

THE ADVOCATE

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Special points of interest

- What is the connection between churches and neighborhoods?
- Take a Carbon Sabbath
- Starbucks doubles Fair Trade purchases
- Looking for someone to speak on climate change?

WAITING AND WORKING FOR THE IMPOSSIBLE BY PAUL KORTENHOVEN



I was reviewing old issues of the Advocate and came across this 2002 article from our friend Paul Kortenhoven. Paul and his wife Mary served as CRC missionaries to Sierra Leone for over two decades and are now living in Grand Rapids, MI. As Americans look to an uncertain future with a new administration, economic woes and war, I thought maybe it was time for a re-print.

This piece also reminds us that World AIDS Day will be recognized on December 1. The figures Paul cites here would be outdated. New numbers from the [annual UNAIDS report](#) indicate that 33 million people are living with HIV/AIDS – progress is being made. – Tracy

A few weeks to wait until Christmas! The Advent season is about waiting, something we find difficult to do these days.

We wait for more than gold, frankincense and myrrh. We wait for the “impossible,” and we wait knowing that such waiting looks like nonsense to many.

We wait for peace in a world where the drums of war are thundering around us, for joy to come each morning, and for love to melt our hearts into the heart of Jesus.

We wait to celebrate God’s “impossible” intervention in our world. We wait for good news to overcome the bad news and for the wounded to become whole.

We wait for God’s justice to become a blessing for the poor.

In the Christmas carol “O Little Town of Bethlehem,” we sing a most amazing line: “The hopes and fears of all the years are met in you tonight.”



I believe that it is this realization that keeps us going. It certainly kept my family going in Sierra Leone during a decade-long brutal civil war.

We had hope that peace would come. We had hope that justice would be given to the victims and joy to the sorrowing. And then we did our level best to make it a reality.

Story continued on page 2.

JUSTICE AND WORSHIP

Don’t miss this must-read article from the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship on how to become a veteran-friendly church. Even though church folks disagree about war and peacemaking, this article discusses the great need for military members and families for the compassion and ministry of the church. It also provides plenty of suggestions for worship and ministry with links to other resources.

Check it out here: <http://www.calvin.edu/worship/stories/veterans.php>

WAITING AND WORKING, CONT'D

Advent for so many Sierra Leoneans was years in duration. But now it is arriving, and the wait was worth it all. God is healing hearts and bodies.

Christians are sharing good news with their brothers and sisters. The kingdom of God is spreading there, as it is in much of Africa.

Our family spent 22 years living and working with people who have few and sometimes no possessions other than a ragged shirt and shorts and worn out shoes.

We wait with our Sierra Leonean friends for poverty to be lifted. While we wait, we speak out on their behalf, we teach people to read, we share the hope that we have in Christ in order to heal hearts.

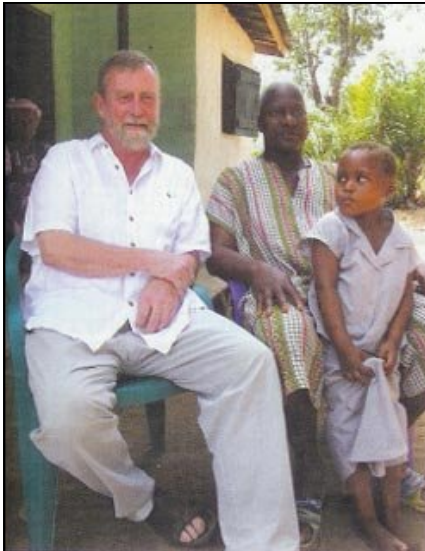
The UNAIDS and the World Health Organization just released new HIV/AIDS figures, showing that 42 million people across the world are suffering from HIV/AIDS.

Most of those afflicted are in Africa and the numbers grow in other developing parts of the world. We wait for a time when no child must be orphaned because of disease, when whole communities are healthy and thriving.

Yet while we wait, we work hard to educate those at risk and those who can help, like CRWRC's Wyva Hasselblad, stationed in Senegal, who has been on the forefront of HIV/AIDS education there for a decade. Some of us will observe World AIDS Day on December 1 in our congregations with prayer, liturgies, and by wearing red AIDS pins. Some of us will advocate for affordable medication and care for those who need it most by contacting the Prime Minister or President.

You who read this newsletter are partners in these efforts because you understand Advent. You know how to wait and work for the "impossible" that became possible in Bethlehem so long ago.

During the next weeks, light the Advent candles, and as you melt them all into the candle of Christmas, recommit yourselves to a world where peace is more powerful than war and the poor know with certainty that God's justice will be their permanent possession.



What is the connection between churches and neighborhoods? Most churches have a desire to serve their communities, but struggle with how to accomplish this.

What if the best way to serve the community is not just *IN* the community, or *TO* the community, but rather create partnerships and serve *WITH* the community?

When churches start partnering *WITH* the community a much bigger world of resources opens up and the true potential of the church will be revealed in The Power of "WITH."

Many people and churches are beginning to experience The Power of "WITH" and are eager to share their stories with you. Come join in on the conversation by bringing your hopes, doubts, questions, and stories to "The Power of With" Conference 2009.

Learn more and register at <http://www.thepowerofwith.com>.

ACTION OPPORTUNITIES

Applications will be accepted through January 1, 2009 for the summer **West Bank Study and Service Tour** coordinated by [IDEA Ministries](http://www.ideaministries.org).

High school, college age and adults are invited to apply for this unique tour which involves archaeological exploration, hands-on ministry, solid study, and personal discipleship.

Participants will spend one week living in Palestinian host homes, and one week visiting archeological sites of biblical interest.

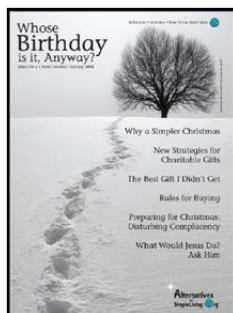
Learn more about the tour and get application forms at www.ideaministries.org.

The **Summer Peacebuilding Institute** at Eastern Mennonite University is now accepting applications.

The Institute is a program of the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding at EMU in Harrisonburg, Virginia and will be held from May 4 to June 12, 2009.

Learn more about the offerings and how to apply at www.emu.edu/spi

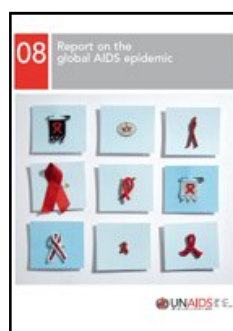
WEBSITES AND RESOURCES



Order your copies of **Whose Birthday is it, Anyway?** before Christmas!

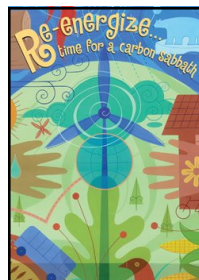
This resource from Alternatives for Simple Living includes personal devotions, family activities and helpful suggestions for making your Christmas season more Christ-focused, less consumer-oriented, and with an eye for social justice.

Contact Alternatives directly to purchase: <http://www.simpleliving.org>.



The **latest numbers on the global AIDS epidemic** are now available.

Access the 2008 [Global AIDS report](#) from UNAIDS.

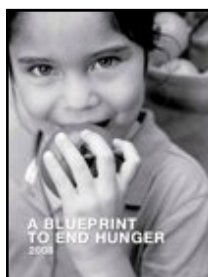


[Kairos](#), a CRC Canada partner, is entering its second year of the **Carbon Sabbath campaign** with new resources and action ideas on energy and the environment.

You can access the new materials at www.kairoscanada.org/e/resources/orders.asp



Those of you in the West Michigan area can take advantage of this speaker opportunity: Dr. Janel Curry from Calvin College is available to speak to classes, adult education groups, etc. on the topic of **climate change** and how people of faith can respond: jury@calvin.edu



Bread for the World and anti-hunger groups have released a **Blueprint to End Hunger**, a plan that highlights critical steps to help families achieve food security. You can download a copy on the [Bread website](#).

NEWS BRIEFS

Standing up against poverty

Do you know what almost 2% of the world's population did this October? They stood up against poverty and stood up for the Millennium Development Goals.

Around the world between October 17 and 19, 116,993,629 people stood up at events in which participants urged action from their government leaders to meet their promises to achieve the poverty fighting Millennium Development Goals.

42 people out of that 116 million participated in the CRC denominational building in Grand Rapids on October 17. You can view photos and videos of Stand Up events around the world at www.standagainstopoverty.org/en/

Starbucks doubles Fair Trade purchases

Good news for those of you who enjoy a Starbucks roast every now and then. The popular coffee company will be doubling their purchases of Fair Trade Certified coffee in 2009 to 40 million pounds.

This will make Starbucks the largest Fair Trade Certified coffee purchaser in the world. Fair Trade ensures that strict social and

environmental criteria are met, guaranteeing a decent wage for small family farmers, ensuring safe working conditions, and protecting fragile environments.

Starbucks has also joined forces with [Product\(RED\)](#), an effort in which popular companies like Apple and The Gap give a portion of their proceeds for (RED) products to the [Global Fund](#) to fight AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. More than \$112 million has been raised for the Global Fund through (RED) products.

Just as companies need to hear from consumers about areas where they can improve, it's also important to let them know we support their efforts to become more socially and environmentally responsible.

If you're a Starbucks customer, send them a [quick note to thank them](#) for their work with Fair Trade and the Global Fund.

- Continued on page 4

NEWS BRIEFS, CONT'D

Tents of Hope camp out on the Washington Mall

Participants in the Tents of Hope for Darfur campaign gathered in Washington D.C. for a weekend of action and awareness.



Photo courtesy of Jeff Malet

The year-long campaign invited communities around the United States to paint canvas tents, similar to the tents that house refugees from the Darfur region of Sudan, with messages of hope and peace in order to raise money for relief efforts, and to advocate for an end to the violence.

From November 7-9, many of those participants brought their painted tents to the Washington Mall for a culminating advocacy

and awareness event. You can see some great photos at www.blogfordarfur.org

A handful of painted Tents of Hope were also put on display outside of the CRC denominational building in Grand Rapids November 7-9, along with a banner directing passing motorists to the OSJ website: www.crcjustice.org.

There, they could access background on the violence in Darfur, a link to donate to relief work through CRWRC, and tips for how to advocate for the refugees of Darfur.

Painted tents from around the country will be shipped to Darfur to become colorful classrooms and teacher offices in Darfur refugee camps.

ADVOCATE CALENDAR

World AIDS Day is December 1.

You can learn about the global HIV/AIDS epidemic by visiting the AIDS issue section on www.crcjustice.org, and you can follow the progress of the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee's global AIDS campaign at www.embraceaids.org.

Registration is now open for Ecumenical Advocacy Days 2009, March 13-16 in Washington, D.C. The 7th annual Ecumenical Advocacy Days will explore ways to bring about a world with Enough for All Creation.

Participants will hear about the connections between climate change, migration and poverty in the U.S. and around the world. Join with hundreds of Christians from around the US for worship, fellowship and witness.

Visit www.advocacydays.org to learn more and register.

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