our world, illuminated by faith, Scripture and experience. Since 1917, *The Witness* has been advocating for those denied systemic power as well as celebrating those people who have found ways to "live humanly in the midst of death." We push boundaries, err on the side of inclusion and enjoy bringing our views into tension with orthodox Christianity. *The Witness'* roots are Episcopalian, but our readership is ecumenical. For simplicity, we place news specific to Episcopalians in our Vital Signs section. *The Witness* is committed to brevity for the sake of readers who find little time to read, but can enjoy an idea, a poem or a piece.

Manuscripts: We welcome multiple submissions. Given our small staff, writers and artists receive a response only when we are able to publish. Poetry can be sent directly to Leslie Williams, 2504 Gulf Ave., Midland, TX. 79705.

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E-mail: The_Witness@ecunet.org.

Sounding the jubal

by Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

Jubilee is a sound in the wind. The horn is being winded as the millennium approaches and we can listen and wonder what its fulfillment may mean in our lives.

South Africans celebrated the tenth anniversary of their *Kairos* document by studying jubilee. Radical Christians in the U.S. are wrestling with it. The pope is preparing a Jubilee 2000 proclamation. Jewish scholar Arthur Waskow is inviting a jubilee conversation across religious boundaries. And a Canadian has created a jubilee homepage.

In every case, people are lifting up the biblical imperative that in the fiftieth year, land ownership will revert back to the original owners, captives will be freed and the land will lie fallow for one year.

Jubilee is a strikingly simple antidote to our current crisis of hoarded wealth and widespread economic slavery.

The question, of course, is can it work? Does it have practical application or is it simply a whirlpool of nice ideas that will keep people of goodwill circling pointlessly for years?

During a recent conference on jubilee economics at Kirkridge, Ched Myers suggested that for an enslaved people, the jubilee requires conversion — the same conversion experienced by the Jews in the wilderness during 40 years, a period of two generations. It requires the imagination to believe that our salvation is not in the storehouses of Egypt or the vaults of Chase Manhattan. It requires an understanding of grace, the grace offered by the creation that feeds us.

“How do we become a society that

doesn't hoard wealth but redistributes it?” Myers asked. “The only way to be a non-Egyptian people is to rely on manna, an economy in which everyone has only enough.”

For Americans to appreciate the meaning of the jubilee requires that we first understand the degree to which we have been enslaved by the spirit of Egypt with its amassed wealth. We know the economic abuse in the third world, but at home it's subtle, the rewards are significant and the denial reflexive.

Most *Witness* readers, however, are alert to the suffering here at home. We hope that the recent series of *Witness* issues (from the need for a labor movement [9/96] through fasting in Babylon [12/96]) have helped illustrate the problems. But it was still shocking to me to notice an article titled “The return of slavery” in *Dollars and Sense* [11-12/96]. And Jim Wallis, recently returned from a book tour that swung through the south, told folks at Kirkridge that he'd heard that Mississippi is using federal block grant money (available for local development projects) to build prisons and that prisoners in Georgia are being used to clean public schools, thereby eliminating service level jobs. In addition, he said, defense contractors are among those bidding to privatize the management of hospitals, schools and prisons.

So what is our covenant with the Creator? How do we move beyond denial and despair? What would the reverberation of the *jubal* mean to us?

Returning the land

There are difficulties with modern application of the jubilee. Nzome Akuda, of the United Church of Christ, is writing a

book on some of its limitations.

Clearly return of the land to the original owners raises questions. Early in the session at Kirkridge, one participant called out, “Yeah, but what about the land rights of the Canaanites?” Similarly when retiring Episcopal Church Publishing Company board member Michael Yasutake broached jubilee with folks in the Hawaiian sovereignty movement, they e-mailed back, asking, what would returning the land mean? The indigenous people never held title to it.

Our Bible study at Kirkridge was aided by Jeanne Gallo's description of the advocacy work Wellspring is doing with fishermen in Gloucester, Mass. [TW 4/95]. One of the economic threats fishermen experience, she said, are corporate fishery enclosures in the sea. Raised to believe that the coastal shoreline and the sea were held in common, I was startled to realize that the government leases out the sea for corporate use. Suddenly the power of fences, deeds and enclosures was transparent.

A community ethic

There are several ways that jubilee ethics are consistent with indigenous understanding of land: the invitation to let the land lie fallow for one year restores balance; it seems to recognize the spirit of the land and its need for time to breathe, its creatureliness. And, as Myers pointed out, it also forces us to remember the gift that is woven into creation: even without sowing, reaping and marketing, the earth can provide for us.

An unexpected grace in Myers' teaching was the biblical image of discipleship



Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann is editor/publisher of *The Witness*.

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as leading toward wholeness in community, not simply a quick trip to Calvary.

Within me there is something that twists our shared theology into a message of despair: "Things are horribly unjust. We are called to act and to the cross. The process is unendurable. Perhaps I should just self-immolate as the Buddhist monks did during the Vietnam War."

I realized I wasn't alone in my despair, when a widow at the conference spoke about money that she will soon receive from a land sale. She said she felt a need to pass the money on, yet was unsure how she might live out her old age since her husband has died and she has no children. She even wondered if she should commit suicide when she is "no longer of use."

Chuck Matthei, a community development advocate who addressed the Kirkridge group [p. 12], worked out a compromise that allows her to invest in community development with a return that provides her livelihood and then shifts her money into full service when she dies.

We need an ethic that calls us to accountability in a way that enhances life. The church has either condoned wanton consumption or its justice advocates have brinked on condemning the desire for bread and roses. I realize only now that, when Jesus instructed the rich young man to give away his wealth, he still presumed the rich young man could have "enough" within the community.

So, does jubilee have practical application? How do we get there from here? Does it require a grand movement that will sweep away the institutions of oppression for a new society?

Beyond despair

The lack of such a grand movement has thrown some into despair. Thomas de Zengotita recently lamented in *The Nation* that there is no political reflection going on. While he's right to blast celebrity culture and excessive "busy-ness," I

believe he's mistaken that "no one really has any idea what's going on anymore, let alone what to do about it" [12/2/96]. His implication that we are dazed, self-absorbed and without a collective will sounds to me like nostalgia for a white male liberal tradition. What some see as selfishness in post-modern personalism, *The Witness* staff takes as hope.

*What some see as selfishness
in post-modern personalism,
The Witness staff takes
as hope.*

We believe that our best chance for keeping the level of hope above the level of despair is in acting out of our hearts rather than from codified principles. We may also keep our hope alive by focusing on the work that we undertake — whether it's running a soup kitchen, displaying political art or investing in a revolving loan fund. We can intercede for all those in pain throughout the world, but we need a way to pull back and to focus our efforts in order to avoid complete paralysis. In all likelihood our focussed acts will grow organically toward a larger justice, just as Wellspring's shelter for women has resulted in creative efforts to support the local economy.

In this way, we may avoid the grandiosity and the discouragement of attempting to manage all the world's affairs simultaneously. This is important in relation to jubilee; there is an implicit call to rest and perspective. Arthur Waskow writes that observing the sabbath helps us remember that, despite our drive to good works, we are not God.

At *The Witness* we take our hope from an image that Korean theologian Chung Hyun Kyung put forth during a recent visit to our office. She speaks of the ant and the spider as models of resistance.

The spider throws the web of connection between communities of ants who are building subterranean communities of life that promise in the long run to replace and undermine the dominant system.

It is our conviction that this is not a time for justice-seeking people to succumb to the idea that nothing good is happening, that the movement is languishing. The work of the spirit that will liberate us all is underway. As Amata Miller says, "We are at one of those watershed times in human history when everything's going to be different in the future. But we're just on the crest, we don't know what's going to come next. I think we're living through the dark times; it's critical that we nourish hope in one another. I see all these alternatives being born" [p.31].

Miller echoes Episcopal bishop Steve Charleston, who says: "When we look to the future, we're going to see the emergence of a new vision of the church and spirituality that's going to come from the ground up. It's like a deep spring welling up from the earth, coming up and giving life and nourishment to local communities first and then merging with others that are doing very similar things around the world" [TW 4/94].

This is not a naive assertion. We are not blind to the power and cruelty of the economic principalities nor to the seduction of consumerism. The death-dealing and the enslavement are real.

Yet we are beginning to free ourselves of Egypt's hold. *The Wall Street Journal* acknowledges that Madison Avenue is losing its grip on our psyches. Like the ants, we are building. With the help of the spiders, we'll work with some awareness of the work being done far and wide.

"There is a hope that is rising," Myers told us. "A very, very old story is being remembered and re-animated. This story only lives if we keep telling it, singing it, enacting it."

TW

Imagine the Angels of Bread

by Martin Espada

This is the year that
squatters evict landlords,
gazing like admirals from
the rail
of the roofdeck
or levitating hands in praise
of steam in the shower;
this is the year that shawled refugees
deport judges
who stare at the floor
and their swollen feet
as files are stamped
with their destination;
this is the year that police revolvers,
stove-hot, blister the fingers
of raging cops,
and nightsticks splinter
in their palms;
this is the year
that darkskinned men
lynched a century ago
return to sip coffee quietly
with the apologizing descendants
of their executioners.

This is the year that those
who swim the borders undertow
and shiver in boxcars
are greeted with trumpets and drums
at the first railroad crossing.

— from *Imagine the Angels of Bread* by Martin Espada
(Norton, 1996)

Glastonbury Echoes

by Elizabeth Jones Hanley

Crumbling walls
shadows of tree branches
laced with sky
Echoes
Concentric rings drifting
day to day
year to year.

Today
the shadows drift
down the abbey path
into the church
for the offices of the day.
Echoes
between then and now
sun and shadow
drift
through the years.

Elizabeth Jones Hanley lives in Hallsville, Mo.



Creative economics: an ecumenical survey

by Camille Colatosti

Elaine Villarreal, a 28-year-old mother of a five-year-old girl, was, as she explains, “up to the top of my head with bills. We were doing fine for a while. I was working for \$4.65 an hour and my husband made \$7. But when he got hurt and couldn’t go to work, we were falling behind. We didn’t know what to do.” Then she met Michele Meyer and Winnifred Crackel of First Steps Child Care Consultants.

They wanted to help Villarreal open a day care center in her southwest Detroit neighborhood. Villarreal, who volunteered at her daughter’s Head Start program, saw this as both the answer to her financial worries and a way to fulfill a community need. In her neighborhood, where the median family income is \$9,870 a year, there are 6,000 children under the age of six and only one licensed day care center.

For 20 years, Meyer has run a child care center in the affluent Detroit suburb of Birmingham. In February 1995, beginning what she calls a “volunteer task,” Meyer and her partner Crackel decided to help bring child care to low-income areas of the city. “This has been a faith experience for me,” says Meyer. “This is an opportunity for me to give back to the community the many gifts that I have received.” With support from her parish, Birmingham’s Holy Name Catholic Church, Meyer contacted All Saints Catholic Church in Detroit. All Saints was deciding whether or not to purchase

and then rehabilitate two houses.

“The week All Saints was making this decision,” Meyer remembers, “we called to see if they would allow us room to meet. Instead, they offered us the possibility of helping someone purchase the houses—and our project was underway.”

Villarreal was interested. “But,” she says, “I couldn’t get a loan through the bank. Then we found the McGehee Fund of the Episcopal Church. They gave us a break and now things are going my way.”

The McGehee Economic Justice Fund is just one of many community development financial institutions nationwide. A fund of the trustees of the Episcopal Diocese of Michigan, it loans money to parish- and community-based projects in lower income neighborhoods throughout the eastern half of Michigan. The Fund took its first investment in April 1991 and is now approaching \$2 million.

In the above example, two women from a suburban Catholic church helped a woman from an inner-city neighborhood receive a loan from an Episcopal community development fund. Villarreal used the loan to purchase a house that was rehabilitated by another Catholic parish in order to open a day care center for low-income families. This example models the partnerships being formed by people of faith across the coun-

try as they conceive new ways to invest in low-income communities.

Institutions of faith—Baptist, Catholic, Episcopal, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Quaker, among others—play an increasingly large role in community development. Some dioceses establish their own community development financial institutions, like the McGehee Fund, which make loans to projects that traditional banks may see as too risky. Others contribute to community development banks and credit unions, which then fund individual projects.

Still others establish their own economic justice organizations—such as the Quakers’ American Friends Service Committee. These devote staff and institutional resources to specific community projects. No matter the approach, however, all efforts serve as catalysts for larger community development and alternative investment.

To McGehee Fund executive director John Hooper, “this work is necessary in order for the low-income neighborhood

to survive.” He explains, “Development, in the sense of creation of housing or businesses or commercial strips, needs to happen everywhere, but in lower-income communities, the corporations and banks are not interested.” This is why institutions of faith must step in.

“We have very clear mandates in Scripture,” he says, “to go beyond the emergency work of providing food, clothing and shelter. We need to help people get into the mainstream economy by ownership, or at least by decent housing. We also need to work with those who will create some struc-

“We were doing fine for a while. I was working for \$4.65 an hour and my husband made \$7. But when he got hurt and couldn’t go to work, we were falling behind. We didn’t know what to do.”

—Elaine Villarreal

Camille Colatosti teaches English at the Detroit College of Business. Photographer **Jim West** lives in Detroit.

tures that will give poor people a part."

Funding community programs

One important structure that religious institutions have helped develop is the National Association of Community Development Loan Funds (NACDLF), a group of 46 community financial institutions. Last year, 19% of the NACDLF's \$204 million came from religious investors. These funds make it possible for religious institutions to invest in the community while relying on the expertise of the NACDLF.

Allyson Randolph, director of development and capitalization for the NACDLF, explains, "A congregation may make loans to a member institution. Let's say they make a loan to a Delaware Valley credit union. The Delaware Valley institution then loans money to a housing project and laundromat, after it assesses the risk. In this way, the congregation is not directly involved in making decisions about which loans are sound and which are not."

Randolph sees this as a positive alternative to what she describes as the "kinds of investments religious institutions made in the 1960s and 1970s. They loaned funds directly to projects, but they were making the loans without expertise and as a result lost money."

Amy Domini, a founding member of the Investment Committee of the Episcopal Church, agrees that using a national intermediary, like NACDLF, makes a great deal of sense. "In this way," she explains, "there is a secure backing."

Domini is part of a national effort of the Episcopal church to invest endowment and operating funds in community development. "We don't invest in specific projects," says Domini. "Instead, we invest in intermediaries who then invest in projects."

To Domini, the program has been successful. "Our investments have had a tremendous ripple effect," she explains.

"A loan of \$10,000 can leverage \$100,000. This program also unified the church. Constituencies that were less likely to find common ground found it because all agreed with the investments."



Elaine Villarreal, with her daughter, is launching a daycare center with church help.

Jim West

Recipients of the Episcopal funds include the Self-Help Credit Union of Raleigh, N.C., which focuses on cooperative business lending in Appalachia; Blackfeet National Bank of Browning, Mont., which invests in Native American businesses; and other community development and women- and minority-owned banks. These service high-risk neighborhoods and, as Domini explains, "appear to serve them well."

The Episcopal effort grew from a 1988 initiative, calling for the establishment of a national community development fund. According to Brian Grieves, Director of the Episcopal Church's Peace and Justice Ministries, "We've had a national committee working on this since 1989. The work never took the direction of fundraising, as originally proposed. Instead, the national church invested \$7

million. We also challenged local Episcopal sources to reach out and match our funds."

To an extent, the investments of the Episcopal Church reinforce those of one

of the nation's largest, faith-based alternative loan funds, Partners for the Common Good 2000. Initiated by the Christian Brothers, Partners for the Common Good applies the ethical principles of "common good" to investment choices. Today, its 99 investors, the maximum number legally allowed a limited partnership, remain primarily Catholic: 68 women's congregations; 19 men's congregations; eight health care systems; three Protestant denominations, including the United Methodist Church and the American Baptists; and one partners group—the Christian Brothers Investment Service. Investors come from 21 states and the District of Columbia to raise, in 1995-96, a total of \$7,902,668.

Partners use funds to make business and housing loans, as well as investments in low-income credit unions and commu-

nity development banks in the U.S. and abroad. Among the Partners' projects is a business loan to ACCION, Texas, Inc., in San Antonio—a program that provides credit to small businesses—and a housing loan to the Oikos Community Development Corporation in Dayton, Ohio. The latter rehabilitates and constructs housing for low- and moderate-income families.

To Allyson Randolph of the NACDLF, the need for institutions of faith to join investment programs like Partners for the Common Good continues to expand. "More and more there is a credit gap in low-income communities. As government sources dry up, there is a need for low-income people to seek help from the private sector. They need alternative loan institutions to increase access to private money."

A direct staff approach

While some institutions of faith make loans to specific programs, or invest endowment funds in national community development financial institutions, others provide assistance in the form of direct staff. The most developed example of this approach comes from the Quakers.

The Quakers' American Friends Service Committee, founded in 1917, runs 22 international programs and 43 in the U.S. There are approximately 800 employees all together: 150 in the national office and many more in the AFSC's nine regional and multiple local offices. While a Quaker board oversees the AFSC, the staff consists of both Quakers and individuals outside of the Quaker religion. Local committees, composed of staff and volunteers, determine programs.

Emily Kawano, the National Representative for Economic Justice, describes the program's purpose: "AFSC has a fundamental belief in the infinite worth of every human being. So we work with groups who are the most marginalized. We want these people to determine the

kind of assistance and support they need."

Programs are wide ranging. In Syracuse, N.Y., for example, a network of worker cooperatives formed to provide mutual support. There, Howie Hawkins, an AFSC employee, coordinates 12 worker and buyer cooperatives. "We want to replace exploitative businesses with

The city showed that it could renovate homes but not for the homeless. The city showed that it had money to spend, but not for the homeless. We took over the buildings and were arrested on Christmas Eve in 1989 and Easter of 1990.

— Terry Messman

businesses that distribute what people need," he explains.

In rural West Virginia, AFSC's New Employment for Women provides education, job training and counseling for low-income women.

Other AFSC projects take the form of direct action campaigns that, in some cases, lead to the formation of new institutions. Terry Messman, program director for the Homeless Organizing Project of AFSC and editor of *Street Spirit*, a monthly newspaper reporting on homeless activism in California, helped form Oakland's Dignity Housing West. This non-profit corporation built 46 units of permanent housing for the homeless. But Dignity Housing West had a difficult and contentious beginning.

A few years ago, activists occupied buildings in Oakland's Preservation Park. "The city was spending millions of dol-

lars of its own and Department of Housing and Urban Development money to refurbish Victorian homes for office space," explains Messman. "They were doing this right in the heart of homelessness. We thought this was a real injustice. The city showed that it could renovate homes but not for the homeless. The city showed that it had money to spend, but not for the homeless. We took over the buildings and were arrested on Christmas Eve in 1989 and Easter of 1990."

The action had the desired effect. The city of Oakland gave Dignity Housing West one lot valued at \$250,000 and another valued at \$800,000. Dignity Housing West also attained one million dollars from the state of California's rental housing construction program, and 2.4 million dollars in federal low-income tax credits.

Dignity used the money and land to build one 26-unit development, and another 20-unit building. Each contains two-, three- and four-bedroom apartments. The buildings feature on-site day care and head start programs, as well as job training and placement services.

Messman describes the community that grew in the housing development. "Early on there were a few people who had drug problems and they were hurting the quality of life for everyone. We took action to remove them. After that, the families made use of the services available and found jobs—virtually every one of them—even though we didn't case manage them to death. We didn't require that they do this. They just did it."

Two years ago, Messman launched a newspaper called *Street Spirit*. Reporting on homelessness in California, the AFSC prints 25,000 copies a month. Homeless vendors sell these for \$1 an issue, and keep the proceeds. To Messman, the paper "represents \$25,000 worth of justice that people give the homeless every

month. This is not charity. It's work. It's a job with dignity. Many of our vendors have sold enough papers to be able to afford to move into apartments."

The papers also help educate policy makers—city council members and mayors in California—about homeless issues. "The paper gives homeless people a voice," says Messman. "It makes it possible for new ideas to be heard."

Local currency

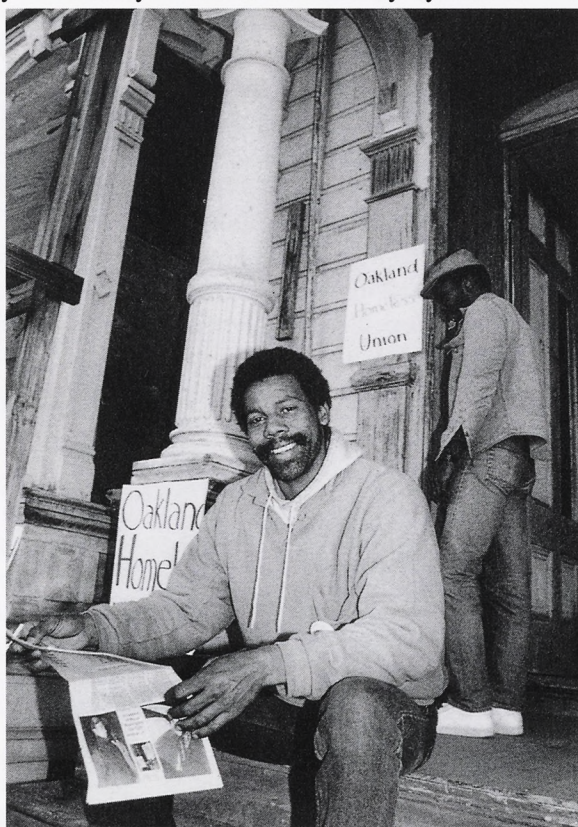
Listening to, exploring and testing new ideas is at the heart of community development. One of the most innovative, and potentially controversial, efforts may be found in the local currency movement that operates in a few dozen communities across the country. While community development financial institutions provide access to capital, local currency projects, explains Greg Coleridge, director of the AFSC's Economic Justice Program in Northeast Ohio, challenge the foundation of America's corporate culture.

Working in coalition with people of many faiths—including other Christians, Jews and Muslims—Coleridge emphasizes the importance of the local economy. "There is a whole movement away from businesses being rooted to a place and people," he explains. "As we move to globalization, a euphemism for corporatization, we need to resist that and form alliances that are people-based. We also have to question the inevitability of giving corporations unlimited rights. And we need to try to control our economy locally."

To that end, Coleridge directs the distribution of local currency in Akron, Ohio. Modelled on a program developed in Ithaca, N.Y., six years ago, the Akron system began producing a directory in 1994 listing goods and services that participants may exchange for local cur-

rency.

"The program starts from the notion that everyone's services are worth the same amount," says Coleridge. "We chose \$10 an hour, the average wage in our county." The local currency system is



Taking to the streets in Oakland, Calif.

Courtesy AFSC

based on hours. People earn whole, half, quarter and tenths of hours. These hours can then be bartered for other services.

Coleridge tells the story of a woman who needed her drain unplugged. "She contacted someone in the directory who is a general handy person. This person had a snake to unplug her drain but he was too busy to help. However, he was willing to lend the snake to a third person who could do the work but lacked the equipment. The woman agreed to pay the snake owner one-quarter of a local hour. The man who did the work will earn his pay in a combination of local hours and bread. The woman bakes bread."

People involved in the program gather together monthly for a potluck dinner. They share ideas, food and strategy. An unexpected benefit has been the enhancement of community spirit. "The social aspects have really grown," explains Coleridge. "People are involved in sharing parts of their lives with each other."

Spiritual aspects of the program have also developed, Coleridge explains. "We are certainly called to see the dignity and worth of every person and that transcends how economically we see people. Everyone has the potential to help each other and sustain the natural world. We emphasize high touch over high tech. We realize that we all have something to contribute. We emphasize that all work, particularly that which is helping other people, is important. Everyone can contribute to the economy."

These examples are just a few of the many that exist nationally. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA), for instance, is, like the AFSC, involved in job training and placement. Its Project Hope in Mississippi and Alabama helps participants prepare for and find work.

Both the ELCA and the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod are involved in "housing ministries" around the nation.

The work will continue as institutions of faith try to bridge what McGehee Fund director John Hooper describes as "the gap between theology and practice." By investing in the community, says Hooper, "the church in the city or the church in the rural area can make a difference. People can cross over and lend some of their affluence to help others. The church can also discuss economic questions in a very practical way: in terms of responsibilities that people who have money owe people who don't."

TW

Taking back the land, an issue coming home

by Chuck Matthei

“You don’t seriously believe that you can talk to Americans about land reform, do you?” a Ford Foundation staffer recently asked me.

But we have to find a way to talk about it, because the patterns of ownership affecting the poor in this country are every bit as skewed as they are in any third world country on earth.

I believe it’s possible to get such a discussion going, but we have to speak the only language that people of differing perspectives can speak together and that’s the language of anecdote, which is certainly a biblical lesson. They can’t talk about their faith in abstract or theological terms, because that immediately highlights the differences in theology. They can’t talk about their politics because they’ll quickly define themselves in opposing camps. But they *can* talk about real places, people and projects.

If they talk practically and without exaggeration, but with evident willingness to grapple with the practical demands, then people of different perspectives can and will come together.

If we want to talk about something as radical as land reform in the U.S., we’ve got to do two additional things.

First, we’ve got to accept from the outset the discipline of financial responsibility. If you stand up in an American audience today and say, “I want to talk to

you about the plight of the poor. I want to talk to you about justice. I want to talk to you about the public interest,” 90 percent of the audience thinks, “This is another one of those liberal, bleeding hearts. The best of them are good-hearted people. Back in the 1960s when the economy was strong, we could give them some money and a little bit of headroom, but don’t let them near the helm of the ship of state today. They’ll wreck it on the financial rocks.”

Second, in a society where the perception is that public and private interests are fundamentally antagonistic, and in a society where people are so highly individualized, you have to begin by acknowledging the legitimate interest of the individual. If you

start by talking about the public interest, people draw in their emotional wagons. They assume that their own personal interests are at risk.

If you affirm those interests, you can introduce a parallel set of communal interests.

Owning a home

If you ask the average American, “What do you want in material terms?” Most will tell you, “I want to own my home.” So we go into communities and say, “We understand that this aspiration is funda-

mental and widespread. What is challenging us is that the opportunity has never been available to everyone and is available to fewer people today than it has been. That contradiction calls us to make a new effort.”

We’ve talked to owners and renters. We’ve talked to rich and poor, east and west, black and white. We’ve said to them, “You tell us you want to own a home. That’s the American dream. What does that mean to you?”

We heard three themes coming up over and over again. Interestingly, we heard the same themes coming from black and white, rich and poor, and east and west. People said, “I want a place that I can live in that nobody can put me out of.

I want to be able to invest an hour of my labor, or an honestly earned dollar and feel that I have something for what I’ve done. I want something to leave for my kids. I want them to be able to stay here, or if they can’t stay here, I want them to be able to get started somewhere else.”

We acknowledge this tradition,

saying “People want lifetime security. They want fair equity for their investments. They want a legacy for the next generation. These are understandable and legitimate interests.”

And then we say, we will respect them and protect them, while asserting that the community has a parallel set of interests, rights, and responsibilities. The community has an interest in making sure that that opportunity is as widely available as possible and it has a right to guide those decisions about distribution and develop-

There are no property rights advocates, no matter how vitriolic, who are prepared to have their neighbors pollute their groundwater. None of us believe in private property in the simplistic sense that public discourse would suggest.

Chuck Matthei is president of Equity Trust, Inc., a non-profit organization working on land reform and community development finance. For a **Syracuse Cultural Workers’** catalogue call 315-474-1132.

ment which affect, not how you live day by day, but how the entire community will evolve, for all of its members, over the generations.

Community interest in private property

If the individual has a legitimate desire for equity, having made an investment of labor or capital, then doesn't the community have a legitimate economic interest in that portion of the property value that comes not from one's personal investment, but from the community, from society as a whole?

Property value comes from many different sources, not just the effort or the investment of one party. It is an active business relationship between the individual and the community.

The day in Washington, D.C. when the *Washington Post* headlined plans to install a new subway line in one of the poorest, most bombed-out neighborhoods in the country affected property values dramatically. With a clean and relatively efficient system like Washington's, transportation becomes a substantial amenity. Subway construction is not a city initiative in financial terms, because almost all the money for subway construction will come from the federal government, so it's really taxpayers all over the U.S. who are going to contribute to building a subway system. And because they make this social investment, there will be a tremendous windfall profit to the owners of the properties which surround these new subway stations. Who are these people? In a neighborhood like this, you can assume that 90 percent of them are absentee landlords. Most of them haven't even been maintaining the properties to decent standards of habitation.

If you finish your story at this point, most Americans will say, "Hey, it's the luck of the draw. They won the real estate lottery. They bought 123 Elm Street at the right moment and now their number

has come in. I wish it were me." People are very tolerant of windfall profits in this society. But you *can* tell the rest of the story. You can say, "As the property values rise, so will the cost of housing to a low-income tenant. These people won't be able to afford that cost, so they'll end up in the street. And the same taxpayer

issues of a moral economy. To do that you have to do several things which are usually not part of the church's engagement with these issues. You have to make sure that everybody is at the table, the social justice committee and the financial manager, the business interest, the trustees, the administrators. Then we have to



Earth Song by Robin Silk Oak

Courtesy of Syracuse Cultural Workers

who just built this subway and created that windfall for the landlords will be asked to pay emergency shelter subsidies or rent subsidies to keep these people from ending up in the street."

That's when the discussion begins to change, because the red-blooded American who's very tolerant of windfall profits is not comfortable with being asked to pay twice!

'Alternative' no longer

Religious groups have a unique opportunity in this conversation. The individual has interests, the community has interests and there is the divine interest, the original interest, the creator's interest.

The church has an ability to engage these questions, to frame the most basic

be clear that we are not talking about alternative economics. We're talking about the life of this community. We're not alternative anymore. These principles are practical.

The economic role of land

In this culture, we've lost almost all perspective on the role of land in an economy. It's refreshing to go to the third world where everybody knows that land is fundamental.

Here we don't talk about it, but I think a very sound argument can be made that it's no less important amongst us today than it is in El Salvador or the Philippines or Kenya. We just don't remember.

Who has an interest in the property? The individuals have an interest, the com-

munity has an interest, the wildlife, the plants, the environment itself has an interest, and the next generation has an interest.

Under the environmental interests, what uses will be permitted, required or prohibited? Who has access to that property? Is it singular access? Is it shared access? Is it unlimited access? Is it access for certain purposes or for certain periods

of time? And what about governance, who participates in decisions relating to that property?

If you live here, you have an interest in occupancy. Maybe I am an abutting neighbor — I do not have an interest, a legitimate interest in walking into your home in the middle of the night. But I do have an interest in making sure that your septic system doesn't pollute my groundwater.

If you can get people into that kind of discussion, leaving alone what they think are the available legal forms or the market constraints, then you can craft a vision of a relationship that is just.

Land trusts

We work with community land trusts where a democratically structured community-based, non-profit corporation owns the land in perpetuity. The land is

Regaining tribal land

A sign in the middle of the Oneida reservation near Green Bay, Wisconsin proclaims 34 acres of natural area to be "HONOR Acres."

A national human rights coalition focusing on American Indian issues, HONOR raised \$5,000 for the down payment to hold this land until the Oneida Nation could free up funds to complete the purchase. These "First Acres" launched a crucial piece of HONOR's work: its land program.

"We figured inch by inch, acre by acre, we would try to help tribes get their land back," explains HONOR Director Sharon Metz. "The centerpiece of everything that Indian issues are about, always have been about and always will be about is land," she says.

"That's because Indian nations still have land that non-Indian America wants. And the land is held collectively as tribal land, which runs counter to the philosophy of a capitalist society."

HONOR's board of directors began looking at how much Indian land had been lost and how it was still threatened. They decided the thing to do was simply give the land back.

"We sidestepped the politics, the court suits, the long protracted discussions," recalls Metz. "You simply buy

land, and give it back. In the case of churches, we encourage them, if they have land within the original reservation boundaries of tribes, to give it back. Nothing could be simpler."

In a 1994 success story, the Oneida Nation received the old parish hall of Holy Apostles Episcopal Church in the village of Oneida, plus the two acres on which it is built, after six years of negotiations with the Diocese of Fond du Lac.

Under terms of the agreement, the Oneidas will restore the building, a longtime center of community life for the Oneida Nation. The church will have first call on the building's use, but it will be available to other groups as well. At 110 years old, Holy Apostles is one of the oldest American Indian Episcopal Churches in the United States. (The first group of Oneidas were Episcopalians who essentially brought the church to Wisconsin from New York in 1822.)

HONOR also promotes land resolutions drafted by Indian attorneys, including Episcopal Bishop William Wantland, that congregations, dioceses or other church bodies may adopt to support the policy of giving land back. To date, only the Episcopal Diocese of Michigan has passed such a resolution.

"There's nothing that makes churches more nervous than talking about land,"

contends Metz. "We're all standing on Indian land. If we open that can of worms then we have to recognize how the land was gotten, and then we have to do something about it."

HONOR was national in scope, even in its beginnings as a tiny sub-program of Lutheran Human Relations, a pan-Lutheran racial justice group. When it split off to become its own organization, it adopted five principles which it affirms today: to affirm sovereignty in government relationships; to affirm and support Indian treaties; to build intercultural understanding; to protect the earth and the life thereon, now and for the future; and to treat all people with respect.

HONOR's 1,600 Indian and non-Indian members live in all 50 states and six foreign countries. The organization is in the process of setting up an office in Washington, DC, to achieve a higher profile and faster turnaround for advocacy. Metz estimates that at least 50 percent of HONOR's revenue comes from membership dues: \$25 for individuals, \$50 for organizations, and \$250 for patrons. For more information on HONOR membership or the Land Program, contact HONOR, c/o Sharon Metz, 6435 Wiesner Rd., Omro, Wisconsin, 54963; 414-582-7142.

—Karen Bota is a freelance writer in Bloomfield Hills, Mich. and promotion manager for The Witness.

no longer a marketable commodity. It's held in trust for future generations. But it's made available to you, because you live today. We give you a lifetime, inheritable lease. Your children can live there and your children's children. There is only one qualification: they must actually use it. For as long as they will make it theirs, in real terms, it is theirs. But they can't move to California and keep control of the tract in Michigan. You can build upon that property — making an investment of labor and capital, putting something of yourself into this and we will respect that — you will build equity. But the community will reserve for the common good, the social appreciation in site value. If you build a house, you build equity. If we build a subway, we will reserve that increase in value to serve the common good.

In farm country

We've also begun working in the last year with the community-supported agriculture (CSA) movement. There are about 550 of CSA farms now that have an enrolled membership of about 45,000 households. Ninety percent, if not more, of those farms, even some of the most successful, have unresolved land tenure issues and no reliable sources of financing. The goal is not only to mobilize resources to meet their need, but over time to use public-private land tenure relationships to push for a higher standard in the whole field of agricultural preservation.

We're also working with conservationists. There are now 1,200 local land conservation trusts in the U.S. They have many structural, legal and practical similarities to land trusts. They have some fundamental differences, too, and none is more important than class.

There is an enormous turnover underway in religious properties. The Catholic religious orders will have to sell almost

everything they own in the next 15 years. The median of age of nuns is 68 and rising. And absent something that nobody sees on the horizon, all their real estate holdings are going to have to be liquidated.

What we find when we work with these communities — and it's true in the Protestant churches as well — is that when a particular property comes into question, the people who have been reading the theology of the environment say, "The earth is sacred. Save it."

Everyone empathizes in a very general, ungrounded, impractical way, but the administrator says, "We can't manage it anymore" and the treasurer says, "We can't afford to just give it all away."

Most people feel either you keep it or you give it away, but if you can't do one of those, the market takes it. So we're in the process now of developing a program that will focus specifically on the disposition of religious lands. We can design a process leading to a result that is a realistic disposition of the property, but also an appropriate measurable expression of faith.

Some church activists in Iowa did a survey and found that institutional churches own 200,000 acres of working farmland in Iowa. That's not counting all the other kinds of properties that they own. That's just working farmland in production today. Virtually none of them have any appropriate policies for land stewardship and disposition.

Churches treat property — whether they've held it a long time or it comes because some parishioner dies — as just another capital asset, as a cash equivalent. There is a real need for the church to develop a theological understanding and practical policy for how they are going to deal with land that is under their stewardship.

We're in the process now of looking

for a graduate student to work with us in designing a simple curriculum segment that could be introduced into environmental education and social studies curriculae to talk about what property ownership means to individuals and how it affects communities. There must be 10,000 environmental education programs in this country and not a single one talks about the nature of property.

Patterns of ownership

What are the patterns of ownership? We don't have good data in this society, but there are interesting examples of grass roots initiatives. The Appalachian Landownership Study trained a veritable army of volunteers and sent them into 70 counties in seven states. They documented the fact that across the southern Appalachian coalfields, the prevalence of absentee ownership averages 75 percent. And then they looked at tax assessments, which were highly skewed because of the political influence that goes with that kind of a maldistribution of ownership. At this point, the coal companies are turning land over to lumbering companies to clear cut. But there are community groups trying desperately to buy and preserve the forests.

The Woodland Community Land Trust built housing units in east Tennessee. They are attempting to purchase neighboring forest and we're trying to connect them with conservation groups and schools that can train residents in forest management.

A church role

Churches can play a key role in financing these initiatives. They can devise stewardship policies for the land they own now and the land they will inherit. They can also revive the biblical teachings that stress grace over merit in economic dealings. They can help us proclaim that jubilee economics are "alternative" no longer. **TW**

An acceptable year of the Lord

by Bill Wylie-Kellermann

On the day of atonement—you shall have the trumpet sounded throughout all your land. And you shall hallow the fiftieth year and you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you: you shall return, every one of you, to your property and every one of you to your family (Lev. 25:9-10).

These are becoming familiar words. Occasionally they resound like a trumpet, but mostly the jubilee notions have been creeping steadily and quietly into conversation, even in popular church parlance.

One reason, apart from the raw urgency of the times, that makes it appropriate, is the series of momentous anniversaries prompting reflection and reconsideration. Personally, I was drawn into serious consideration of this biblical theme in connection with the Columbus Quincentenary in 1992, thinking of the 500-year occupation of the continent. Much that follows, arose for me in connection with a grassroots process of theological reflection which issued in a document, "From Kairos to Jubilee."

In the last couple years we have also passed through 50-year anniversaries of significant postwar military and economic arrangements. So, for example, the Jubilee Plowshares marked the fiftieth of the Hiroshima bombing with a dismantling action against a fast attack nuclear submarine at Newport News; they are currently in jail. And the "Fifty Years is

Enough!" campaign seeks to dismantle, for the sake of justice, the global economic structures, namely the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, concocted by the powers at Bretton Woods in 1944. These are instances where the jubilee program of periodic deconstruction is entirely appropriate.

Now comes the millennium. Mainline churches eager to avoid the apocalyptic millenarianism of the right-wing sects, are gravitating toward jubilee images on which to hang evangelism and celebration. Needless to say, since the jubilee legislation is so radical in both its critique and its remedies, this represents an opportunity for teaching and transformation.

It also abounds with danger. It's easy to imagine the appropriation of jubilee language by the churches played out as a domestication. Jubilee's fundamental economics can be washed out and its terms eviscerated, reduced to little more than "celebration" or a "big anniversary."

To seize the opportunity in church and society requires both a rigorous biblical literacy and concrete practical improvisations with actual economic development in the jubilee line.

Biblically, the jubilee legislation of Leviticus 25 was drafted toward the end of exile in Babylon. It envisioned the new order which was possible in the rebuilding and restoration, in the return to the land. Its provisions drew upon more ancient prescriptions for the Sabbatical year. They were adapted and consolidated from

the exodus tradition (Exodus 16), from the covenantal code of the tribal confederacy (Ex. 21:2-6; 23:9-11), and from the deuteronomic reform movement which flourished under the monarchy (Deut. 15:1-18).

Together, the cycle of sabbatical and jubilee years included such provisions as allowing the land to lie fallow (that the earth may "rest" and "so the poor may eat"), the cancellation of debts, the freeing of slaves and the redistribution of lands and houses, restoring them to families by whom they'd been lost or sold in the interim.

The voice of Isaiah, prophet of reconstruction and return, heralds the acceptable year in jubilee images (61:1-4). Jesus, says Luke, makes Isaiah his inaugural text and infuses the realm of God with the spirit of the jubilee.

Ched Myers observes that the rampant scholarly consensus is that the jubilee was mostly a nice idea never really enacted. He suggested this is a more insidious domestication, a sophisticated evisceration. But if it was never enacted, he asks, then why is it so fundamental, so retold and reiterated, so represented across

such a variety of the traditions?

Why should Jesus fuse it into his proclamation of the reign of God? At the very least we ought to receive it, perhaps not as programmatic legal-

ism but as provocative spark to the imagination. We look to the jubilee and sabbatical traditions for hints, clues and root assumptions.

Root assumption: the earth is the Lord's, an economy of grace and sufficiency. "The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with me"

Mainline churches eager to avoid the apocalyptic millenarianism of the right-wing sects, are gravitating toward jubilee images.

Bill Wylie-Kellermann is author of *Seasons of Faith and Conscience*, (Orbis, 1991). Artist Judith Harkin lives in Eugene, Ore.

(Lev. 25:23). Economically, there is no

Root assumption: the earth shall

Left \adj.: the
side of the body
in which the
heart is mostly
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— Webster's Collegiate



The Witness
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in the church!

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earth is up against its limits. Earth may
indeed, let us be warned, take its rest in
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the honest delights of limits, of rest and
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Judith Harkin

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In the most ancient version of the
sabbatical prescriptions, the fallow year
was so that the poor might eat of field and
figtree and vine (Ex.23:10-11). In the rest
of earth was the fruit of justice. Such
fundamental connections must be under-
stood. Justice to earth and justice toward
one another go hand in hand. Jesus once
provoked a confrontation with the au-
thorities in precisely this regard. In pub-
licly plucking the grain with his disciples,
he wasn't violating the sabbath in the
least. He was renewing and enacting it,
that it might serve both creation and hu-
man life.

**Realism about the fall: debt is sla-
very.** The form of slavery these regula-
tions envision, be it among Hebrews or
foreigners, is indentured servitude —

An acceptable year of the Lord

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Enough!" campaign for the sake of justice, economic structures, nations and the International Conciliation by the power in 1944. These are a jubilee program of protest is entirely appropriate.

Now comes the millennium churches eager to avoid millenarianism of the are gravitating toward which to hang evangelism. Needless to say, legislation is so radical and its remedies, this opportunity for teaching.

It also abounds with to imagine the appropriate language by the church domestication. Jubilee economics can be terms eviscerated, rather than "celebration" or a "big anniversary."

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the exodus tradition (Exodus 16), from the covenantal code of the tribal confederation.

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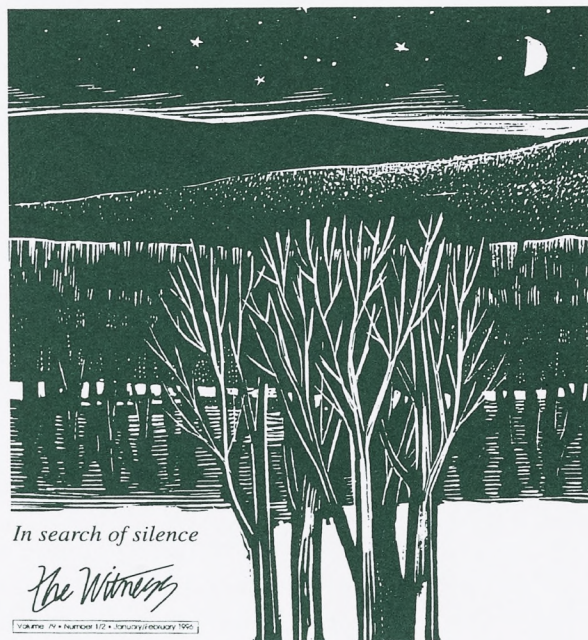
Bill Wylie-Kellermann is author of *Seasons of Faith and Conscience*, (Orbis, 1991). Artist **Judith Harkin** lives in Eugene, Ore.

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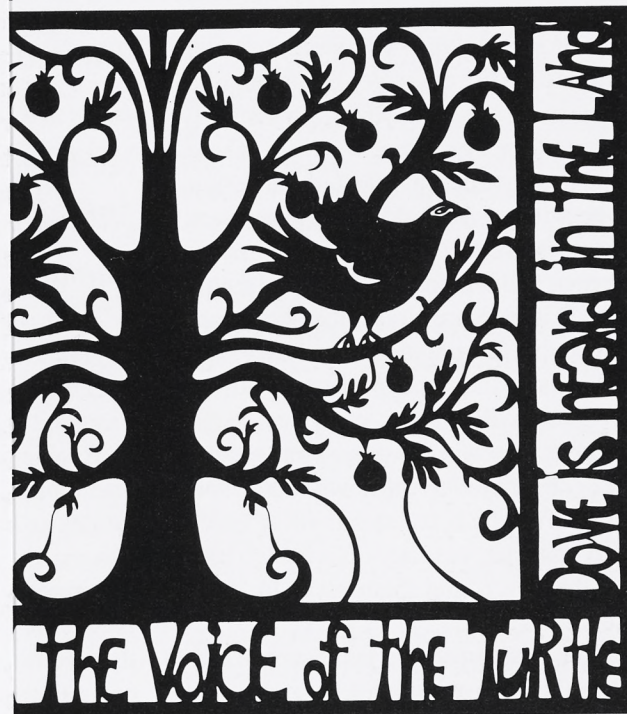
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our desolation. Or perhaps we will learn
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The Witness is committed to pushing boundaries. Our goal is to track the ways that people have found to live faithfully and maintain their humanity in a national climate that is often death-dealing. We will err, always, on the side of inclusion, but we regularly bring our views into tension with orthodox Christianity and Scripture. We consider ourselves to be alert to the Spirit, open-minded in the practice of our faith, and eager for a renewal of the church that is feminist and richly rooted in many cultures.

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In the most ancient version of the sabbatical prescriptions, the fallow year was so that the poor might eat of field and figtree and vine (Ex.23:10-11). In the rest of earth was the fruit of justice. Such fundamental connections must be understood. Justice to earth and justice toward one another go hand in hand. Jesus once provoked a confrontation with the authorities in precisely this regard. In publicly plucking the grain with his disciples, he wasn't violating the sabbath in the least. He was renewing and enacting it, that it might serve both creation and human life.

Realism about the fall: debt is slavery. The form of slavery these regulations envision, be it among Hebrews or foreigners, is indentured servitude —

An acceptable year of the Lord

by Bill Wylie-Kellermann

On the day of atonement — you shall have the trumpet sounded throughout all your land. And you shall hallow the fiftieth year and you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you: you shall return, every one of you, to your property and every one of you to your family (Lev. 25:9-10).

These are becoming familiar words. Occasionally they resound like a trumpet, but mostly the jubilee notions have been creeping steadily and quietly into conversation, even in popular church parlance.

One reason, apart from the raw urgency of the times, that makes it appropriate, is the series of momentous anniversaries prompting reflection and reconsideration. Personally, I was drawn into serious consideration of this biblical theme in connection with the Columbus Quincentenary in 1992, thinking of the 500-year occupation of the continent. Much that follows, arose for me in connection with a grassroots process of theological reflection which issued in a document, "From Kairos to Jubilee."

In the last couple years we have also passed through 50-year anniversaries of significant postwar military and economic arrangements. So, for example, the Jubilee Plowshares marked the fiftieth of the Hiroshima bombing with a dismantling action against a fast attack nuclear submarine at Newport News; they are currently in jail. And the "Fifty Years is

Bill Wylie-Kellermann is author of *Seasons of Faith and Conscience*, (Orbis, 1991). Artist **Judith Harkin** lives in Eugene, Ore.

Enough!" enough for the sake of economic structure and the International Year of the Concated in 1944. The jubilee program is entirely

Now common churches everywhere millenarian are gravitating which to have. Need legislation and its removal opportunity for

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(Lev. 25:23). Economically, there is no structural assumption more radical in all of scripture. No idea more at odds with our own cultural presumptions. The earth is a sacred gift. One cannot finally possess it. We think of the utter amazement attributed to Chief Sealth: "How can you buy or sell the sky, the warmth of the land? This idea is strange to us. If we do not own the freshness of the air and the sparkle of the water, how can you buy them?"

Of course, the grace of God's ownership is not some synonym, a divine stand-in, for state ownership. Here is the commonwealth of creation — the gift at the heart of things. Jubilee measures assumed that one was not buying the land itself, but a portion of access (Lev. 25:13-17).

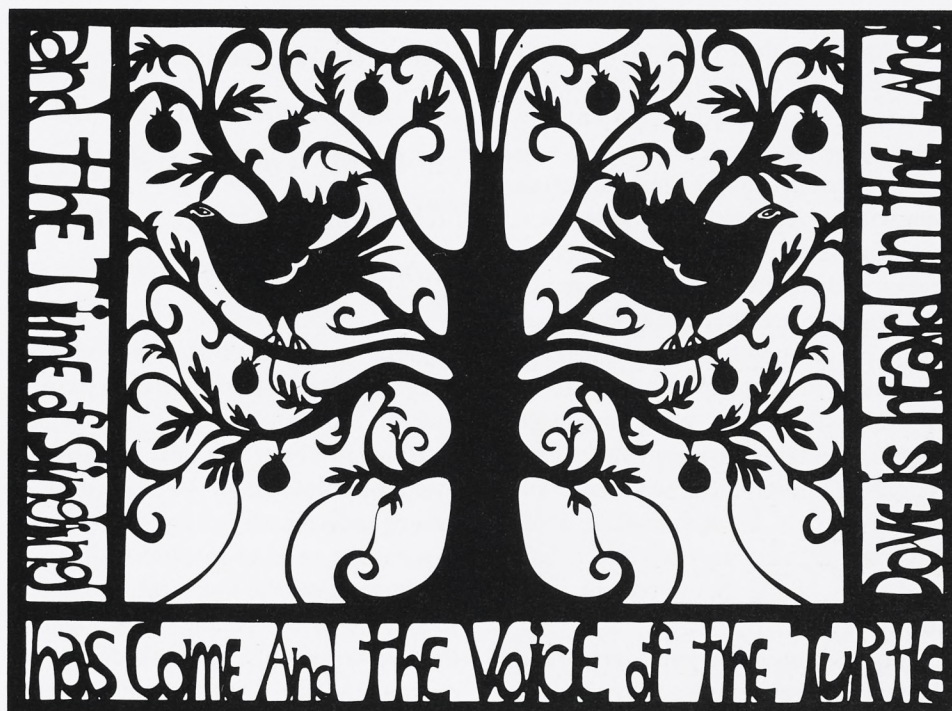
The jubilee spirit can now be seen afoot in the growing land trust movement which holds land in common trust, removing it from the speculation of the market, but guaranteeing access in lifetime inheritable rights. Or it may be recognized in the host of CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) farms now dotting the planet. These are realities. They are being lived and enacted.

A realism about the fall: capital consolidates. The jubilee regulations are anything but naive. They foresee that capital consolidates with capital. Land is added to land and houses to houses. They recognize the perpetual need to renew the equality of access. They provide inventive mechanisms which restore lands to families driven off by debt.

Look around. Here's a theological affirmation easily demonstrated — whole continents have been consolidated and usurped and people have been ripped from homelands. Simply notice the huge transfers of capital from south to north, of houses added to houses and lands to lands. If we call this a jubilee time, it's because we are as realistic as the jubilee code itself.

Root assumption: the earth shall rest. In a creation-based rhythm, the land too must enjoy a sabbath rest — the seventh year fallow time (Lev. 25:1-7). This takes a measure of faith in God, of trust in earth. We are, perhaps, to con-

to the rhythms and so more and more the earth is up against its limits. Earth may indeed, let us be warned, take its rest in our desolation. Or perhaps we will learn the honest delights of limits, of rest and re-creation.



The time of singing

Judith Harkin

sider the birds of the air, who neither sow nor reap, but for whom God provides. This is the spirituality which Arthur Waskow, a founder of New Jewish Agenda, proclaims as the basis of personal, social, and ecological renewal [TW 1/96].

Moreover, the earth has its limits of exploitation and use. Indeed there are stern warnings that the land, denied its rightful sabbaths, will enjoy those sabbaths in a judgement of human desolation. In this view, the Babylonian exile is itself a consequence of dishonored sabbaths and its duration is measured by their number (Lev. 26:34; 2 Chron. 36:21-22).

The earth is in fact dishonored. Human beings are out of synch or indifferent

In the most ancient version of the sabbatical prescriptions, the fallow year was so that the poor might eat of field and figtree and vine (Ex.23:10-11). In the rest of earth was the fruit of justice. Such fundamental connections must be understood. Justice to earth and justice toward one another go hand in hand. Jesus once provoked a confrontation with the authorities in precisely this regard. In publicly plucking the grain with his disciples, he wasn't violating the sabbath in the least. He was renewing and enacting it, that it might serve both creation and human life.

Realism about the fall: debt is slavery. The form of slavery these regulations envision, be it among Hebrews or foreigners, is indentured servitude —

people selling themselves or their families into slavery simply to live. It is the bondage of indebtedness.

It takes little imagination to recall the massive third world debt by which whole nations have come into bondage. Austerity measures and structural adjustments are enforced by the IMF or others which squeeze the life out of people. In our own country we see cities which are similarly jammed, their mortgages held elsewhere. And in a certain sense the federal deficit, even without a World Bank agreement, enforces its own structural adjustment on women and children and welfare recipients. Prisoners are hired out at slave wage to the big corporations, and workfare schemes do the same for the poor still on the streets. But oddly, even among the affluent, a certain "enslavement" may be recognized among those who have sold themselves onto the treadmill of credit card bondage, virtually oblivious to having thereby bound themselves in servitude to a system.

Root assumption: you were freed. The sabbatical and jubilee provisions are predicated on the exodus. "Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God redeemed you" (Deut. 15:15; cf. Ex. 23:9, Lev. 25:42).

The "release" from bondage is envisioned as a permanent and ongoing feature of the new order, whether among the tribal confederation of Canaan, under the established monarchy, or coming home from exile. Within the structured rhythm of life, slaves are "released" (Deut. 15:12-18, Ex. 21:2-6) and debts forgiven (Deut. 15:1-7).

In Matthew, Jesus tells the parable (18:21-35) of the unforgiving servant who, unable to meet a large debt, cries out to the king for mercy. The king in compassion releases the debt, but then the servant turns around and squeezes a compatriot who cries for mercy using exactly the same words, now without effect. When

the king hears the second servant has been thrown in debtors' prison he is infuriated. The original debt is called back and the first servant is thrown in prison as well. The free grace offered the one who had been forgiven and freed (in the spirit

There are stern warnings that the land, denied its rightful sabbaths, will enjoy those sabbaths in a judgement of human desolation.

of jubilee and God's realm) is to be taken in earnest. It is nothing less than the new basis and new pattern of our life together.

Realism about the fall: institutions and loopholes. There is a keen spirit of jubilee and sabbath, but legislative codes assume the need to institutionalize and structure it into the liturgical, economic, social life of the people. This suggests that we not simply acknowledge or acclaim the spirit — our work of construction and rebuilding must embody new assumptions in our own institutions (religious ones come to mind).

Even so, the provisions foresee their own circumvention. The lender will see the year of release on the horizon and become tightfisted (Deut. 15:9). The spirit must be urged again (15:10-11). Or the slave will be released, but without resources, and fall immediately back into debt bondage. A further provision is invented: those released must be given a "stake" — animals, grain, and wine — to begin anew (Deut. 15:12-18). In our own history, one large experiment of this sort was the promise of 40 acres and a mule in the Reconstruction. African Americans, ostensibly freed, fell back into the bondage of economic slavery in the plantation system because this visionary promise of jubilee proportion was subverted. Re-

construction failed, the promise of land and resources unfulfilled. Imagine how radically different our history might be had it been kept.

The questions remain now in the present tense. What kind of stakes can be offered today through economic development loan funds, or assorted equity trusts? How could the capital of church pension funds be mobilized to give the poor a stake? Here is another place for the graces of economic imagination.

Root assumption and confession: Jesus is herald of the jubilee. In the fullness of his own time, Jesus proclaims the reign and realm of God — shot through with the jubilee spirit. Its signs are the forgiveness of debt, release from captivity, from the strictures of the purity code, from blindness of all varieties, from sin itself. He practiced release from bondage to death itself.

Then as now, of course, grace is a summons and choice. We had best recall Jesus' rejection at the inaugural proclamation in Nazareth, acted out finally in the crucifixion. That, of course, is realism in the knowledge that certain assumptions we confess are at utter odds with the presumptions of our culture. Nevertheless, and even moreso, let us be realistic about the abundant power of grace, the economy of sufficiency and imagination, whose name is realm of God, whose emblem is resurrection. **RAY**

Lenten program offer!

During the last five months, *The Witness* has examined our economic crisis, the consequent rise of the Christian Right and steps that people of faith are taking to nurture themselves and the wider community. Singly or in combination these issues provide excellent material for study and discussion. Call Karen Bota, who can design a study guide series to suit your parish's needs at 313-962-2650 on Tuesdays or Fridays.

Robin Hood index

Large economic disparities within a society are harmful to overall public health, according to a recent study by Harvard public health professor Ichiro Kawachi, Bruce P. Kennedy and Deborah Prothrow-Stith. The study, dubbed the "Robin Hood index," suggests that 1) societies that permit large differentials in income also under-invest in health initiatives; 2) such societies have little social cohesion, resulting in minimal health benefits for the have-nots; and 3) large income disparities contribute to higher levels of frustration and stress, resulting in poorer health.

"America is at the top of the United Nations as the country with the greatest disparities between the rich and the poor," Ichiro Kawachi told Harriet A. Washington of *Emerge* magazine (11/96), adding that even "if our income gap narrowed to the point of Great Britain's during the 1980s, we would reduce our national mortality rate by 7 percent."

Dismantling patriarchy

A new consciousness among women will help dismantle patriarchy in church structures and shape new forms of church for the next century, said Theresa Kane, RSM, in her workshop "A New Millennium: Women Breaking Through a Patriarchal Church," at the Call to Action National Conference Nov. 15-17 in Detroit. First, women must "be" and act with a more assertive mindset, Kane said. Conditioning starts early, and for women this often means a focus on the relational aspects of their world and a repression of their own identities. Women must develop their own gifts and use them in a public and visible way, as men are taught to do. Second, women must join — or create — and promote new systems, forms and structures which meet their needs. From designing and participating in feminist liturgies to bringing into being new groups and communities, women must assume public leadership roles and be visible in proclaiming what they believe. Finally, women must name gender discrimination and proclaim it as an expression of idolatry.

The patriarchal church system holds up ordained men as the golden calf was held up as the image of God to be worshipped. By women's silent participation in this system, Kane said, they are promoting and perpetuating institutionalized inequality. Women must name and confront discrimination in a spirit of respect, friendship and mutuality. They also need to know when to confront and when to retreat. Just anger creates a just society, Kane said, not hatred and revenge.

— Karen Bota

Hunger and debt

The chronic hunger of 800 million of the earth's people, in a world which produces adequate food for everyone on the planet, is tied to third-world debt, according to Martin McLaughlin of the Center of Concern. "Many food-deficit developing countries must export much of the food they grow, to service debts they owe to creditors in the industrialized world," McLaughlin writes. "This debt has more than quadrupled since 1974, to a total of \$2.068 trillion in 1996."

Immigration issues

Twelve essays discussing immigration as a civil rights concern are featured in a special issue of *Social Justice: A Journal of Crime, Conflict and World Order*. Contributors include Sara Diamond ("Right Wing Politics and the Anti-Immigration Cause"), Nestor Rodriguez ("The Battle for the Border: Notes on Autonomous Migration, Transnational Communities and the State") and Linda Miller Matthei ("Gender & International Labor Migration: A Networks Approach"). Send \$14 to *Social Justice*, P.O. Box 40601, San Francisco, CA 94140.

Slowing down

"Eknath Easwaren considers slowing down to be one of the cornerstones of a spiritual life. Why? A clue lies in the Chinese ideograph for 'busy,' combined from two other ideographs: 'heart' and

'killing.' When we become too busy, we lose touch with our hearts, with our bodies, with the present moment."

— Melissa West, "Mothering as a Spiritual Path," *SageWoman* #36

Magda Trocmé dies

Magda Trocmé, who worked with her pastor husband Andre Trocmé to hide and shelter some 5,000 Jews in the village of Le Chambon, France during World War II [see *TW*, 4/96], died October 10, 1996 in Paris at the age of 95.

— *Reconciliation International*, 10/96

Navajo justice

"The Navajo form of banishment is what we call killing with eyes. If a person perpetrated wrong in a community, everybody would watch everything he did. While he slept, there was somebody there to watch him. At some point, the person would say, 'Why is everybody watching me?' They'd say, 'Let's talk about it. Do you understand what happened? You finally realize that we are trying to allow you to recognize that there is a problem. We see the problem. Let's talk about it, let's get rid of that problem. Let's kill that monster and allow you to continue to live within our society.' The whole objective is to allow people to stay within the community by using banishment through eye contact."

— Philmer Bluehouse, in *People of the Seventh Fire* by Dagmar Thorpe, \$14, Akwe:kon Press, phone 607-255-4308, fax 607-255-0185.

Short takes

Forgiving third world debt

by Marie Dennis

The global economy is not structured "as is" inevitably, nor is it divinely ordained. Perhaps the most important gift of working seriously and concretely toward jubilee is the way in which this work encourages and strengthens us to reject the myth of its immutability. On a recent journey through Mexico and Brazil I witnessed community after community devastated by economic hardship. Thousands of small businesses have closed in Mexico; villages have been abandoned by every person free to seek work along or across the U.S. border; in both countries the cost of living has skyrocketed while wages remain very low and unemployment very high. At the same time I saw tremendous hope — people struggling to survive and to create alternative forms of economic life.

Brazilian economist Marcos Arruda strongly encouraged us to keep on with our work for the jubilee, saying this system is unsustainable; our collective efforts should offer alternatives, and we should press the system toward jubilee.

My work in this area began when Maryknoll missionaries around the world voiced their growing concerns about the negative impact of global economic forces on their communities, especially in Latin America, Africa and the Philippines.

A few years ago, during the fiftieth anniversary of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), we joined a broad effort initiated largely in the impoverished southern hemisphere to demand reform of these institutions. Because our religious traditions have had much to say about economic justice and jubilee, it seemed important to create a

forum for religious organizations and institutions to work together in formulating concrete strategies for education and advocacy toward change.



Helen Siegel

In 1994 the Religious Working Group on the World Bank and IMF was formed. From the beginning, the focus of the Religious Working Group was on the need for debt relief for poor countries and for radical change in the structural adjustment programs of the World Bank and IMF.

Some important statistics

Seventy percent of world trade is controlled by 500 corporations. One percent of multinationals own half the stock of direct foreign investment.

There were 18.2 million refugees in 1992.

Between 1980 and 1993, Fortune 500 corps eliminated nearly 4.4 million jobs. During that same period their sales increased 1.4 times and assets 2.3 times. Average CEO compensation increased by 6.1 percent to \$3.8 million.

The world's 500 largest industrial corporations employ .05 percent of world's population, but control 25 percent of the world's economic output.

— *courtesy of Grace Boggs*

When we are asked why we are concerned with the third world debt, we respond with information that is by now familiar to many: Northern banks, bloated with petro-dollars after the oil crisis in the early 1970s, pressed Southern countries to accept loans; many of those loans were immoral or unwise in the first place — at times made to corrupt and unrepresentative governments that never used the money to benefit their people; rapidly rising interest rates and failed development projects exacerbated the indebtedness; even payments on the debt were insufficient to prevent debt burdens from mushrooming.

The story continues. In the early 1980s, after Mexico threatened to default on its debt and trigger an international financial crisis, the commercial banks quickly protected themselves, reaped tax benefits from claimed losses and sold off as much debt as possible at discounted prices on the secondary market. But the debt remained on the books. Meanwhile, other debt mounted as well. Much of the overseas development aid from wealthy countries to poor was in the form of loans — and projects funded by the international financial institutions (the IMF and World Bank and regional development banks) were always supported by loans.

Furthermore, *more* loans were needed by poor countries in order to make payments on their debt and keep their economies going. Soon the crisis came to a head. Country after country was wrapped in a straightjacket of debt. Enter the creditors, led by the IMF. "We will open doors for you to new loans," they said, "but first you must let us help you restructure your economy." Step by step, the economies of debtor countries were reworked. The steps were standard: Downsize government (usually social programs, education and health care were the first to go, although the long-term problems with that choice have become increasingly evi-

Marie Dennis works for the Maryknoll justice and peace office.

dent); tighten credit; open markets to foreign competition; privatize; produce for export rather than local consumption, and more. Rarely were citizens consulted, though they were the first to feel the devastating effects.

The IMF would say that they were promoting responsible financial management, and that is a real need, but inherent in the reforms were a set of assumptions that the only direction in which a country can go is toward free market capitalism. As economies began to adjust, inflation would come down, which was good, but the human and environmental costs were terrible; and as growth began to occur it benefited the elites and foreign investors, and never reached the majority of the people. Conditions were terrible for the working class — we see it in this country now — temporary jobs with no benefits, labor unions suppressed or controlled, wages kept low, aggressive depletion of environmental resources, agribusiness that depletes the land, etc.

Religious groups all over the world are saying that the debt crisis has to be addressed in a moral way. The debt is providing a handle for the unjust control of poor countries' economies. The debt has long ago been paid. In fact, given the reality of colonial exploitation, many believe that the debt is really owed from north to south.

There are a few glimmers of hope on the horizon. Bilateral and multilateral lenders are finally admitting that the debt burden is a serious problem. The World Bank and IMF recently approved a debt reduction initiative for the most highly indebted poor countries (HIPC's). It is a very small step; whether or not it can make any difference is yet to be determined.

But the real hope for me is in the global South. People there are working for, *clamoring* for, change — and they are surviving in spite of the system. **TW**

Asian and African demands

This list is excerpted from the Center for Society and Religion in Sri Lanka's compensation demands for:

1. Forcible occupation of our lands during several centuries. Such use of force in international relations to subjugate peoples is wrong, not only today (as in the case of Iraq against Kuwait in 1991) but also over the centuries, in this instance since 1492 and 1498 (when Vasco da Gama opened the way for western colonization of Africa and Asia).
2. Take-over and use of our lands for plantations, for timber, for minerals, for settlement of European peoples.
3. Removal of our resources such as gold and silver, diamonds, gems and pearls, copper and tin.
4. Transformation of our economies making land use and production suit the interests of the colonizers and their companies.
5. De-industrialization of our countries, which had been self-reliant.
6. Control over trade, imposing unfair terms on relationships of trade, that continue to the present day and contribute to the growth of our "external debt."
7. Damage to our environment, the destruction of our forests, degradation of our lands and waters.
8. Harm to our peoples by slavery, semi-slave conditions of indentured labor, inhuman treatment of workers in plantations, mines and factories.
9. Contribution our peoples have made to the build-up of the economy and capital of the colonizing countries and their companies through all the above factors.
10. The degradation of our women and men due to the despising of our human-

ity, our cultures and our languages.

11. Despising our religions and destroying the places of worship and libraries, and sometimes the forcibly imposing their religions on our peoples.
12. Removal of our artistic and cultural treasures.
13. Persons from our countries who served in colonial wars.
14. Children born of soldiers during the wars and around bases as in the Philippines.
15. Damage caused by colonial wars; in more recent times to the Vietnamese — for more bombs dropped on them than during World War II.
16. Displaced populations, refugees.

The compensation can be in the form of:

1. Return of our art treasures.
2. Return of the gold and silver taken from our countries.
3. Cancellation of our debts.
4. Return of our land to us.
5. Rewriting history to be more holistic and true. Rewriting the economic history of international relationships taking these factors into account.
6. Rethinking our religious and theological perspectives to be respectful to all humanity.
7. Support for reducing social inequalities and a fair distribution of resources.
8. Support for a fair distribution of land among peoples of the world.
9. Withdrawal of undue pressures from the World Bank, IMF and GATT.
10. Change of trade relations and "foreign aid" into something more equitable and less damaging to our trade balances.

The new global economy

Like it or not, we all are active participants in the global economy. Take a look in your cupboard or at the label in your clothing. A very few of us reap huge profits. Some of us reap greater choice of goods and services. The vast majority of us, however, give more than we receive. Even in the U.S., at least 50 percent of the population has seen resources decline during the last 15 years. And if you factor in environmental quality, we have all experienced a deterioration. Just how resources are transferred is one of the discoveries of the workshop *The New Global Economy, A View from the Bottom Up*. Who pays and who benefits are the age-old dilemmas. Where does one stand, individually and collectively? What are the options?

The New Global Economy gives participants opportunity to wrestle first-hand

with an announced plant closing, an anti-immigration proposal and an environmental hazard. Scenarios are put in the context of the increased power of transnational corporations, the burden of debt on nations, and the drive for free trade.

The global economy is perhaps most frequently described in terms such as inevitable, beyond everyday understanding, complex, and as having a life of its own. Those of us not carrying the title of economist, banker, corporate executive or high-level government official frequently are intimidated by those terms.

Developed by the Resource Center of the Americas in Minneapolis, *The New Global Economy* is one of the most exciting educational tools around. Many participants describe themselves at the beginning of the workshop as either very

tiny, overwhelmed by or ill-informed about the global economy. At the end of the exercise, there is energy from the insight, information and active participation. Once someone is informed, there is the potential to challenge the system with confidence, to question the prevailing economic dogmas, and to change. The change may be institutional or individual, monumental or minuscule, but it is only with change that there will be truly a new global economy.

To arrange for Groundwork to facilitate *The New Global Economy* for your parish or group, call 313-822-2055. Or you can order the materials from Resource Center of the Americas, 317 17th Ave SE, Minneapolis, MN 55414; 612-627-9445, fax: 612-627-9450.

—Margaret Weber serves on the staff of Groundwork for a Just World, a Michigan-based justice and peace organization.

Some jubilee resources

- * A web site! <http://www.lights.com/jubilee>.
- * Arthur Waskow on Internet: Awaskow@aol.com.
- * Equity Trust, Inc., Church Mathei, RFD 1, Box 430, Voluntown, CT 06384; 860-376-6174.
- * Share the Wealth/Movement for a New Economy, 37 Temple Pl., 3rd floor, Boston MA 02111; 617-423-2148.
- * Institute for Sustainable Development, available on the Internet, search for sustainable.
- * Community Sustained Agriculture, Bio-dynamic Farming and Gardening Assoc., P.O. Box 550, Kimberton, PA 19442; 800-516-7797.
- * Religious Working Group, c/o Maryknoll Justice and Peace Office, PO Box 29132, Washington D.C.

20017; 202-832-1780.

- * Fifty Years is Enough Campaign, 1025 Vermont Ave NW, Washington DC 20005; 202-879-3187.
- * Oxfam International, 1511 K St NW, Rm 1044, Washington DC 20005; 202-393-5333.
- * Bread for the World, 1100 Wayne Ave., Rm 1000, Silver Spring MD 20910; 301-608-2400.
- * Jubilee 2000, P.O. Box 100, London SE1 7RT, United Kingdom; 0171 620 4444 x 2169; j2000@gn.apc.org.

Articles available from Kairos/USA:

- "The Jubilee: An Announcement of Imagination in Times of Marginalization," presented by Israel Batista.
- "From Kairos to Jubilee," by Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer.
- "An Ecumenical Jubilee: What It Might Mean for the Churches," by Konrad Raiser, General Secretary of the WCC.

"On the Way: From Kairos to Jubilee," a U.S. Kairos Document.

"Maka Ainana — The Eyes of the Land," by Kaleo Patterson.

Contact Kairos USA, Joan Elbert, 5757 N. Sheridan Rd., #16A, Chicago IL 60660; 773-275-5410.

Books:

Whole Life Economics, by Barbara Brandt, New Society Pub., 1995.

Fifty Years Is Enough, ed. Kevin Danaher, South End Press, 1994.

When Corporations Rule the World, by David Korten, Kumarian Press and Berrett-Koehler, (155 Montgomery St., San Francisco, CA 94104), 1995. Korten proposes elimination of corporate tax breaks, enforcement of anti-trust laws, reforming corporate charters, stripping corporations of their "human" rights.

Advocating for a living wage

by Karen D. Bota

Churches and synagogues are on the front line doing all the crisis work — we're providing the soup kitchens, we're providing the shelters," said Kimberley Bobo, executive director of the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice. "My church runs a soup kitchen 365 days a year for 200 people, and half the people who come work either part- or full-time, and yet they don't earn enough to be able to even feed their families. They've got to get jobs that pay living wages and have benefits."

The National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice was formed just a year ago in response to a need to mobilize the U.S. religious community on the rights of workers to organize to improve their wages, benefits and working conditions. "It became increasingly clear that there was a real interest in the religious community, partly because I kept getting calls from people around the country saying, 'How could we do a similar organization in this area?'" said Bobo, who founded and built a local Interfaith Committee in Chicago over the past five years.

Obviously she was right. The committee's mailing list today includes 5,000 people of faith — Christians, Jews and Muslims. "We've done no direct mail," Bobo said, "and that's in less than nine months."

Karen D. Bota is a freelance writer in Bloomfield Hills, Mich. and promotion manager for *The Witness*.

The committee was just an idea in Bobo's head last December. At the same time, the new leaders of the AFL-CIO showed a recommitment to organizing and coalition building. Bobo saw a need for a structured way for the religious community to be involved in working on labor issues. In addition, continued deterioration of wages and benefits, particu-



Clergy join poultry workers burning lists of Case Farm's "broken promises" on August 17, 1996 in Morgantown, N.C.

larly for low-wage workers, made it clear to Bobo that the time was right for the creation of a national organization for people of faith seeking justice for workers. The organization incorporated on February 14, 1996, had its first board meeting at the end of March, received 501(c)(3) status in May, made a public announcement of its establishment September 9, and mailed its first newsletter, *Faith Works*, in October.

"If you get out and talk to low-wage workers, the number one reason people want to organize a union is that they want to be treated with respect," Bobo said. "People tell stories of not being able to go to the bathroom when they want to, or being screamed and cursed at regularly, or being sexually harassed, or of workers being treated like they have no brains." At union rallies respect is a common demand, according to Bobo. "Many workers view having a union as at least one way to force the company to respect them."

An impressive 13-page document lists in detail the organization's workplan. Program priorities include supporting and organizing local interfaith committees; assisting with field placements for seminarians, novices and rabbinical students; and developing congregational resources on worker issues. A six-session study guide for congregations was published last spring, and last fall's newsletter included Thanksgiving service bulletin inserts. Plans are underway for issuing a Labor Day statement and bulletin inserts for Labor Day 1997.

An important committee focus is the Poultry Workers Justice Project. At a press conference in Washington, DC, just before Thanksgiving, the committee called on the U. S. Department of Labor to set up a special investigative task force to look into the poultry industry and its abuse of workers. "They announced that, in response to us, they are setting up such a task force," Bobo said. "It's a major victory which we're very grateful for." The press conference was a long-time dream for Jim Lewis, an Episcopal priest who has worked with poultry workers for nine years, and who is a board member of the committee.

"We've adopted as our slogan that the religious community says more grace over chicken than it says over anything," Lewis explained. "We give thanks to God, we give thanks for the hands of the person in the kitchen who cooked it. But we frequently don't think of the hands that have to deal with it both on the farm and in the process plant."

More than 200,000 workers are engaged in poultry processing in mostly small towns from Delaware to Texas. These low-wage workers, primarily African American and Latino, often toil in unsafe and unsanitary conditions with few benefits and no union representation.

The committee is organizing local interfaith committees in poultry communities, organizing fact-finding delegations of religious leaders to meet with workers and management in poultry plants, and developing ethical standards for employee relations in poultry plants. The committee is working closely with a multi-union organizing effort to assure that poultry workers are allowed the right to organize and bargain collectively.

For Lewis, another important part of the poultry project is getting Episcopalians to acknowledge the right of workers to form unions and do collective bargaining. "The right of workers to organize themselves seems to be way out of the range of most Episcopalians," Lewis said. "We're much more a management church. The challenge is getting folks to see the connection with labor."

In Sussex County, Delaware, where Lewis works, the economic base is poultry. Lewis takes small groups of Episcopalians there to do Bible study with people who are working and living at risk.

One group met with strike leaders and workers in a local poultry plant. "It was eye-opening to these people," Lewis said, "doing that in the context of Scripture: Where do we discern God's movement in this, particularly for our church?"

He has done similar small group Bible study, taking groups to meet with other persons living at some kind of risk in the county, such as prisoners, gay people and farmers.

"It changes the way folks think and feel," he said. "They've never sat down with someone who has been threatened that they'd lose their job or did lose their job for organizing, or a farmer who will lose his contract if he speaks up. That kind of fear and intimidation — they've yet to confront that."

An additional focus of the committee plans is the Religious Employers Project.

"This area is clearly going to be huge for us — the whole area of religious employers, both hospitals and nursing homes," said Bobo. "Unfortunately, these institutions are as viciously anti-union as their for-profit counterparts. It's an awful situation, and we've got to figure out some way to prevent religious institutions from spending hundreds of thousands of dollars trying to buck the unions, and unions spending equal amounts of money going after religious institutions, because it doesn't help either institution and it certainly doesn't help low-wage workers."

Despite the litany of abuses cited for low-wage workers, the committee is not anti-business. The organization is exploring ways to recognize good employers, and to work with others to help them become more ethical and avoid unnecessary conflicts with workers.

Neither is the organization uncritically pro-union. The organization does not believe that everything unions do is correct or worthy of support, Bobo says.

One of the challenges in working with unions leaders and religious leaders is that many of them don't know one another at all, said Bobo.

"There's a whole different language the two communities use that sometimes makes it difficult for them to understand

each other. The values are frequently the same but the language and ways things are described are very different."

Another challenge in working with unions is that many of them — because National Labor Relations Board process hampers union elections — have made some tactical decisions to try to move quickly, to send in a whole team of organizers to knock on doors.

"It's referred to in union circles as 'the blitz model' of organizing," Bobo said. "They're going to do it so fast that the company doesn't know what hit them and the company doesn't have time to hire a union-busting law firm to fight it. That whole blitz model has some real advantages and has clearly helped them win some things, but it's a model that flies in direct conflict with trying to build a base of community support which tends to take a longer period of time. It's a challenge: how do we recognize the difficulties created by the National Labor Relations Board and the need to do things quickly and yet, on the other hand, the need to take the time to build community support?"

"One of the exciting things in the union movement right now is the desire and interest in bringing in lots of new, younger organizers," Bobo said. "But a number of the newer, younger people are not personally comfortable with religious stuff. There's a challenge in working with them to understand the values and strengths that the religious community can bring."

"I believe this is a God-given moment," said Lewis. "With a lot of people working, but not getting the right kind of benefits, people are confused, angry and searching. It gives the church an opportunity to work in that confusion." **TV**

For more information on the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice, contact Kim Bobo at 1607 W. Howard, Suite 218, Chicago, IL 60626; 312/381-2832; email: nicwj@ipc.apc.org.

Closing the books on the Cooke embezzlement

The final word on the \$2.2 million embezzled from the Episcopal Church by former treasurer Ellen Cooke is that all but \$100,000 of the stolen money was recovered — but at an expense of \$322,000 in legal, auditing, asset-recovery and other costs, according to a treasurer's report made to the denomination's executive council this past November. The news came as council members voted to accept a \$40.5 million budget for 1997 that contained a \$3.4 million deficit.

The council approved using program cuts and surplus funds identified during a treasurer's office examination of church accounts to cover the shortfall in budget revenues. The 1997 budget is predicated upon a \$1 million increase in receipts from dioceses, despite the fact that diocesan giving has been on the decrease in recent years.

The 1997 budget restored funds to dioceses in Latin America, the Caribbean and the western U.S. as well as to the Episcopal Council on Indian Ministries.

— based on an *Episcopal News Service (ENS)* report

Rwandan bishops replaced

The Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) has formally recognized four dioceses in Rwanda vacant, urging that church leaders "set in motion legal procedures to elect bishops to those four vacant sees." The dioceses' bishops abandoned their jurisdictions following the 1994 genocide.

The ACC is a body of representatives from throughout the Anglican Communion which meets every three years to consider issues before the church. It has no jurisdiction over members of the communion, just as the Archbishop of Canterbury has no jurisdiction outside of England. The council's action in this case is unprecedented, taken in response to a request from church members in the four abandoned Rwandan dioceses who had asked that some authority declare them vacant.

Efforts by the Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, to persuade the four bishops "to return to their dioceses or resign" had been rebuffed because the bishops said they feared reprisals, according to a report by Carey to the ACC's meeting in Panama last October. The council also heard from Carey's special envoy, David Birney, a bishop in the U.S. church who had just completed an extensive visit to Rwanda and to its Anglican churches.

"There is danger of the church being shut down," Birney warned.

ACC delegates from Africa said they did not see how the Anglican church could be an instrument for justice, reconciliation and peace in Rwanda without the active leadership of its bishops.

— based on *ENS* and Anglican Journal reports

Lutherans to study "sufficient, sustainable livelihood for all"

The 11,000 congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) will be studying economic life this year with the aid of a new 117-page document called *Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread: Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood For All*. The document is intended to help Lutherans "apply our faith to our thinking about economic life and to our actions in the world as they concern money," said Ingrid Christiansen of the ELCA's division of Church in Society, which authorized the document's distribution. It defines "sufficiency" as "providing for people's basic physical and emotional needs so they can live in dignity."

— *ENS*

Halt U.S. military aid to Indonesia, NCC demands

Following the announcement that the 1996 Nobel peace prizes would go to two East Timor activists, Roman Catholic Bishop Carlos Belo and José Ramos-Horta, the National Council of Churches has

renewed its call for the U.S. government to halt military aid to Indonesia. Interviews with the two peace prize winners have convinced NCC officials that conditions in East Timor are worsening, according to Larry Tankersely, director of the NCC's Southern Asia office.

An estimated 200,000 citizens of East Timor — a third of the population — lost their lives when Indonesia invaded the former Portuguese colony in 1975. Since then, the Indonesian government has encouraged Indonesians to settle there, "resulting in a gradual, yet alarming marginalization of the indigenous East Timorese by taking away jobs and land," a 1995 NCC board resolution noted.

— based on an *ENS* report

Ordination transcends sex, Presbyterian council rules

Opponents of women's ordination in the Episcopal Church may disagree, but according to the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta an ordained man who becomes a woman through a sex-change operation is still ordained.

The decision came in response to Presbyterian minister Eric Swenson's request for a name change — to Erin — following a sex-change operation last fall. The Georgia body of the Presbyterian Church (USA) was not of one mind about Swenson's status, however — the vote upholding Erin's ordination was 186 to 161. According to Anne Sayre, the presbytery's associate for justice and women, the group decided it had "no grounds either theologically or morally" for revoking the ordination.

Swenson, 49, is the father of two adult daughters.

— based on a report from *Ecumenical News International*



Sexuality in the household of God

by Charles Rice

Ourselves, Our Souls and Bodies: Sexuality and the Household of God. Edited by Charles Hefling. Boston: Cowley, 1996.

We are offering a new course at the seminary in which I teach called "Ministry and Sexuality" because it has become clear to those who teach pastoral theology that reflection on sexual being and practice is essential preparation for ministry. In fact, it is in the context of a class on ministry that questions of sexuality are most fruitfully discussed. Charles Hefling and his colleagues have given us a book which is a major contribution to the ongoing dialogue to which the church's bishops have called us.

Hefling tells us that "the book is intended to be less a manifesto than an *eirenicon*." That attitude gives us a profoundly useful, sometimes inspiring, book. The authors assume that the conversation about human sexuality is important to the church. Though the most interesting thing about us may not be our sexuality, it is, as Susan Harris says, "right up there." These authors assume that we must, somehow, talk about it, if we are to be the church which our baptism implies. Further, the authors of these 17 essays see the discussion of sexuality leading inevitably to speaking of God. In fact, this is a profoundly theological text, a fine example of what Owen Thomas calls "theology done backwards."

The value of this book lies to a large degree in the variety and richness of its material. We have here examples of skilled and focussed exposition of Scripture, pastoral reflection, closely reasoned theology, personal testimony, historical essay, and wonderful writing on

such topics as taboo, usury, politics, and English common law — and questions: Why do some believe homosexuality is wrong? What is sex "good for"? What are we to make of "natural law"?

But this is not a potpourri. The editor and the authors assume that there is an Anglican approach to questions of sexuality. They assume that we are a church, and that the Anglican communion comprises not only gay and lesbian persons but people with a great variety of opinions on questions of sexuality. They also assume that we intend to keep on being one community and that this community is profoundly sacramental in its self-understanding and in its mission.

Marilyn McCord Adams writes: "On balance, I think, the church can best become more articulate about human sexuality if she takes neither rules nor ideals but sacraments as the model. The old Prayer Book catechism defined a sacrament as "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace." More broadly, though, all creatures reflect divine being and goodness; our common call is to express the image of God impressed on us, to be outward and visible signs of divine love in a broken and confused world. From this sacramental perspective, the fruitful questions to ask would be: How can we live as heterosexual and homosexual persons so as to be sacraments of divine love in a broken and confused world?"

Hefling asserts that questions of human sexuality are not abstract, ideological matters; they are questions about our life together and they lead relentlessly to questions about God and the shape of our life together with God. Such assertions are, it would seem, tacitly admitted by those on all sides of specific questions about sexuality and its practice. We must talk about sex because we care about God and about our life together with God in the Church and on mission with Christ in the world.

Independent legal investigation into *Penthouse* allegations launched

Long Island bishop Orris Walker has handed the investigation of allegations that William Lloyd Andries and four other male priests participated in sexual orgies on church property to an independent legal counsel. Walker asked that O'Kelley Whitaker, retired Bishop of Central New York, assist the investigation and that Bishop James Ottley of Panama serve as bishop-in-residence at St. Gabriel's Episcopal Church to counsel distressed parishioners. Andries had been rector at St. Gabriel's, a congregation made up of largely West Indian and Panamanian immigrants, for 17 years.

The allegations were made by two Brazilian men in the December issue of *Penthouse*. They claimed that Andries lured them to this country with a promise of jobs and then recruited them for group sex with other priests on church property. Andries, who denies the orgies but admits sexual involvement with one of the two men, resigned both his priesthood and post at St. Gabriel's following publication of the article.

The only other priest named in the *Penthouse* story, Howard Williams, coordinator for children's ministries at the Episcopal Church's national headquarters, resigned his position as a result of the article. Although the two Brazilians do not claim that Williams was involved in the sexual encounters they allege, Presiding Bishop Edmond L. Browning said he and Williams agreed that the publicity surrounding the *Penthouse* scandal had irrevocably compromised Williams' effectiveness as coordinator.

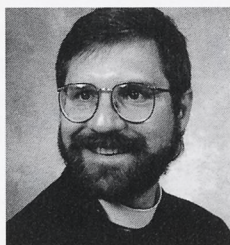
— based on reports from *ENS* and *Episcopal Life*

The Rev. Charles L. Rice is a professor of homiletics in the Theological School of Drew University and interim rector of St. Peter's Church, Morristown, N.J.

New Vital Signs advisory board

We'd like to introduce to our readers the eight men and women we've recently recruited to give us regular input (via a private electronic meeting) about issues and concerns The Witness should be addressing as it covers the Episcopal Church in this Vital Signs section of the magazine. Covering a wide spectrum of geographic location, each is active in areas of Episcopal Church life of special interest to Witness readers.

Ian Douglas has a special interest in both global mission and church history. He is on the faculty at the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Mass., where he directs the Anglican, Global and Ecumenical Studies program. He was a volunteer for mission in Haiti and currently chairs the national church's Standing Commission on World Mission.



Elizabeth Downie, for many years a church musician, is the rector of St. Jude's Episcopal Church in Fenton, Mich., in the new Diocese of Eastern Michigan.

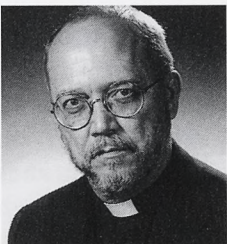


She is strongly interested in liturgical reform, having chaired the national church's Standing Commission on Church Music. She is also a longtime member of the Episcopal Peace Fellowship.

Gayle Harris brings a strong background in urban and interracial ministry. A member of the Episcopal Urban Caucus, she's the rector of Saints Luke and Simon Cyrene in Rochester, N.Y.



Emmett Jarrett has made racial and economic justice a particular focus of study and activism during the past decade. He is past president of the Episcopal Urban Caucus and is now rector of St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church in Stone Mountain, Ga., outside of Atlanta.



Gay Jennings is Canon to the Ordinary in the Diocese of Ohio where she serves as case manager for sexual misconduct. She's



been a strong advocate for reform of the church's disciplinary canons and an active member of the Episcopal Women's Caucus.

Mark L. MacDonald specializes in multicultural ministry, a field he has pursued for many years. He is leadership development training coordinator for the Diocese of Minnesota's Indian Work Commission, vicar of St. Antipas in Redby, Minn., and St. John in the Wilderness in Red Lake, Minn.



Muffie Moroney is a lawyer in Houston, Tex., who brings a special interest in church structure and justice issues. She helped found the local chapter of the Episcopal Women's Caucus. She is chancellor of her inner city parish, St. Stephen's Episcopal Church.



Altagracia Perez serves on the President's Commission on AIDS and is rector of St. Philip the Evangelist in Los Angeles. She was coordinator of youth ministries in the Diocese of Chicago.



National anti-racism dialogue scheduled for Jan. 20

Last May, 1996, Presiding Bishop Edmond L. Browning and House of Deputies President Pamela Chinnis issued a call for an Episcopal Church-wide dialogue around issues of racial justice to begin on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of this year. They were prompted, in part, by an open letter to the national leadership of the Episcopal Church issued at Thanksgiving, 1995, by Edward Rodman,

coordinator of the Episcopal Urban Caucus, which for the past decade has been pushing for national initiatives in the area of anti-racism.

Rodman referred to the public's surprise at the verdict in the O.J. Simpson case and "the furor" that surrounded the Million Man March. "The failure to have been prepared for the possibility of a *not guilty* verdict," Rodman said, "may be the ultimate lost opportunity for our generation, if the goal is to address the issue of racism. This is depressing

because there has been very little true dialogue surrounding the obvious issues that this verdict has raised."

An ad hoc committee appointed by Browning and Chinnis has produced a 138-page resource to provide congregations and other groups with models and ground rules for approaching this difficult conversation. Fifty-eight dioceses sent representatives to receive training in how to teach church members to lead the discussions at a December workshop held in Stony Point, N.Y.

Our readers tell us . . .

Singing praises for the dead

by Mel Schlachter

We lost three saints this past autumn. If there is indeed a mystical "rule of threes," like everyone's grandmother used to say, then we should have a respite from the deaths of humanity's treasures. All were men of uncommon faith: Henri Nouwen, Sept. 12, Edwin Friedman, October 31 and Joseph Bernardin, November 15.

Henri Nouwen

Nouwen, a Dutch priest, theologian and psychologist, known for packing lecture halls when he was on the faculty of first Yale, then Harvard, left us more than 30 books that were as simple as they were profound. I remember first reading *The Wounded Healer*. "This is a bestseller?" I thought. "It's so obvious." He was one of those rare people who had a gift for noticing what was in front of all our noses.

His early book, *Genesee Diary* — the daily markings of a priest spending a few months with silent Trappist monks — revealed the holy as much in the bakery, or looking for building stones in the stream, as in the chapel.

Nouwen manifested a quality that he shared with the two other saints: If we are open in our faith-search, then we will be led necessarily to a sense of identification with the "least" of the earth and a quest for justice. He left academia in the early 1980s, first for a theological center in Latin America, then for a community which includes mentally handicapped people, L'Arche, in Toronto. He was not so much a helper as he was a fellow

traveller through the same earthbound existence.

Edwin Friedman

Friedman, while serving as the rabbi for a congregation in the Washington, D.C. area, trained with the pioneer of Family Systems theory and therapy at Georgetown University, Murray Bowen. He eventually left synagogue leadership and worked as a family therapist, a consultant and a teacher.

He held training seminars out of his home in Bethesda, and wrote the book *Generation to Generation* — thereby saving the lives and ministries of countless clergy. He described how the church "family" functions as an emotional system.

Friedman was most interested in our growth as "differentiated" individuals who (unlike rugged individualists) can still stay in relationship with others. He had no small hand in popularizing the phrase "non-anxious presence," which conveys his hope that we can stay connected to other people even when they are different from us or would seem to threaten us. His collection of parables, *Friedman's Fables*, leads gently toward his vision of the individual within community.

Our culture is full of examples of people cutting themselves off from those they don't like or disagree with. Politics has become more interested in righteous posturing, exclusion and vilification than in keeping the body politic intact with mutual respect. Friedman taught that an individual with some sense of differentiation can take a position without needing others to agree, without having to make them agree, without having to distance from or

submit to someone who generates an emotional reaction.

Joseph Bernardin

From countless stories related by those who knew him, Cardinal Bernardin, like Friedman, cared as much for the process of dialogue as he did for the content of belief. For people who feel a deep sense of righteousness about particular beliefs, this is maddening. It is seen as wishy-washy, not standing for anything. "We should be *fighting* rather than having coffee with the opposition," they say.

To such critics, Bernardin had the terminal flaw of wanting to talk to the opposition, as when he went to pray at the bedside of the dying man who had falsely accused him of sexual abuse. A deep and growing Christian faith led him to a deep sense of justice for the least and most vulnerable in our society. Archbishop Desmond Tutu called him a beacon for the oppressed.

Bernardin's ability to listen well and his genuine desire to listen to everyone meant that authority, for him, was horizontal as well as vertical. Though a leader in a hierarchical church, he nonetheless exhibited a deep faith in God speaking through everyone, not just established authorities. For some of his colleagues in red, even to enter into dialogue with women about their roles in the church meant that one was questioning the church's authority, but Bernardin did not think the church's authority under God was so fragile that the baptized could not speak frankly with one another, irrespective of rank.

So it has been a hard autumn for the kind of moral leadership that cares more about people than causes, more about justice for all than privilege for some, leaders willing to lead by example while staying connected with all sides. Pray that the winter of the absence from our midst of saints such as these will be short and temperate.

TW

Mel Schlachter is co-rector of Trinity Episcopal Church, Troy, Ohio.

The heart of jubilee

by Marie Dennis

***Proclaim Jubilee!* Maria Harris
(Westminster/John Knox Press, 1996)**

Forgive everything we can,
forgive debts,
forgive trespasses,
forgive sins, forgive family,
forgive world debt!

In her extraordinary book, *Proclaim jubilee!*, Maria Harris probes the intersection yearning to happen between a broken creation and the biblical prescription for its repair. Identifying the jubilee tradition as a “richly textured vital response” to the complex issues of our era, she invites us to explore the core teachings of this tradition, but above all the comprehensive spirituality it offers.

She includes a concise, readable overview of the recent scholarly work on the jubilee. However, for such a small book, Harris draws on a remarkable range of authors and disciplines to identify ways in which the spirit of jubilee is already being explored and enacted. For example, she includes Thich Nhat Hahn and Gandhi, Thomas Berry and Wendell Berry, Alice Walker and Annie Dillard, Martin Buber and Abraham Heschel, Gustavo Gutierrez and Hannah Arendt.

She organizes their wisdom on the need for jubilee around contemporary themes: liberation (as passionately demanded in revolutionary theologies and popular movements of the twentieth century), connectedness (the need for a “thicker listening,” the attentive mind-

fulness of being peace), suffering (the constant which demands not only deep silence and ritual, but active intervention), imagination (the realm of vision so stifled in our culture), and repair of the world. By the latter Harris means a religious vocation that puts our fingerprints on the shattered vessels of the modern world and ensures that “our lives and our work will have meaning to ourselves, to the next generations, and to our fragile planet.”

To each of these modern queries the biblical response is “jubilee.” The prescriptions are familiar to us: let the land lie fallow; forgive everything; proclaim liberty; do justice; and sing a new song, the Canticle of jubilation. Yet Harris takes them with new depth and breadth.

For example, in the instruction to let the land lie fallow, we honor our relationship to the earth, but we also pay similar reverence to the “the tiny country each of us comprises, whose geography we know so well.” We need to listen to the creation that surrounds us, but also to the creation and the land that we are. With this turn, Harris makes of jubilee a call to contemplation. In these times we need to become a people whose “every activity has an underlying residue of receptivity, quiet, and contemplative being.” Sabbath means that we live in time, in the present; that we stop; that we recreate in community - in order that we might move toward rich, precise, positive practice for justice.

Jubilee teaches us forgiveness, especially of debt, but forgiveness as a way of being in the world. “Forgiving and being forgiven are part of the human situation, a ‘necessary corrective’ to evil, and part of the connectedness that illuminates a common destiny.”

A third leg of the jubilee tradition concerns liberation of the captives. Harris is quite concrete in recognizing those at work on behalf of prisoners, the anti-death penalty activism of folks like Helen Prejan. She goes deeper, though. jubilee frees us to go home, the place where we learn “the ‘thicker times’ of presence that care and sabbath teach — where loneliness can be relieved through community.” To go home is to honor traditions and ancestors, to return to parents, to risk honestly removing the barriers between us and our roots.

Justice is another fundamental jubilee response. The community or nation is called simply to find out what belongs to whom and give it back. This enactment — religiously, socially and economically — brings freedom in turn to the doers of justice themselves.

And finally, by jubilee we are invited to sing. Imagine! jubilee a summons to art and music. Clearly, this work must go beyond mind to visions and dreams who language first comes in poetry. Harris invites us to notice the jubilee artisans among us already.

In that very way, reading *Proclaim jubilee!* makes one want to sing! In his foreword Walter Brueggemann notes Maria Harris’ remarkable facility with words and images, as well as her creative articulation of a new relationship between biblical texts and the demands of our own reality. I agree. *Proclaim jubilee!* offers soul-deep substance to nourish the variety of contemporary projects now using the language of jubilee in our move toward the millennium. **TW**

review

Marie Dennis works at the Maryknoll Justice and Peace office in Washington D.C.

Amata Miller became an economist, and not a music professor, because the sister who was dean of her college won an argument with the music teacher.

"In the days when I entered the community, you did what you were told," says Miller, a member of the Roman Catholic Immaculate Heart of Mary (IHM) sisters of Monroe, Mich. "In my wildest dreams, I would not have sat down when I was in my 20s and said, 'I'm going to study economics and learn how to put it together with my faith.' But having been called to do that, I can look back and see why it happened."

Now chief financial officer of Marygrove, a small IHM college in Detroit, Miller is nationally recognized as a gifted educator in the field of economic justice, speaking and serving on the boards of projects like the Shorebank Corporation, Partners for the Common Good Loan Fund, Mercy Housing Corporation and Earth Trade.

She lives on campus with two other IHM faculty members, a 12-year-old Haitian boy in the U.S. for long-term medical treatment, a dog named Farmer Jack (after the supermarket lot where he was found) and two cats. A talented musician, she plays organ and piano and belongs to an IHM music ensemble. Miller exudes energy — she speaks briskly and forcefully, her words struggling to keep pace with her thoughts.

"What has been happening since the 1980s is this tremendous number of alter-

We're on the crest, we don't know what's going to come next. It's critical that we nourish hope in one another. I see all kinds of alternatives being born."



Amata Miller

On the crest of change

by Marianne Arbogast

natives growing from the bottom up. They're invisible to most people because they don't hit the mainstream press, and the people doing it are too busy to write about it. But things like cooperatives, worker-owned businesses, community development credit unions, community development banking institutions, affordable housing providers — all these kinds of things are growing in sophistication and networking and in linkages to the private system, so that what you've got is a whole alternative economic order which is beginning to be in place. It's still very small, and some people ask what difference it can make in the face of global corporations, but it's having its transforming influence."

Miller grew up in the northwest Detroit neighborhood in which she now lives and works, in a milieu of faith-based social consciousness. Her parents sponsored Austrian refugees and frequently

hosted international guests. Her mother, a member of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, was an early advocate of disarmament.

Upon graduating from high school, Miller joined the IHMs, taking up college studies at a Marygrove campus in Monroe. After teaching grade school for five years, she was sent to Berkeley, Cal. to earn a doctorate in economics. Living in Berkeley in the early 1960s was "a very powerful, transformative experience," Miller says, "and also very lonely."

At a time when nuns were normally forbidden to carry money or go out without a companion, Miller found herself on her own in a highly secular environment.

"I grew up in a Catholic subculture," she says. "It was the first time I had to explain all the categories that organized my life to people. I was fully robed, so I looked like a non-conformist of sorts, but I was a conundrum to them because to

*Witnesses,
the quick and the dead*

Marianne Arbogast is assistant editor of *The Witness*.

many of them, faith was a relic of barbarism. I can remember thinking, what they are after is basically what Christianity is all about — simplicity, community, integrity — and yet we have done such a bad job of presenting Jesus Christ to the world that they don't even think of looking there. I had to strip away all the stuff that was part of what it meant to be a nun, to figure out what was important and what wasn't."

Her studies were equally challenging.

"Economics is a very difficult field," she says. "It was a long, hard struggle. I kept thinking, something's wrong here — but I had to get far enough along before I could unpack it and figure out what the problems were."

When Miller returned to Marygrove in 1967, she says, her challenge was to teach economics from the perspective of social justice. "It was quite an unusual opportunity. There were no books — we had to create everything ourselves."

The labor bore unexpected fruit when, after teaching in a summer masters' degree program on religion and social issues, Miller started receiving invitations to speak to groups across the country. As interest in economic justice mushroomed, Miller found herself in great demand as a speaker, consultant and board member for fledgling projects.

In 1976, she left Marygrove to serve on the IHM leadership team.

"We were building a retirement fund, I was meeting with money managers and I got into the whole field of alternative investments and socially responsible investing," Miller says. "I couldn't just talk about it — I had to do it."

After 12 years of congregational leadership, Miller spent six years in Washington, D.C. with Network, a faith-based social justice lobby. She returned to become Marygrove's financial officer in 1994.

Although she prefers teaching to ad-

ministrative work, she feels deeply committed to the survival of the college, which has focused its mission on the education of low-income women.

Miller considers herself "a Christian communist."

"I would like to live in a world in which we each contributed according to

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our ability and received according to our need. But if you ask me, as an economist, if we can ever have socialism in the U.S. — no, not in an individualistic society, it would be almost impossible. But capitalism has many faces and it does not have to be as selfish as ours. Our form of capitalism is probably the least social-justice-oriented of any capitalism in the world, with the exception of Japan. We don't have to have 25 percent of children under six living in poverty."

The time is ripe for jubilee, Miller believes.

"Clearly, globally and nationally we have got to do some redistribution. In the U.S. we have unprecedented inequality. In the past 10 years we have reversed the trend of 40 years: From 1945 to the mid-1970s, the different income groups grew together. Now they are growing apart. Something structural is happening in our economic system that is very different."

It is important to identify and support local economic justice initiatives, Miller

believes.

"Everybody's not going to be an innovator, but those innovators need a lot of people behind them. Somebody's got to be writing the newsletters, telling the story, contributing \$10, helping put posters up. We've got to have our antennae up, to be open to think about different ways, and we've got to nourish them."

We can all examine the institutions in which we work, Miller says, "subverting them with different principles. If you start applying the principle that everybody's value comes from being a human person, not from what they do or how much money they make, then you've got to put different people around the table when you make decisions. You've got to ask questions about whether the CEO is supposed to get 145 times what the average worker gets. You've got to deal differently about relations between men and women and white and black. Once people have a taste of doing things differently, it starts rippling out."

Miller no longer accepts speaking engagements that are not connected with a plan of action.

"We don't have time to just sit around and talk to one another any more," she insists. "I always try to integrate the principles of justice and the analysis of the situation with what we can do."

"I'm hopeful because I see so much happening in the grassroots. I meet people all over this country who are asking the important questions, trying to figure out how to put their faith and their life together, deepening their prayer and taking action. I believe we are at one of those watershed times in human history when everything's going to be different in the future, but we're just sort of on the crest, we don't know what's going to come next. I think we're living through the dark times and I think it's critical that we nourish hope in one another. I see all kinds of alternatives being born." **TW**



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