

The Peace Memo

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November-December, 2011

New Year

⁹Do not be exceedingly angry, O Lord, and do not remember iniquity for ever. Now consider, we are all your people. ¹⁰Your holy cities have become a wilderness, Zion has become a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. ¹¹Our holy and beautiful house, where our ancestors praised you, has been burned by fire, and all our pleasant places have become ruins. ¹²After all this, will you restrain yourself, O Lord? Will you keep silent, and punish us so severely?

(Isaiah 64:9-12, NRSV)

Although I don't usually write about the Christian roots of the [Peacebuilding Institute](#), I am writing this on the first Sunday of Advent, the day that marks the beginning of the Christian Church year. All such beginnings are arbitrary, but they give us a reason to pause, reflect, and refocus.

These days, it seems the whole world is crying for similar relief—from warfare, economic distress, meaningless work, poor wages, reduced access to services, and so much more. But even as we lament our tribulations, we look forward, in hope, for a better time: a time of justice, equity, and peace. Perhaps we're naïve; then again, perhaps hope is part of human nature and we seek it instinctively. Advent ends with the birth of a child. What is more hopeful, more inspiring, than that?

In this issue, we pause to look at some things that have recently begun, like the Occupy Movement in the U.S. and abroad; and refocus on some older issues, like our ongoing wars and the people who serve in the military. We also reconnect with some old friends.

The Peacebuilding Institute was founded by Jim Foster in 1988. It has grown from ecumenical Christian roots to become a faith-based umbrella embracing all traditions and actively seeking to build bridges. The Peacebuilding Institute of East

Tennessee's ([PIET](#)) activities form the core of this newsletter, and its director, Mike Henry, is a new contributor. Look for him in the next issue. The Institute for Spiritual and Global Economics

([SAGE](#)) publishes its work in these pages. We are few, and sometimes our mission seems too big for our numbers, but we keep returning to our core and reaching out from there.

Please consider supporting our work in ways that are appropriate to your location and means. We would love to have more willing hands. Check the calendar for meetings and events in Knoxville. If you buy books online, please consider ordering, through [our portal](#), from Powell's, an independent bookseller in Portland, Oregon that is competitive with Amazon. We get a small percentage of sales through this link.

You may subscribe to this newsletter at our [website](#). You may also follow us on [Twitter](#).



“...if Walmart were a country...

...[according to a June, 2011 Report](#) issued by Business Insider— its revenues would exceed the GDP Norway, the 25th largest economy in the world. In less than three minutes Business Insider debunks the mythology of free-market ideologues: Yahoo is bigger than Mongolia, Visa is bigger than Zimbabwe, Nike is bigger than Paraguay, McDonalds is bigger than Latvia, Amazon.com is bigger than Kenya, Apple is bigger than Ecuador, Ford is bigger than Morocco, Bank of America is bigger than Vietnam, General Electric is bigger than New Zealand, Chevron is bigger than the Czech Republic, and Exxon- Mobil is bigger than Thailand. The monopolization of big business is endemic to capi-



talism. And the monopolization of capitalism produces corporatism. And corporatism bastardizes any prospect of establishing accessible and accountable democratic institutions and practices.” (Christopher Petrella, writing in [Nation of Change](#))



Nigeria and Security Challenges

From Cletus Obasi, [Spiritan International School of Theology at Attakwu, Enugu, Nigeria](#)

Nigeria is the most populated Black Country in the world. With over 250 ethnic groups and languages, it is presently facing security challenges. As the population is growing rapidly, the scarce resources of the nation are in high demand. The rate of unemployment is high. Industries are closing up while new ones are not been established. Public infrastructures are decaying and new ones are not being established. The decayed infrastructures have been blamed on the many years of military dictatorship in Nigeria. The result is a high rate of poverty everywhere.

When the present administration of President Goodluck Jonathan came on board in May 2011, he promised a transformation. He promised that his administration will transform the lives of the people through jobs creation; he promised the revamping and revitalizing of moribund industries, and to build new ones. Already the energy sector has been revitalized as hundreds of billions of Naira have been spent in the sector. The government promised, too, to rehabilitate and build new roads, among many others. Implementation of these enviable programmes is under threat from militant groups.

The federal government had earlier granted amnesty to the militant groups in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, who posed a security threat to

the government during the previous federal administrations. The youth’s restiveness (who were fighting for resource control) and the vandalism of oil facilities affected Nigeria’s economy. The amnesty brought about the end of militancy in the region. It reduced the rate of kidnappings, vandalism of oil facilities, and destruction of life and properties. The militant youths surrendered their weapons to the government and embraced peace. Over 80% of Nigerian economic income lies in the Niger Delta region where the Nigerian “Black gold” (oil) is produced. In return, the government promised to rehabilitate the youths through skilled acquisition, professional training, and in agriculture. The training has since commenced here in Nigeria in various institutions and in overseas.

The current security challenges began as soon as the result of the last presidential election, held on April 9, 2011, was being announced. A group that felt that their presidential candidate was losing vented their anger and went about destroying properties, killing people, especially young graduates employed to facilitate the election in some parts of Northern Nigeria. The youths who were perceived to be political thugs metamorphosed to what is today called *Boko Haram*. *Boko Haram* is a faceless terrorist group. It abhors western education and condemns the education of women. It advocates the establishment of “Sha’ria law” in Nigeria. The group has already destroyed many churches in Northern Nigeria, bombed the Police Headquarters and UN office in Abuja, and killed many innocent people. The government has not been so much challenged and threatened in recent times. The unity of the country is being challenged. The government is now spending more money on security matters than on providing water, food, and good roads for the people. Nigerians are worried as poverty is growing wide.



In response to the high rate of insecurity in Nigeria, various Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs), are organizing peace workshops in various institutions and forming peace clubs. The youths pose the greatest security threat to any nation; it is important that we target them in training for the purpose of understanding the value of co-existence. Through peace workshops and peace clubs, they will be trained to become agents of peace in their communities and the nation. It is on the basis of this that the Centre for African Peace and Conflict Resolution of the University of California, Sacramento (USA), and Young Negotiators and Mediators of Nigeria Association (YONAMAN), organized a two day workshop on Conflict and Mediation at the foremost Nigerian University, the University of Nigeria, Nsukka recently. The aim was to train future leaders on the importance of peace. The audience—who were undergraduates, graduates and lecturers—were trained in mediation skills to assist in conflict situations. They were trained to be mediators and ambassadors of peace. Another workshop is being targeted for another Federal University in South East Nigeria in the next few months. Our aim in YONAMAN is to reduce the tension posed by the militant groups through education and training and to assist in creating an environment for peaceful co-existence among different ethnic groups in Nigeria.

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Occupy Update

(From [Wikipedia](#), the most concise source we could find.)

The first Occupy protest to be widely covered was [Occupy Wall Street](#) in New York City, taking place on September 17, 2011. By October 9, Occupy protests had taken place or were ongoing in [over 95 cities across 82 countries, and over 600 communities in the United States](#). As of December 1 the [Meetup](#) page "Occupy Together" listed 2,686 Occupy communities worldwide.

The movement was initiated by the [Canadian](#) activist group [Adbusters](#), and partly inspired by the [Arab Spring](#),^{[16][17]} especially Cairo's [Tahrir Square](#) protests, and the [Spanish Indignants](#). The movement commonly uses the slogan [We are the 99%](#), the #Occupy [hashtag](#) format, and organizes through websites such as "Occupy Together" and "[Occupy Xmas](#)". According to the [Washington Post](#), the movement, which has been described as a "democratic awakening" by [Cornel West](#), is difficult to distill to a few demands.

Just after midnight on November 9 in [London, Ontario](#), police evicted protesters from the city's Victoria Park, becoming the first forced evictions in Canada. On the afternoon of November 11 in [Halifax, Nova Scotia](#), and later on the night of November 14, authorities forcefully closed down camps around the world in cities such as [New York, Oakland](#) and [Zurich](#). Occupy protesters immediately regrouped and vowed to continue their protests, often defiantly returning to the cleared sites.

In a worldwide precedent, Occupy Edinburgh has gained full official recognition from a government body, the [Edinburgh City Council](#).



From Irene Nasser, Senior Manager, [Jerusalem Just Vision](#)

Dear Friends,

The August heat has arrived in full force here in Jerusalem, and with it a growing sense among Palestinians and Israelis that if change for the better comes to this region, it will be from the bottom up.

One place where this holds true is the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah. Every week for the past two years Israelis and Palestinians have been protesting against evictions of local Palestinian families from their homes. Our Jerusalem team has been based in Sheikh Jarrah since 2004, and we've been following this story from its earliest days. We are humbled by the staying power of the families and those who come to support them.

That is why it was a special privilege for my colleague, Education and Outreach Coordinator in Palestine, Rula Salameh, to bring Budrus to a summer camp for Palestinian children in Sheikh Jarrah. The children were so moved and excited that we had to stop the film several times as they broke out spontaneously into song and dance.

Over the past few weeks, Rula has brought the film to over 140 children in Palestinian refugee camps across the West Bank. In nearly every case, the screening marked the first time the children had seen or heard of a Palestinian unarmed protest, joined by Israelis, successfully bringing about tangible change on the ground. Many of them later asked to visit key sites of the protests, such as Budrus, Bil'in and Ni'lin, in order to meet the visionary people involved in these struggles and to learn more about civilian-led nonviolent efforts.

In Israel, we continue to engage journalists, students and organizations from a variety of back-

grounds. In one recent screening, participants remarked that Budrus raised questions about nonviolence and its role in the conflict that they had never considered before. They shared with us that they were moved to learn more about similar initiatives taking place on the ground.

As increasing numbers of Israeli and Palestinian civilians seek to actively become part of movements for freedom, dignity, security and peace in their societies, we look forward to sharing their struggles and achievements with you.

With best wishes,

Irene Nasser, Senior Manager, [Jerusalem Just Vision](#)



News from Uganda

Many thanks to you,

I smiled with joy when I read that you are not dead yet. Thanks for being alive and still great.

Perhaps of interest; Uganda has been named by [Lonely Planet](#), an international world's travel guidebook as the world's number one tourist destination come 2012.

Thanks for *The Peace Memo*.

Fr. Boniface (Uganda)





About UN Women



In July 2010, the United Nations General Assembly created [UN Women](#), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

In doing so, UN Member States took an historic step in accelerating the Organization's goals on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

The creation of UN Women came about as part of the UN reform agenda, bringing together resources and mandates for greater impact. It merges and builds on the important work of four previously distinct parts of the UN system, which focused exclusively on gender equality and women's empowerment:

- Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW)
- International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW)
- Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI)

- United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)

The main roles of UN Women are:

- To support inter-governmental bodies, such as the Commission on the Status of Women, in their formulation of policies, global standards and norms.
- To help Member States to implement these standards, standing ready to provide suitable technical and financial support to those countries that request it, and to forge effective partnerships with civil society.
- To hold the UN system accountable for its own commitments on gender equality, including regular monitoring of system-wide progress.

Meeting the Needs of the World's Women

Over many decades, the UN has made significant progress in advancing gender equality, including through landmark agreements such as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

Gender equality is not only a basic human right, but its achievement has enormous socio-economic ramifications. Empowering women fuels thriving economies, spurring productivity and growth.

Yet gender inequalities remain deeply entrenched in every society. Women lack access to decent work and face occupational segregation and gender wage gaps. They are too often denied access to basic education and health care. Women in all parts of the world suffer violence and discrimination. They are under-represented in political and economic decision-making processes.



For many years, the UN has faced serious challenges in its efforts to promote gender equality globally, including inadequate funding and no single recognized driver to direct UN activities on gender equality issues.

UN Women was created to address such challenges. It will be a dynamic and strong champion for women and girls, providing them with a powerful voice at the global, regional and local levels.

Grounded in the vision of equality enshrined in the UN Charter, UN Women, among other issues, works for the:

- elimination of discrimination against women and girls;
- empowerment of women; and
- achievement of equality between women and men as partners and beneficiaries of development, human rights, humanitarian action and peace and security.



With respect to the number of deaths, arms manufacturers are charitable institutions compared to cigarette manufacturers—Silvio Garattini, doctor, researcher, professor, and founder of the [European Organization for Research on Treatment of Cancer](#) (b. 1928)



Hunger in the United States, 2011

(From [Hunger in America, By the Numbers](#), by Pat Garofalo and Travis Waldron)

17.2 million: The number of households [that were food insecure](#) in 2010, the highest number on record. They make up 14.5 percent of households, or approximately one in seven.

48.8 million: People who [lived in food insecure households](#) last year.

3.9 million: The number of [households with children](#) that were food insecure last year. In 1 percent of households with children, “one or more of the children experienced the most severe food-insecure condition measured by USDA, very low food security, in which meals were irregular and food intake was below levels considered adequate by caregivers.”

6.4 million: Households that experienced [very low food security](#) last year, meaning “normal eating patterns of one or more household members were disrupted and food intake was reduced at times during the year because they had insufficient money or other resources for food.”

55: The percentage of food-insecure households that [participated in one or more](#) of the three largest Federal food and nutrition assistance programs (SNAP, WIC, School lunch program).

19.4: The percentage of food insecure households in Mississippi, which had the [highest rate in the nation](#) last year.

3.6 percent: The amount by which [food prices increased](#) last year.

30 percent: The amount by which [food insecurity grew](#) during the Great Recession.

44: The percentage increase in households [using food pantries](#) between 2007 and 2009.

20 million: The number of children who [benefit from free and reduced lunch](#) per day.

10.5 million: The number of eligible children [who don't receive](#) their free and reduced lunch benefits.

\$167.5 billion: The [amount that the U.S. lost](#) in 2010 due to hunger (lost educational attainment + avoidable illness + charitable giving to fight hunger). This doesn't take into account the \$94 billion cost of SNAP and other food programs.



8: The number of states (FL, TX, CA, IL, NY, OH, PA, GA) where the annual cost of hunger exceeds \$6 billion.



WELCOMING
AMERICA 

↑ *Building a Nation of Neighbors*



The Receiving Communities Initiative

The receiving communities initiative (RCI) is an effort to build a movement of individuals and organizations focused on building understanding and easing tensions between long-time residents and new arrivals in communities that have seen recent immigrant population growth. [Welcoming America](#) is helping to lead this initiative, which is also supported by the [Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning](#), the [Center for American Progress](#), and the [JM Kaplan Fund](#). *All individuals and organizations working to engage immigrant receiving communities are encouraged to join this effort. Please join the [Facebook page](#), and add your email address in the form to the right for updates!*



THE SPARROW SINGS

This year, Roberta and I had the privilege of being able to take the bus with others to Ft. Benning, GA, for the annual protest of the [Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation](#) (formerly the School of the Americas) to demand that it be closed. Before we arrived, about 200 people who had already arrived in Columbus, went to the Stewart Detention Center in Lumpkin. It is the largest for-profit prison in America. About 2,000 immigrants are held there, mostly for minor traffic violations, costing taxpayers \$200 a night for each of the detainees and raking in annual profits between \$35 and \$50 million. It is part of the [Corrections Corporation of America](#) (CCA), the nation's largest private prison company, which last year received \$74 million of taxpayers' money to run immigration detention centers. The inmates may receive no visits from family or lawyers. Inmates are charged \$5 per phone call. The inmates work for \$1/ day, so it takes five days of work to make one phone call. They are held until the government decides to deport them to their native countries. Chris Spicer of the [White Rose Catholic Worker](#) in Chicago was arrested with others last year for crossing a line drawn by the police in front of the prison. He was charged with "criminal trespass". According to the [National Immigration Forum](#), in 2010 there were over 500 immigrant detention facilities in the U.S., costing taxpayers \$1.7 billion/year to operate. In January, 2008 there were 33,400 people detained; 18,690 of these had committed no crimes and should have been released. Thousands of children are being sent to foster homes when their non-citizen parents are detained or deported. At least 5,100 children of deportees are now living in foster care. ([Democracy Now](#),

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11/10/11) The U.S. prison in Guantanamo Bay is the most expensive prison in the world, costing taxpayers \$800,000 annually/prisoner. That is more than the most expensive college tuition in the U.S. The average cost of keeping a federal prisoner in the U.S. is \$25,000. ([Miami Herald](#) and AlterNet, 11/09/11) The U.S., which boasts of having liberty and justice for all, has a long way to go in achieving that goal.--Don Timmerman

“I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”--Maya Angelou

“We should also never forget that our wealth derives in no small measure from the tragedy of others.”--Noam Chomsky

“Our problem is civil obedience. Our problem is the numbers of people all over the world who have obeyed the dictates of the leaders of their government and have gone to war, and millions have been killed because of this obedience...Our problem is that people are obedient over the world, in the face of poverty and starvation and stupidity, and war and cruelty. Our problem is that people are obedient while the jails are full of petty thieves, and all the while the grand thieves are running the country. That’s our problem.”--Howard Zinn

“Love is the felt experience of connection to another being. An economist says ‘More for you is less for me.’ But the lover knows that more for you is more for me too. If you love somebody their happiness is your happiness. Their pain is your pain.”--Charles Eisenstein

Be all you can be. Love your enemies. (From a poster seen at the protest at Ft. Benning)

Interesting Facts

From Thanksgiving to New Years Day, household waste increases by more than 25%. Added food waste, shopping bags, packaging, wrapping paper, bows and ribbons--it all adds up to an additional 1 million tons a week to our landfills.--[Recycleworks.org](#)

In less than 10 months in 2010 and 2011, U.S. Special Operations Forces killed well over 1,500 Afghan civilians in night raids.--[U.S. NATO Command](#)

One U.S. veteran of Iraq and Afghanistan occupations attempts suicide every 80 minutes. In 2009 alone, 1,868 veterans made suicide attempts. One-fifth of the soldiers returning suffer from some mental disorder.--[The Daily Mail UK](#)

Seven years after the U.S. invasion of Fallujah with weapons with depleted uranium and white phosphorus, doctors have reported drastic increases in the number of premature births, infant mortality and birth defects, such as babies born without skulls, missing organs or with stumps for arms and legs. Fallujah General Hospital reported that out of 170 babies born in September 2009, 24% died within the first 7 days, of which 75% were deformed--as compared to August 2002 when there were 530 babies born, only 6 deaths and 1 deformity.--[Foreign Policy in Focus, 11/27/11](#)

In 2010, government subsidies for fossil fuels totaled \$409 billion while subsidies for renewable energy totaled \$64 billion.--[The Switchboard/NRDC Blog, 11/08/11](#)

One media analyst predicts that \$3.2 billion will be spent on T.V. ads during the 2012 election cycle.--[Public Citizen, 11/08/11](#)

Right now, big banks like Bank of America borrow money from the Federal Reserve at less than 1% interest, lend it out to payday lenders at

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3%, who turn around and lend it to our communities at 400% interest or more.--[Jobs with Justice](#)

Tax cuts and wars by 2019 will account for nearly half of the U.S. public debt.--[Truthdig](#), 8/2/11

The attacks by Israelis resulting in casualties and severe property damage have increased by 40% in 2011 compared to 2010 and by over 165% compared to 2009. Over 80 Palestinian communities with a combined population of nearly 250,000 people have suffered attacks by Israeli settlers. Eight Israeli settlers have been killed and 30 others injured by Palestinians in 2011, compared to 5 killed and 43 injured during the same periods in 2010. In 2011, nearly 10,000 Palestinian-owned trees, primarily olive trees, have been damaged or destroyed by Israeli settlers, significantly undermining the livelihoods of hundreds of families.--[United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs](#)

Major food shortages brought on by drought are affecting more than 2 million people in Afghanistan, and the coming winter could exacerbate the crisis.--[A.P.](#)

Almost 2.6 billion people in the world lack access to decent sanitation facilities. Some 1.2 billion people have no facilities at all. The majority of the illnesses in the world are caused by fecal matter. In fact, 50% of the hospital beds in the developing world are occupied by people suffering from water-related diseases, and every 20 seconds, a child dies from a water-related disease. Clean water and sanitation are basic human rights. Amnesty International asks that we get our legislators to pass the Water for the World Act to help these people.--[Amnesty International](#)

Some 42% of Americans say that news organizations “hurt democracy”.--[Harper’s Index](#), November, 2011

Cathy Breen of the New York Catholic Worker is asking for people to help the very needy families of Syria and Jordan whom she has met over the years. If you wish to help, please contact Cathy at newsfromcathy@yahoo.com

NOTES FROM 21st STREET: I mentioned to Don that I would like to go hiking on my birthday. We hiked together in the morning. In the afternoon Don fished from shore and I hiked on my own. The leaves were off the trees, but many bushes continued to hold onto their berries and seeds. Suddenly I heard the song of a friend. I stopped and listened; it was the cheerful chickadee. My mind and body relaxed at the sight and sound of the little bird flitting from twig to twig in the bushes. What a delight and what a surprise at how my whole body responded to one of God’s small creatures. It is not the large and the grand that reminds us of how we are connected to the Creator’s beautiful world. It is often in the small, quiet song of a bird or the whisper in our ear of the Holy Spirit reminding us of God’s love for us and all creation. I pray we may take time during the season of Advent to listen to the whisper of God’s love. Peace, Roberta

Don and Roberta
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MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

When	Who	What	Where	Details
Dec. 7, 2011 Noon - 1 PM		ANTI-ROTC VIGIL	Marquette U. 16th & Wisconsin Milwaukee, WI	Asking Marquette to no longer host ROTC on campus
Dec. 14, 2011 Noon - 1 PM	Stand for Non-Violence.	Anti-gun demonstration	Badger Guns, 43rd & Lincoln Milwaukee, WI	
Jan 28, 2012 1 PM	Peacebuilding Institute	Steering Committee Meeting	Church of the Savior 934 Weisgarber Rd. Knoxville, TN	
Feb 28, 2012 7-9 PM, followed by reception and book signing	Jeff Sharlet , Mellon Assistant Professor of English Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH	Second Annual David L. Dungan Memorial Lecture	Cox Auditorium, Alumni Memorial Building University of TN Knoxville, TN	Title (tentative): <i>The Noise of Democracy: Faith, Faithlessness, and the Country In Between</i> Jeff Sharlet is author of <i>The Family</i> (2008), described by Barbara Ehrenreich as “one of the most compelling and brilliantly researched exposes you’ll ever read.” His most recent book is <i>Sweet Heaven When I Die</i> (2011). “Sharlet’s greatest distinction is Ann Coulter’s designation of him as one of the stupidest journalists in America.”

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