

THE ADVOCATE

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Special points of interest

- Can violence ever lead to peace?
- Justice Seekers turns 100 ...sort of!
- Pitch a tent, write a letter, turn off your lights—not necessarily in that order
- Turning our thoughts and actions to those with HIV/AIDS

A TOUGH TOPIC: CAN VIOLENCE EVER LEAD TO PEACE?

BY PAUL KORTENHOVEN

CRC missionary Paul Kortenhoven thinks so. Paul, a witness to the brutality of the Sierra Leonean war in the 90s, poses some tough questions here about the use of violence to usher in peace.

Read his article, then discuss your thoughts with Paul and others at our community on justiceseekers.ning.com.

I have been asked to write a short article about the relationship, if there is one, between violence and peace.

From an academic perspective, this would be almost a never ending task beginning with Augustine, going through the violent history of the pre-reformation church, the development of the traditional "peace" churches (Anabaptists, Mennonites and Quakers) and into the Bonhoeffer approach in Nazi Germany to the present day proclamations and theories of just war, pre-emption and proportionality.

So I have a different approach: drawing from my real experience as both a first-hand witness to and recipient of violence, and as a participant in the peace-making process of the civil war in Sierra Leone.

From 1991-2002, our family was in this country with a few breaks necessitated by increasing violence and the possibility of imminent attacks by one of the most brutal and undisciplined rebel forces in the history of war in Africa.

“... when you are yourself ducking bullets and running from deadly attacks, you do not usually start thinking about Augustine’s just war theory...”

What I offer you is reality, not theory, and what I personally recommend is what I saw working in that horrible situation. I will do this through two short stories.

Story continued on page 3.

JUSTICE AND WORSHIP—EMBRACE AIDS DAY



HIV and AIDS continue to impact the lives of millions of people in North America and around the world.

The church is called to speak a message of truth, hope, care, and challenge; what better place than in the context of worship.

Sunday, April 20 is CRWRC Embrace AIDS Day. Please observe this important day with worship, prayer, reflection, and generosity.

Make this day the launch of a year-long campaign to come together as followers of Christ and share the love of God to people living with HIV and AIDS.

Access a short [Worship Service Guide](#) here to help you plan a service (pdf). [Embrace AIDS Campaign Progress](#)

NEWS BRIEFS

Hope, one brush-stroke at a time

This February, employees at the Christian Reformed Church denominational building in Grand Rapids were greeted by a peculiar sight when they arrived for work one Monday morning.

A large canvas tent sat in the atrium. Building on the energy of the Tents of Hope event at the Faith and International Development Conference at Calvin College a couple of weeks earlier, CRWRC and the Office of Social Justice decided to bring the tent to the building and invite employees to participate in a unique opportunity.

[Tents of Hope](#) is a national campaign that aims to bring communities together to raise awareness, funds and voices on behalf of the people of Darfur, Sudan. Communities obtain a large canvas tent, similar to the tents that refugee families must live in after fleeing their homes from violent rebel groups in Darfur.



The tent makes a big visual impact, but it also serves as a center where participants can learn, pray, and advocate for people on the other side of the world. And they can also make a visual mark of their compassion and concern. Turning the tent from a symbol of loss into one of hope, participants paint messages of peace, love and justice on the giant canvas. Painted tents will eventually make their way to Washington, D.C. for a culminating advocacy event next fall.

CRWRC and OSJ urge CRC churches and communities to get involved. Funds raised at these events can go to CRWRC relief efforts in Darfur, and the tents provide a unique community building experience that participants of all ages can enjoy and learn from. Visit www.crcjustice.org and click on Tents of Hope to learn more and about how to get involved.



Agreement signed to end conflict in Kenya

The latest news on the post-election crisis in Kenya is that President Mwai Kibaki and the opposition leader Raila Odinga have signed a power-sharing agreement that was mediated by former UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan. Keep tabs on the latest updates at www.crwrc.org.

Good news in the fight against extreme poverty

President Bush has recently unveiled a plan to commit \$350 million over the next five years to fight tropical diseases in Africa, Asia and Latin America and urged other G-8 countries to provide additional funding to reverse the number of people suffering and dying from preventable diseases.

ONE THE CAMPAIGN
TO MAKE
POVERTY HISTORY



You can learn more about this commitment, why it's important, and why we still have much to work for at www.one.org.

WEBSITES AND RESOURCES

Okay, so maybe no one will call it **Must See TV**, but it's still not a bad way to spend an hour.

Check out Bono and Al Gore at the World Economic Forum discussing the emergencies of global poverty and climate change, how they are connected, and what must be done to turn the tide on these issues.

The video can be viewed here: http://blog.algore.com/2008/01/world_economic_forum_annual_me.html

US folks can check up on the presidential candidates' positions on issues of hunger and poverty at ONE's special website: www.onevote08.org.

From there, you can compare candidates' positions on the issues (they've recorded video responses for ONE), get involved as a volunteer, locate where the candidates are on the campaign trail and more.

Hey, we've reached the one hundred member mark! Come join other Christian Reformed people who have a concern for social justice at our new social networking site: <http://justiceseekers.ning.com>.

It's free, it's not hard to sign up, and you can make some great connections.

You can join in on certain groups (creation care, peacebuilding, etc.) or create your own – like a group just for the social justice committee at your church.

Come on, a hundred people can't be wrong, right?

ACTION OPPORTUNITIES

Kairos, a partner of the CRC in Canada, is encouraging individuals and churches to participate in **Earth Hour on Saturday, March 9 at 8pm local time.**



Building on the success of an Earth Hour last year in Sydney, Australia, where two million people turned off their lights for one hour to send a message about fossil fuels and climate change, this year's Earth Hour has gone global.

Recognizing that environmental problems especially effect the poor and vulnerable, Kairos is urging churches to participate.

They have some suggestions for action, and even ideas for a worship service during the Earth Hour at: <http://www.kairoscanada.org/e/action/earthhour/index.asp>.

US folks can check out the campaign here: <http://www.earthhourus.org/>



If your church or school justice committee or small group is looking for a unique, memorable, and effective event, then check out [Tents of Hope](#).

We've held a couple of tent events to raise awareness, funds, and voices for the refugees of Darfur, Sudan,

VIOLENCE AND PEACE, CONT'D

First: In 2001, twelve British soldiers were kidnapped by a notoriously murderous rebel group called the "West Side Boys." The British military decided to rescue them and they did this by means of a pre-dawn attack by the SAS (Special Air Service).

In this rescue mission, one of the kidnapped British soldiers was killed and the other eleven were rescued un-harmed. Following the rescue, the SAS force did a search and destroy mission in the area and basically eliminated the "West Side Boys" and any future possibility of their being a threat to anyone or anything.

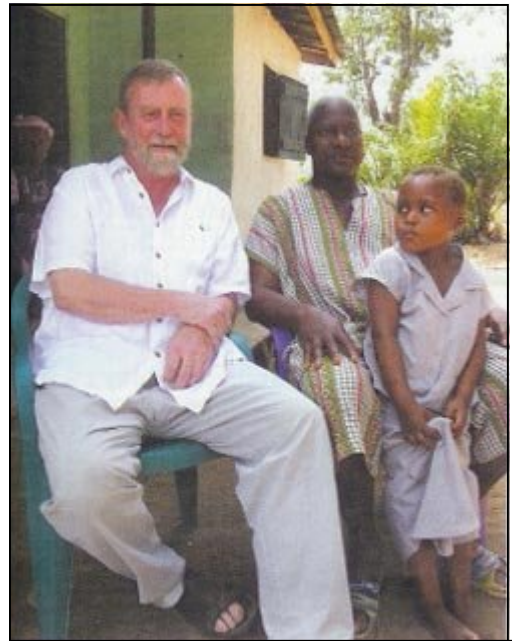
Shortly after this incident, the entire rebel offensive had second thoughts about their chance of success in a civil war and finally began to seriously negotiate for some kind of favorable peace deal.

In order to re-enforce their presence and their ability to intervene, the British Navy staged regular mock invasions on the beaches of Freetown which were open to all (including any infiltrated rebel spies) who cared to watch them.

This included a visible aircraft carrier on the horizon sending Hercules helicopters which landed troops and tanks on the beach while a dozen helicopter gunships buzzed overhead and then they enclosed the entire area in razor wire, all within one hour – a most impressive performance designed to intimidate, which it did very well. Extreme violence perpetrated against the extremely violent rebel group was the main catalyst which led to the final working out of a peace accord, which held.

The Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and their "West Side Boys" faction admitted publicly that they could not mount any kind of successful attack against any of the government forces as long as they were backed by the British forces. And the British forces made it very clear that they were not leaving until there was a peace established in the country. Peace came to Sierra Leone one year after this rescue mission.

[Continue Paul's article at www.crcjustice.org](http://www.crcjustice.org) and [talk about it at justiceseekers.ning.com](http://www.justiceseekers.ning.com).



Kortenhoven in Sierra Leone

and people's responses have been wonderful.

We've explained the campaign, and provided some materials on [crcjustice.org](http://www.crcjustice.org) (such as a guide to help you organize an event, and suggestions for advocacy).

Plus, we'd love to assist as you plan an event, so don't feel you're organizing an event alone. Check it out today!

Bread for the World, a long-time friend of the CRC has

unveiled its new Offering of Letters campaign for 2008.



The Offering of Letters is a unique education and advocacy campaign that explores an area of hunger and poverty, provides information and education to a congregation, then encourages members to write, collect, and

send off advocacy letters on the issue.

This year's Offering of Letters is pushing for more and better poverty-focused development assistance.

You can order an Offerings kit for your church, which includes a handbook, a DVD, poster and bulletin inserts (\$10).

Learn more here <http://www.bread.org/take-action/ol2008/> and order a kit here: <http://www.breadstore.org/ofofle1.html>

ADVOCATE CALENDAR

From **March 7-10** in Washington, D.C., justice-minded Christians will gather for **Ecumenical Advocacy Days**. This year's conference is called "Claiming a Vision of True Security." You can learn more about the topic, the speaker, lobby day, registration and other opportunities at www.advocacydays.org.

March 23 is Easter: Our friends at Alternatives for Simple Living suggest 10 steps for a simpler, more meaningful Easter celebration: <http://www.simpleliving.org/indexoth.php?place=archives/MR/10tipEaster.php>

Once you've done your advocacy in D.C., you can jet on over to Philadelphia for a conference hosted by Evangelicals for Social Action called, **"The Scandal of Evangelical Politics: Towards a Biblical Agenda."**

The conference runs from **March 28-30** at Palmer Theological Seminary. You can check out the interesting roster of speakers, topics, and registration information at: www.esa-online.org.

Turn those lights off! **Earth Hour is March 29, at 8pm** local time. Check the Action Opportunities section above for info.

April 20 is CRWRC's Embrace AIDS Day. Check out the Justice and Worship section above for info and a link to worship service help.

How would you like to spend a weekend focusing on food? Join others from **April 24-27** in New Hamburg, Ontario for a Canadian Foodgrains Bank learning weekend called **"Hunger for Life: Food for Change."**

With other participants you'll explore bio-fuels, climate change and global hunger, local food and more, and work together on action steps.

Learn more, including how to register here: http://www.foodgrainsbank.ca/event/537/a_hunger_for_life_food_for_change.aspx

Happy Easter!

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared.

They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in, they did not find the body. While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them.

The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, 'Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.'

The Advocate

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