

Calls for justice ring out in Madison, Wisconsin, in Cairo, Egypt – giving birth to new hope and new community



**Workers' rights demonstration at the Wisconsin State Capitol,
February 26, 2011. (See pages 11- 20.)**

Photos are courtesy of the Workers' Rights Center of Madison, WI. Inc.
Photo of the Capitol by Carlos Miranda; photo of the women by Blake Valenta.
They invite you to consider contributing to the Workers' Rights Center of Madison, WI. Inc.
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The Co-Moderator's Column

Finding Justice on Common Ground

by Bill Dummer, Co-Moderator

In addition to my leadership in this organization and as the Coordinator of Milwaukee Presbytery's Ghana Partnership and my near-round-year involvement with gardening (see my Email address), I am content to just be a foot soldier in a couple other justice organizations. One of them is Southeastern Wisconsin Common Ground (an Industrial Areas Foundation) organization of congregations, religious groups, small businesses, non-profits, schools, unions and neighborhood associations. In February of 2010 Common Ground launched a campaign to require *Deutsche Bank*, *US Bank*, and *Wells Fargo Bank* to comply with CG's three demands for the reasonable disposition of the hundreds of foreclosed homes they own in southeastern Wisconsin.

Responsible/accessible foreclosure sales – Stop selling the homes to “speculators” through auctions or mass sales and work with us to develop a plan to sell these properties to responsible owners.

Demolition – Pay for the demolition of the properties beyond rehabilitation and donate the land to a community land trust for future residential construction.



Bill Dummer

Rehabilitation Fund – Each bank to contribute \$25 million towards a \$75 million fund, which will be used to rehabilitate and sell these properties.

As in many places in the U.S., major banks own hundreds of foreclosed properties, many vacant and abandoned. These properties are causing tremendous problems in our community: safety issues, neighborhood deterioration, increased taxes and declining property values. A research group of Common Ground concluded that large, national, out-of-state banks that marketed and invested in subprime mortgages primarily to the poor and the elderly caused the foreclosure crisis in

Southeastern Wisconsin. As a result of the great recession, these banks are now the owners of these properties. A year ago, the study group also learned that these three banks recorded third quarter profits of \$5.8 billion. So CG demanded that they invest some of these funds back into the communities they have been destroying.

A year ago about 100 people gathered across the street from the main Wells Fargo branch office for a media event in which the research document "Faces of Foreclosure" was released to the media. Copies were then taken to the two banks in town (Deutsche Bank is an absentee land owner in Milwaukee). They were given a deadline to agree to sit down with CG to respond to the demands. Progress was painfully slow. Finally, in April, the lead organizer and a member of the task group who spoke German went to Frankfurt, Germany

for Deutsche Bank's annual meeting. We also made sure that the German media were present when CG presented its grievance. The CEO of Deutsche Bank assured them that the U.S. branch would cooperate. And they did start cooperating.

In October, the negotiating team working with the bank representatives told them that CG would be having a convention on the 26th at the Harley-Davidson Museum in downtown Milwaukee. One of the items of business was to hear the banks' answers to five questions regarding how they were cooperating with CG in providing information on their foreclosed properties to the city governments in which they were located. By then, there were five banks involved. All but Deutsche Bank gave fairly acceptable answers to the 1100 people who were present from the 40+ CG

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or contact our membership database manager:

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organizations (including the media). My perception was that at last the banks had gotten the message that Common Ground meant business.

At a follow-up action event in November with 200 people present, each of the banks provided lists of all of their foreclosed properties and agreed to have Common Ground monitor the progress (or lack thereof) in following through with the original demands. At the conclusion of the meeting, we had the opportunity to volunteer to do monthly evaluations of the properties. I am monitoring six of them in a neighborhood north of where I live that has been particularly hard hit by the foreclosure crisis. I check on such things as whether the walks have been shoveled, the security of the doors and windows, the condition of the property, and progress in selling, rehabbing or demolition. Despite what the political right thinks, community organizing does work to bring justice.

Well, that's the news from Milwaukee, with the fourth highest poverty rate of large cities in the U.S., high unemployment of minorities, and kids trying to get an education in a struggling public school system. It is an interesting time in this part of the country, with the recent political shifts.

Meanwhile, enjoy the articles and news in this issue and watch for the upcoming membership survey.

More Light Presbyterian Board issues statement on Amendment 10-A

We stand at the half-way point in the presbyteries' voting on proposed Amendment 10-A, which would return the church to our historically Presbyterian way of calling church officers. In true Reformed tradition, faithful Presbyterians throughout the church have been advocating passionately to affirm the inalienable right of governing bodies to elect their own officers.

We are very hopeful that this will be the year that the church acts to unbind the Holy Spirit and open the door to ordination for those qualified and called to serve. We rejoice in this positive momentum and give thanks for all those who have labored to change hearts and minds, and for those presbyteries that have come to understand that the conflict created in our church by the present G-6.0106 b. is intolerably hurtful to our denomination.

We encourage and welcome the support of all in the ratification of 10-A, confirming our commitment to work faithfully together, acknowledging our oneness in Christ, and our common call to reconciliation.

Adopted by the National MLP Board of Directors on 2/21/2011 in Kansas City, Missouri.

Follow the vote, or inquire about getting involved at www.amendment10A.org.



The Editor's Spot

Walking on the edge - and rejoicing in the web of life

Here's a news item that appeared in the *La Crosse Tribune*, our local daily paper, on Valentine's Day:

A driver suffering from an apparent medical condition hit a pedestrian and several mailboxes before ending up in a yard in the 2800 block of Lakeshore Drive on Sunday afternoon, police said.

The 51-year-old driver was taken to Franciscan Skemp Medical Center after the 4:18 p.m. accident, but his condition was unknown. Town of Campbell police did not release the man's name pending notification of family.

The vehicle clipped a 76-year-old pedestrian walking on the roadway's shoulder; the person was treated for minor injuries at the site, Campbell police said.

Well, I was that 76-year-old pedestrian. And that little incident has led me, as you might expect, into a few reflections that I'd like to share with you in this, my last Editor's Spot before I happily turn over my space to our new editor, the Rev. Lorelei Hillman. (Please see p. 34.)

The newspaper offers a fairly minimalist approach to the incident, so I'd like to tell a little bit more of it from this participant's point of view.

It was a nice Sunday afternoon in southwestern Wisconsin – at least nice for Wisconsin in February – so I decided to go out for a little walk. I left our apartment complex, walked out to the main road, which is lightly traveled, with most drivers going about 30 miles an hour. I turned right, walking south on the left side of the road, facing what traffic there was. I'd gone just a few yards, and wasn't paying particular attention to the few cars coming toward me. (Thinking deep thoughts no doubt.)

Suddenly I felt a sharp blow on the inside of my right elbow, the side toward the road, as a pickup truck moved past me. It hurt, but I was still standing, fully conscious, and otherwise seemed to be fine. I turned to see what had passed me, and just then a car pulled up beside me. The driver was busy with her cell phone, calling 911, and then opened her window to ask if I was OK. I said yes, and then we both looked down the road and saw that the pickup had swerved off the road into a snowbank. A woman from one of the small houses by the road was standing by the driver's door waving for us to come and help her.

The woman who had stopped by me parked her car and we both walked some ten or twenty yards to the pickup, as two men who were driving by stopped and walked over, too.

The windows on the cab of the pickup were closed, and the woman from the nearby house was calling into the cab, trying to get the driver to answer. He was clearly unresponsive, so she and the rest of us tried to get a door open or break a window. Nothing was working, and the driver of the truck still showed no signs of life.

Then another pickup pulled over. The driver got out – a young man wearing a sweat-shirt bearing the name of a neighboring community’s volunteer fire company. He hurried over and joined the effort. We were having little

success, when we heard sirens approaching, and two local police officers arrived in quick succession. They had the tools and the skills to get the truck door open, while a couple of us walked down the road far enough to warn other drivers to slow down, and then to redirect traffic away from the scene.

I went back to the pickup and watched the officers, now aided by an EMS squad that had just arrived, as they pulled the man out and laid him on the cold pavement. They started efforts to revive him, but as far as I could see, his situation looked far from promising.

I wandered around the growing group of passers-by, as some of us shared what we had seen of the incident. One of the police officers approached me

The Mission of Presbyterian Voices for Justice

We are a playful and passionate community
of women and men in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
who are called to proclaim the Gospel vision
of God’s extravagant love and justice
in church and society.

We seek the wisdom of the Spirit for following Christ’s example
and for living into the hope of sustained gender equality,
racial reconciliation, full human rights for LGBT persons,
economic justice, environmental wholeness,
an end to war and all forms of violence,
and a justice-loving shalom over all the earth.

We commit to risking the transformation of our own selves
and our organization
to live into this vision,
even as we invite both church and society
to meet this challenge.

saying someone had identified me as the one who had been hit as the truck veered off the road, and took down my name and contact information. A few minutes later one of the EMS crew came up to ask more about me, to look carefully at my elbow (which was already looking impressively bruised, but nothing worse than that), and to ask if I wanted to be transported to one of the hospitals to be examined. I said I thought that was not necessary, and she made sure I signed a statement on her laptop, taking responsibility for my choice not to seek care. (We do take those legal things seriously, don't we!)

A couple neighbors from the apartment complex were in the group of bystanders, so I chatted with them a bit, as they expressed concern both for me and for the unidentified man still lying on the pavement. Soon the EMS crews (we now had two ambulances there, and a fire truck) had him loaded up, and headed off to one of our hospitals. He died a day or two later, apparently without ever gaining consciousness. He lived just a couple blocks north of our apartment, and was apparently on his way home when some medical "incident" rendered him unconscious as he drove up the road toward me.

That's a long story, but I need to tell you what happened, so my various thoughts since then may make a little sense. So what's been going through my head in the two weeks since then?

First, of course, I was struck by a profound sense of the uncertainty, the

vulnerability of life. I survived, but if I had been walking just a bit slower, had been just a couple paces behind where I was, I might well not have lived through it. So I live with a powerful sense of gratitude for my life – mixed with sorrow for the death of another man whose life ended so suddenly.

I realize how much energy I have put into convincing myself that I live in a world that is safe, and then I go out to enjoy a little walk in my quiet neighborhood, and find that my life is seriously at risk. At one level, of course I know that, but my religious faith has taught me for years that I am watched over by a loving, caring, powerful God, so I need not be afraid. Well, I guess it's not that simple, is it?

So I am coming to a new awareness of my – *our* – vulnerability. And that leads me to a sharp new appreciation for life and all that it holds for me, and for all of us.

As I talked with my wife, Kim, about this feeling of vulnerability, she was reminded of a favorite poem, that speaks to me as well:

Otherwise

I got out of bed
on two strong legs.
It might have been
otherwise. I ate
cereal, sweet
milk, ripe, flawless
peach. It might
have been otherwise.



I took the dog uphill
to the birch wood.
All morning I did
the work I love.

At noon I lay down
with my mate. It might
have been otherwise.
We ate dinner together
at a table with silver
candlesticks. It might
have been otherwise.
I slept in a bed
in a room with paintings
on the walls, and
planned another day
just like this day.
But one day, I know,

it will be otherwise.

Jane Kenyon

From *Otherwise: New & Selected Poems*. © 1996 by the Estate of Jane Kenyon. Published by Graywolf Press, Saint Paul, MN.

As the first shock of the accident wore off, I have increasingly felt gratitude for the people who gathered around the scene of the crash. The woman who stopped to check on me, the woman who led the way to try to help the driver of the truck, and all the others who came into the little group to do whatever they could, some coming as professionals with skills and tools to help manage a very difficult situation, others simply bringing their friendly concern and

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If you would like to make a huge contribution to the work of Presbyterian Voices for Justice, consider helping us with our PVJ website.

What might you do?

Well, one great gift would be your help in redesigning the site, and perhaps helping provide the software we need for doing that.

Or you could help by finding and/or writing content for posting, or doing some of the formatting and posting yourself.

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support. I was deeply touched, as I have been so many times over the years, by the ability of ordinary people to respond to the needs of others. I wonder if sometimes we progressives have become a little too “realistic,” seeing only the selfishness and greed in our society, and thinking that only better laws and government programs can limit them. People really do respond out of compassion, with real care, when someone is in need. In our sophisticated awareness of social structures and systems, we should not lose sight of that vital and humane reality.

But our social systems *do* work, too. It was professionals, after all, who were finally able to get the unconscious man out of his car, and begin doing what needed to be done – even if in this instance he was really beyond help. The rest of us could have stood around for an hour, full of compassion and concern, without really being able to help much. The police and medical people were trained, disciplined, paid employees of local government units. (Probably union members, too, though Wisconsin’s governor would like to undo that if he could.)

So I was reminded vividly that we live within an infinite network of life and being – what Thich Nhat Hanh calls “Interbeing.” And that network is profoundly sacred, holy. It sustains us, connects us, is both transcendent and immediately “real.” We are never alone, but are eternally with and for others. That has become a vital thread

of comfort and strength to me through these days.

It seems that compassion, while immensely powerful and effective at knitting us together in the great human network in which our Creator has placed us and by which we are so profoundly blessed, is not always able to move into action. Perhaps it’s because we don’t have the skills or knowledge, perhaps it’s because the problem is just too big and too complex for us. But compassion is where the action starts.

Compassion matters. But sometimes we Presbyterians may get too cerebral – urging people to do good (working for justice and peace and all that), without recognizing that our action is fundamentally motivated by our hearts, not our heads. We act in response to the needs of others because we feel a profound kinship with them, in all their pain and pleasure, in all their weakness and their strength.

The Rev. Jane Spahr, former director of TAMFS (That All May Freely Serve) has taken that seriously by urging that proponents of full equality for LGBT Presbyterians, including the possibility of ordination, must work at “personing” the issue. By telling human stories, we can help people see the question of ordination not simply as a matter of proper Presbyterian doctrine, or right interpretation of Scripture, but as a matter of the lives of real people. They suffer real pain when their gifts are not respected, and when they are

labeled as somehow beyond the reach of God's love. LGBT ordination is indeed a matter of justice, but we need to start by recognizing and discussing it as a matter of people, awakening the compassion that lies at the heart of what we call "life in Christ."

So our commitment to justice can perhaps best be conveyed by telling human stories. I've seen this expressed well in a recent book by Burt Berlowe, with whom I have worked in the Twin Cities chapter of the Network of Spiritual Progressives. In *The Compassionate Rebel Revolution: Ordinary People Changing the World* (by Burt Berlowe and other contributing authors, edited by Rebecca Janke; published in 2011 by Mill City Press, Minneapolis), Berlowe and his co-authors simply help a variety of people tell their own stories of how they became activists for issues of peace and justice. Ordinary people tell some powerful stories!

One important point that Berlowe makes in his introduction, and through many of the life stories, is the importance of anger – outrage at the injustice and the poverty and the multitude of sufferings that the world inflicts on people. That outrage can move people to seek change, but it can also destroy people and communities, unless compelling voices of compassion are raised in the community as well.

Out of all these ruminations come two parting thoughts for Presbyterian

Voices for Justice: Considering our organization's focus on "justice" as our core commitment, we must never let that become an abstract value or goal. Our commitment to justice should grow out of our human caring for people and the world in which we live – compassion, love, and delight in the people around us, in circles small and intimate, and wide and far beyond our immediate relationships and acquaintances. May our anger at injustice never fade, but may it always be guided and made into a "healing touch" by the divine gift of compassionate love.

And thinking about my sense of the connectedness of life, of the "Interbeing" within which we all live and move and have our being, I'm deeply grateful for the networks of friendships and shared commitments with which the Witherspoon Society, and now Voices for Justice, have surrounded and grounded me over the past two decades and more. May this strong web of relationships continue to nurture and sustain us all, even as it enriches the life of our church, and serves as part of God's working in the world.

Doug King

Standing In the (Wisconsin) Gap

By Shannon Johnson

Shannon Johnson is a choir director at a private school in the Madison area. She has degrees in music, education, and religion.

She has been involved with the unions when she worked in public education but no longer has the opportunity to be a part of a union.

Growing up in Minnesota, she spent time in Iowa and Arizona teaching before moving to Wisconsin, where she also serves as a choir director and confirmation teacher at a local church.



Shannon Johnson, right, with a friend, Cara Stone, on the Wednesday evening they spent overnight in the capitol.

People have asked me, “Why do you care about this budget repair bill? It doesn’t affect you. You teach at a private school.” And I thought long and hard about how disappointed I would be in myself if I were to remain passive, all out of fear. Wasn’t Jesus involved and concerned about the injustice he saw in his society?

Jesus showed love and created community and calls on us to do the same. A great community has risen up in protest to the Wisconsin State Governor’s budget repair bill. And it has risen up in the most loving way possible – by asking protestors to stay peaceful, by encouraging respect toward police, by voicing opinions to legislators through appropriate channels, by cleaning the state capitol, and the list goes on.

On Valentine’s Day, I read a short but passionate article about the legislation, recalling slightly that I had also read a different article the day before that was much more vague. I perused the Wisconsin State Governor’s website, running over the bullet points listed there about the budget repair bill. Did it say that unions would become defunct? Not in so many words, but it did say that collective bargaining would only be able to negotiate pay within limits (although not things such as pay schedules). Collective Bargaining Rights were the sticking point. I read about protestors at the State Capitol and was desperate to get down there

but was unable to, as I had to work late in the evenings.

February 16 was the first day the Madison School District could not have school because so many teachers called in sick. My friends who teach in the district still planned on going to work, since they were still requested to report to school even though there were no students. They had no doctor's note and were not sick. They were mad but they were also torn. The rest of the week saw no-student days in Madison as well as many other districts in Wisconsin. Fourteen Democratic senators left the state so the State Senate could not vote on the bill. Direct deposit stopped to their bank accounts and they now have to retrieve their paycheck in person at the capitol. None have come back to get paid (a source of encouragement to many protestors).

My first experience with protesting other than through the Internet was on Friday, February 18, after work. I was stunned when I walked into the Capitol. Homemade posters lined the walls – some asking the governor not to take away workers' rights, some outlining how it would affect them, and a few demanding that he be recalled when it was a legal option. Of note were also the signs that asked protestors to put up the signs using blue tape, as this would not damage the walls. Signs were hung up with blue tape.

As I headed into the rotunda, chants and drums grew louder. In the middle

was a large group of young college-aged people. They were hitting drums, starting chants, dancing around, and sharing stories through a megaphone. Heading up to the second tier revealed many more people comprised of many more ages and even more signs, saying things like, "I love my teachers," "Solidarity from North Carolina," and "Workers Rights ARE Human Rights." Stationed around the capitol were people offering food from Ian's Pizza (people from multiple states had been calling in orders and asking it to be delivered to the capitol for the protestors), bottles of water, sleeping bags, first aid, an information "center," a "family space," and quiet but observant security officers.

The next day saw a very large protest. Some estimates were as high as 70,000 and some as low as 55,000. Either way, most people belonged to the protestors. There were volunteers "crowd controlling" and people wearing signs and reminding people that it was a peaceful protest. "Please," one woman asked, "keep it peaceful. It may be difficult to keep a cool head when you hear things that are factually incorrect or mean spirited, but do not respond in a poor manner, otherwise that can be used against our cause." And although there were signs with clever little quips, nobody that I saw became unreasonable. Some protestors stopped by the non-protestor rally. Here were signs that read things such as "Guess who is overpaid? Teachers! Do your share." But other signs just said "Support Walker." Those two signs

give two very distinctly different feelings and also showed that perhaps there was no clear unifying factor for the non-protestors' rally. But there were no brawls, no police intervention. Mostly the two groups just ignored each other. Some people were having heated but civil conversations. It was amazing. "Tell me what democracy looks like! This is what democracy looks like," was a common chant.

Sunday showed gross weather but still protestors came to the capitol. And Monday. And Tuesday. Wednesday evening I spent more time at the capitol. I met up with a young student who helped me lead the national anthem from the middle of the state capitol rotunda. I stayed up until 1:30 AM watching the Wisconsin State Assembly debate before sleeping on the hard, marble floor. I felt so extremely proud of the State Assembly for going over amendments – almost 40 hours continuously at this point.

The Wisconsin Law Enforcement Association issued a statement regretting their endorsement of Scott Walker. The Chief of Police in Madison was troubled by the fact the governor said he had considered planting trouble-makers among the protestors. The mayor met with city workers and negotiated contracts for the next two years. Firefighters, a union that also endorsed Scott Walker, have marched through playing bagpipes just about every day of the protests as the people chant "thank you!" People are angry that Scott Walker has threatened public

workers with lay-offs, but recently gave tax breaks to corporations. I do not know if I can explain the feelings of the community when the Assembly passed the bill on Friday, February 25. While some people were glad, most I saw were disappointed, sad, and angry. The bill now waits on the Senate (which, if you recall, cannot currently happen).

The second protest the following Saturday showed even more protestors, continuing to be peaceful. There was more marching, chanting, sign holding, thanking, speeches. There continues to be a stream of people from both Wisconsin and outside of Wisconsin coming to rally to show support against the bill. The Wisconsin governor has said that "most of the protestors are from out-of-state." This is very far from the truth. Protestors still remain in the capitol, despite an order to leave the building. Security has determined not to arrest anyone as long as they obey the law. In fact, security asked those who were not planning to leave the capitol to go to the upper floors, while those who planned to leave could stay on the bottom floor of the capitol. So there a contingent of protestors remain. Who knows if they will be there in a week?

I do not foresee the protestors giving up. This is not just a few people who are upset because they are being asked to pay more of their health insurance premiums. This is a large community demanding to keep their collective bargaining rights so they can have a

say in working conditions, work environment safety, and the number of students in the classroom. This is a community that does not understand why the governor is making a choice to lay off workers instead of finding other responsible ways to balance the state budget (many question the tax breaks to corporations the governor passed his first month in office). This is a community and allies asking to collectively bargain in good faith.

Over and over again, I heard public workers emphasize “it is not about the money.” In fact, most are understanding of having to take a pay cut (billed as “paying more into their pension”) and pay more for health insurance. Then what is everyone protesting? Taking away collective bargaining rights.

People are determined to protest peacefully until the bill is re-evaluated and changed. Security and protestors are getting along. People who cannot take off work during the day continue to blog, post Facebook updates, text, and e-mail each other to show solidarity.

Who has come together for this bill? Just a short description of the people I have met while protesting at the capitol: students, teachers, retired teachers, pastors, fire fighters, police, nurses, doctors, plumbers, a stay-at-home mother, an Illinois-based road construction worker who has done a lot of work in Wisconsin, musicians, professors, a waitress from a local diner, accountants, state social

workers, teaching assistants from the University, private company IT workers, lawyers, a water aerobics instructor, a librarian, artist, custodian, family, friends.

What a great sense of community – and what a loving protest. Jesus would be proud.

Public employee unions are under attack!

For more information, check out *The Wisconsin State Journal*, at http://host.madison.com/news/state_and_regional/article_5c2a2c58-9c6c-58e1-888b-1bccd7e2a1f8.html

or *The Nation*, at <http://www.thenation.com/blog/158522/wisconsins-dictator-governor-guts-collective-bargaining-rights-public-employees>

Deadline for the Spring 2011 issue is May 1

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SB 1070, Immigration, and Worker Rights: From Arizona to Wisconsin and Beyond

The Rev. Trina Zelle gave this keynote address on Thursday morning, Feb. 24, for the Interfaith Coalition for Worker Justice of South Central Wisconsin <http://www.workerjustice.org/>, on the occasion of their Labor/Religion Breakfast. It obviously comes at a critical time for the labor movement in Wisconsin, when labor unions in general, and especially public employee unions, are under attack by the state's governor and the Republican-dominated legislature.

Trina is the director of Interfaith Worker Justice of Arizona <http://azworkerjustice.com/default.aspx>, and served as co-moderator of the Witherspoon Society from 2006 to 2008.

Good morning. It is an honor to be here with you today. And let me begin by bringing you greetings of solidarity from the 60% of Arizonans who aren't – to use that Texas phrase I am so fond of – a bubble off plumb. (I'll leave that to the carpenters and construction folks among you to figure that out!) That is to say, the good people of Arizona who get up and fight every day for the working families of Arizona.

I am here to tell you that what has been going on in Arizona, and what is going on here in Wisconsin is linked. Literally. One of the most draconian anti-immigrant bills ever to be written and the attempts of Governor Walker to eviscerate the union movement in Wisconsin are of a piece. Both in terms of a dystopian world view that sees working people as commodities to be manipulated and in terms of the actual behind-the-scene players. Both part of a larger effort to turn back the clock to the Robber Baron era or the England of Charles Dickens. Both constituting a grave threat, not only to the people of our

respective states, but all working Americans, the union movement, and the Union – as in these 50 United States – itself.

Where to begin in such a complicated and ugly story? When SB 1070 was signed into law last April 23, it was a culmination of increasingly vicious anti-immigrant bills in Arizona; including the denial of bail for the most petty misdemeanor to the denial of workers compensation for injured undocumented workers. But SB1070 outdid them all. It has as its stated goal, and I quote directly from the legislation itself, “enforced attrition.” Translation: We are going to make things so miserable for you here, you will leave on your own.

No matter what meme is put out there by apologists for this legislation, this means that you are subject to questioning, arrest, and deportation if the grass on your front lawn is too long, or if someone is of the opinion that there are too many people living in your house. Although some of the more egregious aspects of

the bill have been temporarily set aside by a federal judge (who had to go under police protection following her ruling), I could still have my car impounded if someone who is riding with me is found to be out of status. Given the mixed immigrant status of many Latino families, this means that you could be arrested for taking Grandma to the doctor.

But what's this all about? Where did this desire to inflict misery on a once tolerated part of the population come from? And why has it seemed to resonate with so many across the nation that now, states are vying with each other to out-Arizona, Arizona?

There are a number of reasons. Among them, well-documented nativist racism and the aggressive lobbying of a private prison industry with cells to fill, but the reason that carries all the others along is as old as the first contractual arrangement between human beings – the drive to control labor. More accurately, to disenfranchise labor and thereby maximize profits on the backs of workers. To so demonize one group of people that the rest of us won't notice that we're being taken to the cleaners too – just less obviously – for now. Not all that different from what you're seeing at work here in Wisconsin – you see, not only does Walker's "budget repair bill" gut public sector unions, it gives him the authority to award Wisconsin's public utilities to anyone he sees fit to do so on a no-bid basis. Can you say, "Koch Brothers?"

At this point, I'd like to step back for a

moment and give you a brief history of this most current "immigration crisis" – both in the state of Arizona and nationwide – from my own personal experience and perspective.

In the Fall of 1993 I had barely unpacked from our family's move to El Paso, Texas, when the North American Free Trade Agreement was passed by Congress and signed by President Clinton. Concurrent with these events the El Paso Sector Border Patrol established a border blockade, called "Operation Hold the Line," which abruptly cut off the free flow of traffic between Ciudad Juarez and El Paso. On January 1, 1994, NAFTA was implemented. By the end of 1994, the Mexican peso was devalued, going from 3 pesos to the US dollar to 10 pesos to the US dollar.

The result of this was a Mexico plunged into severe economic crisis. Property values dropped and unemployment soared, but since NAFTA is only about the free movement of goods, Mexican workers had limited options. The traditional journey to the United States to find temporary work was met with border fences, which were an extension of the initial 1993 blockade. This not only stopped these new workers, it disrupted the circular migration that had characterized the US/Mexico labor exchange for generations. Unable to risk going back to Mexico to visit family, people who had managed to cross over, stopped going home. Some families migrated north for the first time.

In an attempt to control what was

imagined to be a flood of desperate workers coming across the border, our federal government, in 1996, made the strategic decision to block the border in such a way that border crossers would be funneled through the extreme conditions of the Sonoran desert into southern Arizona. The rationale was that no one would be crazy enough to attempt to cross such rugged terrain. But desperate people will and desperate people did and they started dying, and continue to do so. To date, more than 5,000 men, women, and children have died excruciating and lonely deaths in the desert.

Then came 9/11 and brown skin attained the status of “probable cause.”

On June 27, 2003, Anthony Tngeman, Director of Homeland Security’s Office for Detention and Removal released a forty-five page memorandum that he had begun working on in September of 2001. This nine year strategic plan starting in 2003 and scheduled to end in 2012 was titled “Endgame.” The stated goal of Endgame is the removal of every “removable alien from the United States” by 2012. As far as I am aware, Endgame is still very much with us, being played out in programs like “Safe Communities” and the 287g arrangement between immigration and local law enforcement.

As all of this was happening, the economy began to tank, in large part because of Wall Street’s bad behavior, and our long-simmering American ambivalence about immigrants came to a full anti-immigrant boil. Its flames were fanned by organizations like the

Federation for American Immigration Reform and its even less savory affiliate entities, founded by a man who is on record as saying that he fears the destruction of the white race. This group proudly admits to drafting Arizona’s legislation and has been designated as a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center.

The narrative surrounding “the immigration debate” is hard to argue against, partly because it is replete with plausible characters – working class whites, angry at the disappearance of their jobs; immigrant criminals; a weak federal government, failing to pass much needed immigration reform. That’s why SB 1070 passed, we are told. And why there’s so much support in other states for similar legislation.

But that’s the narrative for public consumption. What’s really going on?

As Deep Throat tells the young Watergate reporter, “Follow the money.”

Take Corrections Corporation of America – or CCA. Now the fastest growing industry in Arizona, it’s hard to remember that at the end of the nineties, private prisons had become a losing proposition. But then the scapegoating of immigrants exponentially increased and there was CCA, ready to fill the void. Finally, there were bodies to fill those beds and cells. Even better, bodies with few rights and fewer resources

And surprise, surprise. Suddenly, the private prison industry was booming again. In a nutshell, hunting, arresting,

warehousing, and transporting immigrants is big business and as a result, a lot of folks in Arizona are doing quite well.

But immigration incarceration as a cash crop is only the lead in. The rest is about worker disenfranchisement. Most of the cases we see at our worker rights center – as with yours I’m sure – involves wage theft. The withholding of payment for work that has already been done. Since SB 1070 was signed into law last April we have witnessed increasing brazenness on the parts of many employers – who are quite upfront with their threats: leave me alone or I’ll call Sheriff Joe! Standing up for one’s rights could very easily end in arrest and deportation.

This exploitation and intimidation of workers isn’t really new – just the old bad behavior on steroids. And it represents an attitude that dates back at least 160 years to the end of the Civil War. Obviously, the abolition of slavery in 1865 ruined a sweet set-up for a lot of folks not to mention the entire southern economy which was based on unpaid labor. Suddenly, former slaves were supposed to be paid. But former slave owners were not deterred – where there’s a will, there’s a way and while the Thirteenth Amendment of the Constitution ended slavery in general, it specifically excluded prisoners from the abolition of slavery and indentured servitude.

And thus was born the “hiring out of prisoners” system made possible by a justice system that had nothing to do with justice.

All too often, freed slaves in the south found themselves charged with such crimes as “shirking their sharecropping duties” or “petty theft,” automatically convicted and, once again without freedom, “hired out” by the local powers that be for cotton picking, working in mines and building railroads. According to Vicky Pelaez writing for “Global Research” in 2008, fully 88% of Georgia’s “hired out” convicts from 1870 to 1910 were African American. In Alabama, 93% of the hired out miners were African Americans. In Mississippi, prison farms functioned in the same way with the same population until 1972.

This legacy of exploitation extended up to and through the New Deal, when the Fair Labor Standards Act excluded from coverage jobs that had been traditionally carried out by slaves. Initially, southern legislators had objected to this legislation, arguing that southern employers should be allowed to pay lower wages than in the north, but with so many “slave jobs” excluded from protection, the Act got their vote.

Which brings me back to SB 1070 and the forces behind it. We know that the nativist Taunton network folks had a large hand in its drafting, but other groups actively lobbied for its passage as well, including the American Legislative Exchange Council – or ALEC. ALEC exists to bring its member corporations (including the Koch Brothers) together with federal and state legislators to write business friendly legislation. It proudly acknowledges being behind the enactment of laws authorizing and increasing the use of prison contract labor

throughout industry.

Including agriculture, which is why ALEC has vigorously lobbied for tough, anti-immigrant laws, including SB 1070. With traditional immigrant farm workers replaced by inmates, the profit margin for agribusinesses greatly increases. Using prison labor means that there's no danger of a twenty-first century Cesar Chavez emerging. Today, female prisoners from Colorado pick crops once picked by immigrant labor and the same thing is happening in Arizona.

But it doesn't stop with agribusiness. ALEC often serves as a broker between government and multiple industries to put prisoners to work. As of 2008, 37 states had legalized the contracting out of prison labor by private corporations. The list of corporations utilizing prison labor ranges from IBM and Verizon to Target, Intel, Nordstrom's and Dell. Inmates in state penitentiaries usually receive minimum wage – although DOJ rules stipulate “prevailing wage.” But private prisons? That's another matter. In private prisons, inmates receive as little as 17 cents an hour although some CCA prisons pay as much as 50 cents an hour for highly skilled work.

And did I mention that ALEC and its member organizations are also behind many of the mandatory sentencing laws that keep non-violent, disproportionately African American, prisoners incarcerated and available to the prison industrial complex for contract labor? You might call it their own workforce readiness program.

So here's the deal. Or the New Deal as rewritten by the hard right of our country. In order to maximize their profits, labor costs have to be minimized even further. What can't be outsourced to countries with weak labor protections can be in-sourced using prison labor. Immigrants are no longer an important part of the mix – at least the ones who aren't incarcerated – because like immigrants throughout the history of the United States they have an annoying tendency to organize and demand their rights. With the vitality of immigrant labor under assault, all that remains to be done in order to completely disenfranchise labor is to break the unions, beginning with the most powerful ones and symbolically in a state with deep roots in the labor movement.

And now let's talk about Governor Walker's relationship with some of the aforementioned businesses and business associations. To wit, ALEC and the Koch Brothers. Walker's bill stripping public sector unions of their collective bargaining rights was, as reporter Ezra Klein explains, “cooked up by ALEC.” As we know, similar bills are being introduced in Ohio and Indiana, and threaten to overtake the nation in the same kind of mindless firestorm that SB 1070 has. Walker had originally intended to de-certify the unions by executive order but learned that he couldn't do that, hence his “Shock Doctrine” declaration of budget crisis – even though there had been a surplus until his tax give-aways to business.

One of Walker's fellow governors-in-crime is in the process of setting the

stage for similar union-busting actions by citing the notion of the “new normal.” Meaning that we’d all better get used to being deprived of our hard earned rights and lower our expectations for ourselves and our children. Meaning that we should accept the migration of our white collar jobs to other nations with well educated, but low wage workforces, and our blue collar jobs to our domestic Prison Industrial Complex which holds a limitless supply of the kind of workers corporate America wants. In this “new normal” we’re supposed to be grateful for whatever crumbs we are thrown – even though we’re the ones baking the bread!

And yes, these corporations understand that this is destroying families and destabilizing communities across the United States. They don’t care. Why should they? Their “new normal” is bringing them profits beyond their wildest dreams.

In the book *Deep Survival*, Laurence Gonzalez describes the experiences of several seasoned hikers who got so lost in the wilderness that they had to be rescued. Virtually all of them report having had maps. After being rescued, the hikers realized that they had been guilty of “map bending”: trying to forcibly reconcile the actual unfamiliar terrain where they found themselves onto the no longer relevant map in their hands.

I think that some of us in the faith community, and to a lesser degree, in the labor community, are guilty of map bending. We refuse to believe that what

is transpiring in front of our eyes is really happening. We tell ourselves, oh it couldn’t be that bad or these people are so ridiculous they are going to over reach and discredit themselves. We undervalue solidarity and forget who our real friends are.

I’m here to tell you that the terrain has changed. The situation is dire. The stakes are high. We need to draw ourselves a new map that accurately reflects the hostile terrain where we find ourselves. That’s the only way we’re ever going to get to higher ground safe and whole.

One place that map is being drawn is here in Madison, Wisconsin. In the Capitol Rotunda where people are coming together. Where people are supporting each other with resolve and the kind of joy that emerges in the presence of love and respect and gratitude for the opportunity to stand together for what is good and right in this state and in this nation. Where people from all walks of life look at each other with brimming eyes and say, if not now when, if not here, where; if not us, who?

I thank God for you and all of the good working people of Wisconsin, who have told the governor and his handlers and the rest of them: “This stops here and now. We will hold the line. And we will not be moved.”



And more on immigration:**JUSTICE FOR ALL?**

Immigration—boon or bane? At various times in our history, it has been considered each of these, more often both simultaneously. Today the issue is particularly contentious, especially in regard to our southern neighbors. Should we as a people of faith seeking equality and justice have a voice in this debate?

The PCUSA has been actively involved with immigration issues and policies for many years. Last March, I was fortunate to learn about them at a “Crossing Borders” conference I attended in Phoenix, sponsored by the Synod of the Southwest and National Presbyterian Church of Mexico. Inspired by what I learned, I have planned an immigration seminar at Ghost Ranch, August 1-7, 2011.

One leader for this week will be Julia Thorne, Manager of Immigration Issues for the Office of the General Assembly, PCUSA. She is an advocate for reform of current immigration law, policies and procedures in accord with the Resolution passed at the 216th General Assembly (2004). From Julia’s expertise and experience we will learn the many facets of present immigrant and refugee realities and become informed advocates for comprehensive, just immigration reform.

Mark Adams and his wife, Miriam Maldonado Escobar, who live on the border of Agua Prieta, Mexico and Douglas, Arizona, will share what life is like at an epicenter of the many conflicting situations that surround their everyday environment. Mark is the Mission Coworker at Frontera de Cristo,

one of six bi-national border ministries of the National Presbyterian Church of Mexico and Presbyterian Church (USA). Miriam serves with Mark as a mission worker on the border.

Our border ministries are among the best sources of information for us to understand border realities and what is required for building more faithful and just response to immigration issues. One of the most impressive programs developed by Frontera de Cristo is the Café Justo/Just Coffee Cooperative whereby Mexican farmers can remain in their villages by owning their coffee business. This is called “coffee with a conscience” as the farmers benefit from value added steps in processing and roasting that traditionally have benefited corporations. The farmers receive a living wage, health insurance and retirement benefits by owning everything from growing the beans to selling the finished product. This is an exciting program we will have opportunity to learn about and become participants.

During our week together we will learn the reasons for massive global immigration that are a source of continuing political, economic, social stress and alienation. We will examine how present programs for addressing the problems are failing people on both sides of our borders and how we might help shape solutions that are just for all.

– Jane Hanna

See the full seminar description, and a link for registration, on page 38.

More on the Express Scripts vs. its labor union – and the silence of the PCUSA

In the Fall 2010 issue of *Network News* we reported on the SEIU Healthcare Pennsylvania challenges to a plan by Express Scripts (which handles prescription orders for the Presbyterian Board of Pensions, among others) to close its facility of Bensalem, Pennsylvania. Their plan was to move that work to a non-union plant in the St. Louis area.

We were happy to report on our website in December that members of the union in Bensalem had voted overwhelmingly to approve a settlement that will preserve approximately 400 jobs at the Street Road facility, reversing the Company's announcement of plans to shutter all of its Bensalem operations. It also provides a severance package to some 500 workers facing layoff as a result of the closure of another facility and some downsizing at Street Road. (See more on our website at [http://presbyvoicesforjustice.org/2010/express%20scripts.htm#SEIU vs express scripts](http://presbyvoicesforjustice.org/2010/express%20scripts.htm#SEIU_vs_express_scripts))

PVJ member Dennis Maher, of Lake Luzerne, NY, provides the latest update:

Here is a recent follow up story on Express Scripts, from the St. Louis Today website: http://www.stltoday.com/business/local/article_f23869d9-6c1b-5f5f-a92b-a00e112b073b.html

Earlier we learned that Express Scripts was consolidating its operations in the St. Louis area where its employees are not unionized. This article describes company celebrations for many millions of dollars of state and local tax incentives to help them expand. Expansion includes more layoffs

and moving an undisclosed number of jobs perhaps to India or the Philippines.

Workers at Bensalem settled in December with good results, ONLY because they were unionized. I raised the labor issues at Bensalem with the Board of Pensions in November and received this answer:

Dear Dr. Maher,

Thank you for your recent email regarding Express Scripts. The Board of Pensions of the PCUSA has no comment.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any further questions.

Best Regards,
Johnson, Mary [unsigned]

So the PCUSA has no comment about labor issues with its contractor for prescription drugs. Also, the PCUSA nowhere has any comment that I can find on the labor issues in Wisconsin and other states, where collective bargaining itself is threatened.

I am thinking how far we have come since the days when social consciousness was institutionalized in the late '60s and early '70s. Few today are interested in witness, but only in new gimmicks to save a church that may be declining because it has little integrity in its witness.

Denny Maher
Lake Luzerne NY

EDITOR'S NOTE: Stated Clerk Gradye Parsons has recently written a letter to Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker, urging him to call off a plan to balance the state budget in part by de-unionizing state workers.

The Uprising in Cairo

“Helplessness transformed into agency and power”

An American well-acquainted with Egypt offers insights (and calms some American fears) about the recent, amazing uprising there.

PVJ Coordinating Team member Sylvia Carlson sent us this now-widely-circulated email by a former student of a friend of hers. The author, Casondra Sobieralski, described herself this way when I asked her to tell our readers a bit about herself:

I live in Oakland, California. I am a digital media artist, and I have worked several field seasons doing digital documentation work for French archaeologists in Luxor, Egypt. I have an MFA in Conceptual and Information Arts, and my 2005 MFA thesis piece was a 3-projector video installation about the Hatshepsut. My statement for that piece reads: “I went to Egypt seeking the pharaoh Hatshepsut. I thought I was failing, until I realized that I was looking for an ancient Hillary Clinton when I probably should have been looking for a character more like Hatshepsut’s patron goddess of love, play, sensuality, music, and mothering, Hathor. Then I began to see Hatshepsut all around me, in the people of Luxor.”

Here is her e-mail, only slightly edited:

February 10, 2011

I almost was in Cairo or Alexandria for the month of January to work on an online digital heritage project with Egyptians I met in Hong Kong. (I was in Hong Kong with Kevin, my friends/UC colleagues Jeanette and Howie, and others after Thanksgiving for a Pacific Neighborhood Consortium conference. Still haven’t had time to write about that trip, paid for by UC Berkeley...)

But nope, I am here in the Bay Area.

At least my BODY is. Egypt is, of course, my soul state, and hence the ol’ Ka (in Pharonic belief systems the Ka is roughly equivalent to the astral body) has been mostly in Luxor, a bit in Cairo.

So I have been quite exhausted and a space cadet this week, scrambling around feeling like a snail shell with no snail inside.

Many people have been asking me questions, and I have been trying to answer as best and as expediently as I can. But it is very hard to offer insights or opinions or reports because everything is changing so quickly, and so many reports I am receiving are contradictory. I’m talking here about reports from Northern California ARCE (American Research Center in Egypt), reports from AlJazeera, and reports from the ground – i.e. friends in Luxor and Cairo.

I have been frantic all week gathering, sorting and disseminating information

about the state of antiquities. Again, there are many contradictory reports out there, and Zawhi Hawass' (he has been the Secretary General of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, but Mubarak just gave him a new title) reports contradict a lot of the other reports from archaeologists and ARCE. Dr. Zawass was faxing his reports to Europe to be posted on line when Mubarak shut down the internet.

{Oh, and a thank you to Google here. When the cell phone communications were cut, they created a system to allow for landline voicemail to convert to tweets! Here is something I have never said before and may never say again to Little Brother Growing Ever More Towards Big: GOOOO GOOGLE!}

I cannot list a week's worth of flurry, and this may still be amended, but here are some highlights:

- NOTHING has been damaged in Luxor. The people defended the sites on their own until the SCA could send support. Looters at Karnak Temple were thwarted by the people.
- Damage within the National Museum in Cairo was quite limited because the army secured the museum quickly. Original reports said that Tutankhamen's grandparents had their heads ripped off. Later reports said these were non-royal mummies.
- Reports of looting in Saqqara are vastly contradicting.
- Originally reports were that there was damage at the pyramids at Giza, but the extent was unknown. Later reports revised this, and said only equipment was damaged, not the pyramids.
- UCLA's archaeology team is out. They were in Armana, and didn't want to leave, everything was calm. State

Department made them fly home.

- Part of John's Hopkins (under Betsy Bryan) team left right away, part of the team stayed. At this point, they must be gone, too. (They work at Mut, near Karnak temple in Luxor, East Bank.)
- The European teams all reported to each other. Our colleague Hourig from the German Mission, who oversees excavations at Amenhotem III's sites in Luxor (West Bank), is still there last I heard, and wants to be. Really, there is no danger for archaeologists in Luxor.
- Our lead archaeologist, Philippe, was already back in Paris because his father died about a week before the revolution started.

And, of course, I have been racing all about trying to reach local friends, which took a while with the communications systems impeded. Everyone in Luxor is fine – Luxor has remained pretty mellow – but they ask for our prayers for Egypt. Everyone is quite excited to get that [Mubarak] out of there. But people are still disappearing, and people are still getting threatening calls from the "police" (it's all a mafia structure).

Second, the tension was palpable even last December/January when I was in Luxor. Every year it gets worse. I'm not a tourist, and I have built trust with locals over the years, so I get told more than I possibly WANT to know.

The first time I went to Egypt, if we tried to talk politics to learn, people would say, "Oh you know we can't talk about that!" But wink wink nudge nudge, they'd tell you through a story or something. In successive years, people got more reticent, and would try to change the subject. Last year, people would "shhh!" you and take you outside and say, "You cannot even ASK!

Everything is bugged!" Then they would list all their friends who had disappeared. Anyone who spoke against Mubarak got taken to the desert in the night and was never heard from again.

Couple with that the economic tension. Luxor is normally this happy go lucky free love town full of music and joy and dancing. (Not only does the goddess Hathor rein supreme, there is also a huge sex tourism situation going on. Women in their 50s and 60s – especially American and English women – go there for the supposedly legendary lovemaking skills of the Egyptian men.) Everyone was quite stressed about trying to feed their families. With the US and European economies down, tourism was down. And without lots of tourists – not even the male prostitutes can thrive! Usually Luxor is one big love fest, and last year – people were ANGRY and tense. There was a foul wind from the Sahara...

The people are over the moon happy that the revolution is happening. Everyone is nervous about what comes next, but 31 years of (US backed, of course) oppression, corruption, torture, mafia rule, secret prisons within secret prisons, and back room deals with Israel – was ENOUGH! The thing is, THE PEOPLE CANNOT FAIL, or there will be a bloodbath. I am not sure people in the US can comprehend the level of bravery of the Egyptian people in taking to the streets in the way they are, because we take such liberties for granted.

One question people keep asking me is, "What about the Muslim Brotherhood?"

That was my first knee-jerk reaction when the revolution started. They have

been, for many years, the most powerful opposition party. That's why Mubarak outlawed them. What would happen to WOMEN if the MB got in power? What would happen in terms of regional alliances shifting?

My Egyptian friends say this will not happen. They say that there is not enough popular support for the Brotherhood. And if the Brotherhood DOES get in, and they suck too, then they will just have another revolution and kick them out, too! My friend from Cairo says the women of Egypt are NOT going backwards. They have a huge role in the revolution, and there are tons of professional, educated, liberated women out there in the streets fighting for freedom.

From what I learned this week on a panel on Tunisia's recent Jasmine Revolution (organized by my former boss at the Center of Middle Eastern Studies, and including some of the activists who organized it – there will be one on Egypt this week), the aim of these revolutions is to give EVERYONE a seat at the table and a voice, from conservative Islamicists to the most liberal progressives and everyone in between. Because that is what democracy means. And now that the genie is out of the bottle – I don't think The People are going to settle for anything less.

But say, worst case scenario, like many idealistic revolutions where things end up worse than before, the Brotherhood or someone of that nature DOES take charge? DEAR USA, IT'S NOT REALLY THE END OF THE WORLD. You know what it means? It means I *might* not be able to run in shorts anymore in Luxor, but more people in Egypt will be able to eat and get

medicine for their babies. The Brotherhood is NOT a particularly violent group.

Socially conservative and regressive, yes. I wouldn't want to live under them any more than I want to live under the "G"OP in America, those pasty bald guys who ALSO love to deny women the right to dignity, equity and self-determination. Just this week the USA "G"OP in the legislative branch is trying to push women back 150 years (what else is new) by redefining rape to further curtail our agency over our bodies. [See p. 36 for more on this U.S. issue.] Yeah, that one is getting covered up by all the headlines being dominated by Egypt. So the people who have the MOST fear of the Brotherhood – are the people who share the most similar social agenda.

But violent, no. They totally renounce violence except in the case of defense against colonialist domination – or in the case of Israel. (The Brotherhood IS tight with Hamas.) But from an Arab perspective, that's about colonialism.

The Brotherhood is NOT AlQaeda, and in fact they hate each other. The confusion comes in with the US media because some members of AQ branched off from the Brotherhood.

They share some religious dogma, but they disagree totally on the issue of violence. And no jihadist group is going to be able to carry enough popular support to gain – and stay – in power.

Most people seem to think ElBaradei – the Nobel laureate – will emerge as leader. But again, the pulse is changing minute by minute.

... I think we need to trust the Egyptian people to get some sort of governing body established, even if it is an interim

thing. They have historical precedents. They have had sweeping changes and revolutions before. They aren't a mere 200+ years old, like us.

What should Obama/Clinton do?

I have no doubt there is plenty of behind the scenes stuff that the US is doing. I think one reason the Egyptian military has remained so chill is they are bought and paid for by the US. (We foot the bill 25%, I think. This might need to be researched SKC) I expect they are taking orders from Obama more than they have to heed Mubarak.

But Obama has to APPEAR, at least, that he is staying the heck out of it. Otherwise, anyone who comes into power will look like a puppet of the US, like Mubarak was, and this will breed anti-US sentiment. And this just fuels the Islamicist groups. This struggle is about the right to self-determination. The Egyptians don't want us to "save" them any more than they want us using them as a pawn with Israel or any more than they want to be sprayed with tear gas canisters that say "Made in USA" on them. They don't want that condescension.

... I may have more comments after Thursday's panel discussions. But for now – AlJazeera English is where it's all happening: <http://english.aljazeera.net/>

DIGNITY: "helplessness transformed into agency and power"

Ashab: "the people"

Keefaya!: "enough!"

Power to the People,

Casondra Sobierski

MEET OUR NEW CO-MODERATOR

The Rev. Dr. Pamela Szurek assumed the position of Co-Moderator at the time of the Coordinating Team's face-to-face meeting in Chicago in early December. She is the solo pastor of the First (*and only*) Presbyterian Church of Levittown, New York. "Pastor Pam" leads this congregation that was established over 60 years ago as part of the development of this post war planned community. Her recent D.Min. from McCormick Seminary has prepared her for dealing with the challenges presented by the now mature congregation she leads. Pam recently represented PVJ at the "Next" Conference in Indianapolis. Co-Moderator Bill Dummer is happy that he is no longer "flying solo," and can enjoy his retirement freedom a little more. She writes a blog on her congregation's website, where you can look her up at <http://www.levitfpc.org>.

The birds and the bees ... at Ghost Ranch

Birds do it. Bees do it. And, thanks to Cole Porter, we know that educated fleas do it, but what about Presbyterians?

Come to Ghost Ranch July 25-31 and join a lively conversation about sexuality, cultural change, and how people of faith can contribute to gender, sexual, and other modes of justice.

Some of the questions we'll deal with include: Why do we have to keep talking about sex all the time? What makes "good sex" good? Is it still adultery if the spouse has Alzheimer's? What do we have to learn from, as well as teach, young people about sex? Is same-sex marriage a "must" or a "bust"?

What should you bring? Your own questions, insights, and, above all, your passion for justice-love.

– Sylvia Thorson Smith

More about this event on p. 37.

Are you overdue??

Has your membership in PVJ run out?
Or is it almost up?
You can check by looking on the address label on the cover of
this *Network News*.

And if it's time,
please use the envelope in the center in this issue, or go to
http://presbyvoicesforjustice.org/membership_form_2.htm

Thanks!

ARE WE DEATHLY ILL?

GOVERNANCE IN A TIME OF FERMENT

by Margaret J. Thomas, Minneapolis, Minnesota

History and Context

Of course, there is dissent in today's church based upon conflicting interpretations of what the gospel means and what is required of us as followers of the Christ. Every Presbyterian has robustly sung "The Church's One Foundation" acknowledging the reality that the elect from every nation are rent asunder despite Jesus Christ her Lord being the foundation of the church.

Dissent has been among the followers of Jesus from the very beginning. James and John envisioned Jesus ruling over the people as a king; Judas expected a different salvation; Peter and others in Jerusalem accepted that God was calling the gentiles into the church, but it was only Paul who continued to evangelize the Greco-Roman world; European crusaders slaughtered the descendants of Palestinian Christians; the Eastern and Western churches split apart and then there was the Reformation leading to the establishment of denominations; charismatic and Pentecostal renewals brought new expressions to the forefront; and third world Christianity grew exponentially bringing even greater cultural diversity into our midst. Every one of these transformative processes was marked by dissent and, yes, schism. **The church has always been a fragile craft as the gospel's streaming love of God flows through history.**

Nor is disagreement in our denomination new – as the Synods of Philadelphia and New York united in 1758 they included provision for dissent and mutual forbearance in such times¹.

Since then each new presenting, divisive issue – confessional standards, essential tenets, the education of clergy, the dismantling of the vestiges of slavery and segregation, the role of the church in society, civil rights, divorced men as ordained officers, the inclusion of women in ordained offices, and most recently human sexuality – has been bolstered by a rehashing of the same debates regarding biblical authority, Christology, the extent of salvation, the nature of our confessional documents, and what is an essential tenet. Time and time again the General Assemblies of the church have listened patiently, considered overtures and appointed committees to counsel with those holding minority views. Time after time General Assemblies have dismissed particular analyses of the presenting issues, refuted a biblical interpretation, or rejected an interpretation of Reformed theology or polity. Usually a consensus emerges and our corporate life is reaffirmed. More recently, however, rather than submitting to the judgments of the church or continuing to reason and remonstrate, those holding minority views have established parallel para-church sys-

tems, diverted their funding and leadership to affinity groups or entities outside the structures of the denomination, and at times fermented schism.

Both predecessor denominations of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) experienced **schism**² shortly before their 1983 reunion. *But even after these schisms people holding thought patterns similar to those who left remain in the denomination.* Perhaps they are members who had been taught by the schismatics; perhaps they are people who entered our membership and leadership unaware of the positions the denomination has taken over the centuries; perhaps their seminaries and congregations failed to teach them our Reformed beliefs and polity; perhaps they have never engaged in a deliberative process based upon mutual forbearance during times of discernment, as the way we live in the midst of our diversity as believers; perhaps they seek to control the denomination and impose their beliefs on others; or perhaps their values, beliefs, and attitudes have always been more compatible with other expressions of the Christian faith.

Most recently our differences have manifested themselves in the ongoing debates about **ordination standards and the inclusion of GLBT persons** in the church, with the continuing undercurrents of the church's relationship to society, Christology, sexuality, and of course biblical authority. Every encounter has come down to disagreement regarding biblical interpretation, the nature of our confessional documents, and the very heart of the gospel. The application of the principles enunciated by the *Task Force on the*

Peace, Purity, and Unity of the Church are only now gradually working their way through the corporate life of the church.

Within the past several years some of the more strident voices and leaders continuing to carry these agendas from the perspective of the Presbyterian Coalition and the New Wineskins Movement have left for the EPC, which conveniently has allowed the formation of a transitional New Wineskins nongeographical presbytery and declared that the ordination of women does not represent an essential tenet of the faith. Anecdotal word is that the EPC has not been a satisfactory alternative for some of these leaders and congregations. Those that still remain in the denomination seem to have little energy for pursuing dismissal to another church and even less for the creation of a new denomination. They also seem somewhat naïve, or perhaps just disingenuous, about the current structures of the church and the complexity their proposed changes to our corporate life imply for our mission and Reformed polity.

Their choices seem limited, unless they can find some way of symbolically separating themselves from the denomination as a whole. Consequently, a contingent of "evangelical" leaders still in the denomination proposed the creation of a non-geographical synod and new presbyteries to the 2010 General Assembly. It was not approved. Their vision was one whereby they would be free to disavow or exempt themselves from *Constitutional* provisions, judicial processes and denominational positions with which they disagree. Yet they also

sought the right to vote on those provisions and positions in the more inclusive governing bodies and to use the judicial system to seek to impose their interpretations on others.

The desire to be separate yet remain in the denomination continues as evidenced by the release in early February, 2011 by several unhappy Presbyterian pastors of large “evangelical” congregations of what has come to be known as the “Deathly Ill Letter” seeking a parallel governance system based on theological affinity. The intent seems to be able to say: “We are Presbyterian, but not like the ones you read about in the press.” Numerous other models are being developed and floated in various arenas. Some are variations of the proposal that was defeated by the last GA. Some propose the formation of ecumenical congregations belonging to the PC (USA) and another more favorable communion such as the EPC – ignoring the requirement that such congregations are obligated to follow the polity of both denominations and to adhere to the most mandatory provision when there is a conflict between the polities. Others go so far as to propose two separate Synods (progressive and evangelical) that would share the services of the various General Assembly agencies but presumably would run parallel governance systems³ with diverging Constitutional documents. **These proposals border upon asking the denomination to grant a scruple to several of the vows members and ordained officers of the church are required to affirm.** That is not possible.

There is no reason to acquiesce to or

support any of these proposals.

Their implications for the governance of the church are profound, and it would be missionally destructive to subject the denomination to another round of imposed structural change. We should not underestimate the disruption that would be caused by allowing the formation of a parallel governance system – every congregation would be faced with the potential of divisive debate and internal schism, congregations remaining in a presbytery where a significant number of congregations joined an alternative structure would have to reconfigure themselves and redefine relationships with neighboring presbyteries and within their, or another, synod. In some areas where evangelicals are in the majority it would be the progressive congregations that would have to find new ecclesial homes. Every minister on the roles would have to choose where to place their allegiance. No governing body of the church would be unaffected and once again much of the creative energy of our leaders and the financial resources of the church would be diverted to organizational and legal issues and away from the mission of the church.

It is hard to believe that the “evangelicals” would wish this disruption on other congregations and the denomination in which they claim they want to remain, but then perhaps

- the reality of the vast majority of Presbyterian congregations is not of concern to them. (The “Deathly Ill Letter” dismisses the life and mission of more than half the denomination’s churches as being too small to matter);

or

- they are organizationally naïve and the implications of their proposals have not been considered; or
- their intent *is* chaos and the further deconstruction of the denomination; or
- they simply do not want to be Presbyterian and yet want to retain their current positions.

The “Letter” also refers to being “trapped” by the **property clause** in the church’s *Constitution* (G-8.000ff). G-11.0103i provides a clear way for the presbytery to “divide, dismiss, or dissolve churches in consultation with their members.” Furthermore, many of the signers of the Letter are within the bounds of the former PCUS: did their congregation not exercise the exemption provided for in G-8.0700 within the prescribed period of eight years following reunion? Certainly the trends and issues so distressing to them were present in that period (1983 – 1991). If so, there are no issues – they can be dismissed to another communion with their property. And if not, what gives the current leadership the right to reject the historic commitment of their congregations to the denomination and their decision to reject the trump card of exemption?

So why can’t they be comfortable in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) as it is evolving?

Denominational life:

- Are they really unable to live within their current presbytery, or is it the denomination that is offensive to them? If it’s the denomination, they need to leave.
- Is anyone making it difficult for them to find new calls?

- Is there nothing in the life of their presbytery, synod or the General Assembly that they can support, or do they simply believe that only their self-defined mission is worthy?
- Do they even support the work of their presbytery and the broader denomination and honor any per capita expectations, or do they divert their resources and leadership to para-church organizations and affinity groups?
- Do they not understand that one of the primary roles of larger congregations in the Reformed tradition is to help provide the supportive services and resources that only a more inclusive governing body can provide?
- Is any presbytery excluding them from participation?
- Has anyone tried to stop them from forming partnerships among themselves for mission or rejected any initiatives to partner with denominational efforts? Have they even talked with our mission and ministry personnel regarding areas where partnerships might be possible?

Addressing the Issue of the Place and Inclusion of GLBT Members in the Church:

- Is anyone bringing judicial cases against them for their biblical or theological positions and pastoral responses to their members?
- Is their presbytery forcing them to participate in the ordination of a GLBT Minister of Word and Sacrament? (There is nothing in the Constitution that forces anyone to serve on a presbytery commission.)
- Are their congregations electing GLBT people to leadership or wondering why they can’t? (If so, maybe they should think about whether they belong in that congregation.)

- Are they afraid that some of their members will ask them to perform same sex unions/weddings? Are they afraid that the changes in state laws will force them to do so? (Sessions determine the usage of congregational property, and no minister is required to perform any marriage ceremony.)
- Are they reluctant to make their opposition to GLBT leadership or same-sex unions/marriage known in their congregation? Or maybe they are not opposed and can't say that?
- Are they afraid that if they and their congregations remain identified with the PC (U.S.A.) when homosexual practice is no longer a barrier to ordination and same sex unions/weddings are permitted, they will lose members and financial resources? (Yes, they probably will even if they try to mitigate the transition by reminding members that a Foundational principle of Presbyterian governance is the right to elect their own leaders. If they respond with God's grace, they will also attract new members and resources.)
- Are they ill prepared to lead their congregations into a future where neither society nor the church condones the exclusion of GLBT people from the responsibilities inherent in citizenship or membership respectively?
- Are they personally afraid to face the issue themselves or because of what their colleagues and members might do to them if they do? (Many evangelical leaders who have changed their opinions on this issue have paid dearly for doing so.)

What is really going on? I believe they are wrong in their characterization of the nature of human sexuality, and they are on the wrong side of history and on the

wrong side of the gospel - and conversion is very, very difficult.

Just like the reactionary forces of the past who argued from a faulty biblical exegesis that Blacks should remain slaves, and when that battle was lost, that segregation was the only moral way to relate across racial lines, or those who fought against the inclusion of women in ordained leadership based on clear biblical injunctions against women's leadership, or excluded divorced men because the biblical model of marriage and the Westminster standards said that marriage was between one man and one woman, so too is the argument waged against the full inclusion of GLBT. Do those proposing separation from their current governing bodies disagree with the resolution of those former church dividing issues? Are they unaware of how much they sound like the losing sides in our history, how familiar their arguments are and how the church has repeatedly found them wanting?

Once again the inclusive love of God is winning the hearts and minds of those who profess faith in Jesus as the Christ who overcomes all barriers that divide humankind and calls everyone who loves him to lives of grace and faithful discipleship.

How should progressive Presbyterians respond? Rather than helping these forces find a way to cling to their positions by enabling a church within the church, progressive Presbyterians should affirm their understanding of the gospel and reassure them that the church has room for them as fellow travelers in the continuing story of God's redemption. We might even offer to help them

prepare their own hearts and their congregations for the changes that are coming.

Notes

¹“That when any matter is determined by a majority vote, every member shall either actively concur with or passively submit to such determination; or if his conscious permit him to do neither, he shall, after sufficient liberty modestly to reason and remonstrate, peacefully withdraw from our communion without making any attempt to make any schism. Provided always that this shall be understood to extend only to such determination as the body shall judge indispensable in doctrine or Presbyterian government.”(G-6.0108b)

² In 1973 what became the *Presbyterian Church in America* (PCA) separated from the Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUS) based upon assertions that the PCUS had denied the deity of Jesus and the inerrancy and authority of scripture. In response the schismatics declared their intention to uphold the “traditional role of women in the church and the Westminster standards” in the face of liberal trends favoring the inclusion of women in leadership and the emerging Declaration of Faith and the creation of a Book of Confessions. In 1981 the *Evangelical Presbyterian Church* (EPC) was formed as a more moderate alternative to the PCA. Their issues were the liberalization of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (UPCUSA), the perceived need to define the essential tenets of the faith (in the face of mandatory inclusion of women and ongoing debate about the place of GLBT persons in the church), upholding the Westminster standards and the optional ordination of women.

³ When the Old School and New School exhibited the existence of two entities both claiming to be the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America there were no national structures.

The author:

Margaret Thomas has served the Presbyterian Church in a variety of roles over many years. Now honorably retired and living in Minneapolis, she was the Deputy Executive Director of the UPC/GAMC, and then executive of the Synod of Lakes and Prairies. She then served as executive of the Minnesota Council of Churches, and during that time she became a member and moderator of both the GA Permanent Judicial Commission and the Advisory Committee on the Constitution. Out of this broad and deep experience, she offers some of her insights on current state of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

She has also written a short essay commenting specifically on the proposed new Form of Government, now being considered in the presbyteries. < http://www.presbyvoicesforjustice.org/Mgt%20Thomas%20Governance_In_a_Time_of_Ferment%20v2.pdf >

Meet our new Editor

“It gives me great pleasure to introduce ...”

– That seems to be a favorite line when people introduce guest speakers – especially if they’re politicians. Well, it really *does* give me great pleasure to introduce the woman who is taking over the editing of this little newsletter, beginning with the next issue. In the conversations we’ve had over the past couple months, she has shown a sharp understanding of what we’ve been trying to do over the years to communicate both with our members and with a wider audience in the church.

She shared some of her own thinking and writing with us in the Fall 2010 issue of *Network News*, in a very helpful background paper on the Belhar Confession. And she made the contacts to provide two of the major articles in this issue, as well.

I know you will appreciate her style and commitment, and I hope she will gain as much pleasure and satisfaction from being a part of this project, and this network, as I have.

Thanks to all of you for these interesting and challenging years. And especially thanks to Lorelei, for carrying on the project. And now it’s her turn:

Dear Members and Friends of PV4J,

I hope you will all take a moment to send a card, or an email (or cookies?), to Doug King. He has done an incredible job of editing this *Network News* for many years now, sharing insight and information critical to our walk as Presbyterian Christians. He has challenged and educated us, and drawn out from us our better selves in Christ. We give thanks for his leadership!

These will be big shoes to fill, but I look forward to the opportunity to serve in this way. Being rather a ‘newbie’ in the community, I hope you will all be willing to send me suggestions and to offer your good work for the issues of *Network News* to come - it’s a rare element of our denomination’s communications, bringing together strands from many different areas. I hope to bring both continuity, and perhaps some new creativity as well.

For the curious among you, I have a BA in English - Creative Writing, and a Masters of Divinity. I was ordained as a Minister of

Word and Sacrament in 2008, and just completed a position as an interim associate pastor. I’ve served on many of the committees of my presbytery (Grand Canyon), including Christian Education, Social Justice & Peacemaking, Theology & Worship, and am now on Evangelism & Church Development. I’m also a commissioner to the Synod of the Southwest, and I serve on the board of the Arizona Interfaith Alliance for Worker Justice. I’ve been married to Scott for almost 27 years, and claim four children: son Clint and his wife Ashley, and daughters Vanessa and Eva. My personal vices are reading and poodles.

You can contact me (easily, I’m compulsive) by email at LoreleiHH@yahoo.com, or by calling my cellphone at 602.803.2878. Or you can come to Phoenix, though you might want to think twice about coming in August... :) I look forward to meeting you!

Blessings,
Lorelei Hillman
512 W. Thunderbird Road
Phoenix, AZ 85023

The Presbyterian Peace Fellowship invites you to the Convocation of Peacemakers

**April 7-9, 2011
Stony Point Center, New York**

Curious about the radical Jesus?
Weary of talk?

This is not a normal conference, but a working meeting for peacemakers from across the church to plan together for effective advocacy and action. Experts will be on hand as we focus on four key topics to learn more and strategize together for more creative and effective peacemaking:

- Gun Violence Prevention
- Colombia Accompaniment
- Israel-Palestine
- Becoming a "Peace Church"

Featured speakers:

Gloria Ulloa is an ordained minister in the Iglesia Presbiteriana de Colombia. She has extensive experience in religious education, pastoral and public administration, women's rights, conflict resolution, and community organization. Most recently, Gloria has served as the Executive Secretary of the Presbiteria de la Costa (Colombia, and as Director of Secondary Education at the Colegio Americano in Barranquilla, Colombia. She is currently the Chaplain at the Colegio. She has significant cross-cultural experience, in 2003-2004 she served as an International Peacemaker for the Presbyterian Church (USA) and has been honored in Colombia not just for her work in the church, but by governmental officials for her ongoing

dedication to women's rights.

Riham Barghouti is a Palestinian American who lived in the Occupied Palestinian Territory for 10 years, who currently resides in New York City where she works as a teacher. She is a founding member of Adalah- NY: The New York Campaign for the Boycott of Israel, which has carried out a successful boycott campaign against Israeli diamond magnate and settlement builder Lev Leviev since 2007. Formerly the Director of Public Relations and the External Relations Officer at Birzeit University, Ms. Barghouti has worked on several campaigns for justice in Israel/Palestine since 2002.

Christian Iosso is Coordinator of the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy. Ordained in the United Presbyterian Church, he is a graduate of Johns Hopkins University (BA), Princeton Seminary (MDiv) and Union Seminary (NY) (Ph.D.). His denominational service has been in Presbyterian social ministry and social witness, both in the early 1980's on the New York staff and from late 2005 to present in the Louisville offices. He also staffed year-long research and policy assignments for the United Church of Christ and the National Council of Churches of Christ. Author of many shorter publications, he is also coeditor of Prayers for the New Social Awakening: Inspired by the new Social Creed.

Conference Cost: \$230, including meals and lodging. Scholarships are available To register, please visit www.presbypeacefellowship.org/convocation2011

Women's Reproductive Health Under Attack (and so are PCUSA reproductive health policies!)

The assault on women: It probably happened in your state in 2010 – 950 legislative measures were introduced in D.C. and 44 states related to women's reproductive health. Of these 89 were passed in 32 states. Most of these related to abortion, adding more restrictions on women's access to abortion services. With the newly elected U.S. Congress, women's reproductive lives are on the federal docket again. Most recently, the House of Representatives passed budget legislation that *eliminated* Title X funding: funding for HIV testing, breast and cervical cancer testing, and birth control for low-income women. This budget includes the total defunding of Planned Parenthood, a provider of family planning clinics that serves 20% of U.S. women at some point in their lives. This is at a time when the World Bank ranks the United States as having the highest infant mortality rate of 33 advanced countries.

Other bills that have been introduced would allow hospitals that receive federal funds to refuse abortions even in emergency situations; another prohibits women who will buy health insurance coverage from state exchanges from buying abortion coverage with their own money; and another redefines "rape" to mean only "forcible rape" (not as yet defined) for purposes of establishing eligibility for a federally funded abortion. Will poor women once more have to show bruises, cuts, and broken bones to prove rape? (See Steinhauer, "Under Banner of Fiscal Restraint, Republicans Plan New Abortion Bills," NYTimes, 02/09/11, A18.) <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/09/us/politics/09congress.html>

What the church says: PCUSA policy is clear. It respects the diverse viewpoints that

Presbyterians hold on the issue of abortion and the question of when human life begins. It respects the diverse ways that Presbyterians interpret the Bible. Even as it calls for abortion to be "an option of last resort," it places the responsibility for making a decision about a problem pregnancy in the minds, hearts, and spirits of the women who face "many complicated and insolvable circumstances." Rather than denying women needed health care, our church's policies call for universal access to health care, including contraception and abortion, and for addressing the "poverty, unjust social realities, sexism, racism and inadequate supportive relationships" that present too many women with no good choices (2004th G.A., 1992, "Do Justice, Love Mercy, Walk Humbly" <http://oga.pcusa.org/publications/problem-pregnancies.pdf>).

WE NEED YOU! Presbyterians Affirming Reproductive Options (PARO) is a network of the Presbyterian Health, Education & Welfare Association (PHEWA <http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/phewa/>) whose responsibility it is to proclaim, explain, and defend the church's policies regarding problem pregnancies. We are currently looking to fill five positions on our PARO Leadership Team. Are you, or do you know a Presbyterian who is, actively engaged in these issues, connected with the local church, and ready to help PARO organize in defense of women's health and the church's policies? If so, please e-mail Gloria Albrecht right away: albrechg@udmercy.edu . Also consider adding your support by taking out an annual membership in PARO/PHEWA at: <http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/phewa/join-phewa/>

Thank you!

A Ghost Ranch seminar

Sex, Faith, and Culture: Understanding the Mix in our Lives and Society July 25-31

Sponsored by Presbyterian Voices for Justice
Coordinated by Sylvia Thorson-Smith

Twenty years after the controversial report, “Keeping Body and Soul Together: Sexuality, Spirituality, and Social Justice,” was overwhelmingly rejected by the Presbyterian General Assembly in 1991, two of its primary authors will begin this seminar with a reflection on the development of the report and the firestorm that surrounded it. How did such a sex-positive, women-friendly, and gay-affirming study ever get written in the first place, and what’s been the impact of the report on its supporters and critics?

The conversation will then shift to a variety of concerns on the “justice-love” agenda, including alternative reproductive technologies, comprehensive (vs. abstinence-only) sexuality education, equality for transgender and bisexual as well as lesbian and gay persons, same-sex marriage, sexuality while living with Alzheimer’s and other chronic illnesses, and the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality.

This seminar will welcome all perspectives and experiences, and will be designed to maximize participation of those who attend. Participants will be invited to share their insights about the ongoing personal, social, and ecclesiastical quest for an “ethical eroticism,” one that deepens self-respect and strengthens inclusive, radically hospitable communities.

The Seminar Leaders

Sylvia Thorson-Smith has an MA in sociology and women’s studies from

Wichita State University (Kansas) and taught courses in sociology (human sexuality), gender and women’s studies, and religious studies at Grinnell College (Iowa) before retiring to Tucson, Arizona in 2003. Her publications include *Body and Soul: Rethinking Sexuality as Justice-Love* (with Ellison), and *Called Out With: Stories of Solidarity in Support of LGBT Persons*. She currently serves as an elder on the session of St. Mark’s Presbyterian Church (a More Light congregation) and lives with her retired partner-husband, the Rev. Mike Smith. Sylvia is a member of the board of Presbyterian Voices for Justice.

Marvin M. Ellison completed his doctoral studies at Union Theological Seminary (New York) and teaches Christian social ethics at Bangor Theological Seminary. He is a minister-member of the Presbytery of Northern New England. He founded the Religious Coalition Against Discrimination in Maine to support civil rights protections for LGBT people, including the right to marry. His publications include *Sexuality and the Sacred: Sources for Theological Reflection*, and *Body and Soul* (with Thorson-Smith). He lives in Portland, Maine, with his partner Frank Brooks, a licensed clinical social worker.

For more information, and to register, go to
http://www.ghost ranch.org/index.php?option=com_oscommerce&osMod=product_info&cPath=34&itemid=199&products_id=1082

A Ghost Ranch seminar

A FAITHFUL RESPONSE TO IMMIGRATION

August 1-7, 2011

Cosponsored by Presbyterian Voices for Justice
and Presbyterian Peace Fellowship
Coordinated by Jane Hanna

Discerning God's call to advocate for a just immigration system requires people of faith to have a knowledgeable understanding of the issues related to modern global migration. Julia Thorne will help us to understand present immigration law, how detention and deportation policies impact both migrants and our communities. We will learn about Presbyterian policy on immigration reform. Mark Adams and Miriam Maldonado Escobar, PCUSA Mission Co-Workers, will share their experiences with the many players on the border (the undocumented, Border Patrol Agents, faith communities, rich and poor, humanitarians, landowners and communities on both sides of the border).

As momentum builds to reform US immigration, our voice as informed faith communities advocating just policies and practices is the challenge we face.

Julia Thorne, Manager of Immigration Issues and Immigration Counsel in the Office of General Assembly, Presbyterian Church (USA). She creates resources and provides advice to presbyteries and churches regarding immigration law and issues. The Office also works on advocacy for the reform of current immigration policies, procedures and laws in accordance with General Assembly policy. Since graduating from college, Julia has worked with internationals as Foreign Student Advisor, College Instructor, Campus Minister and Private Immigra-

tion Attorney.

Mark Adams has served since 1998 as mission co-worker with Frontera de Cristo, a Presbyterian (USA) Border Ministry centered in Agua Prieta, Mexico and Douglas, AZ. As U.S. coordinator of this bi-national ministry, he is responsible, in partnership with the Rev. Angel Valencia of the National Presbyterian Church of Mexico, for the coordination of the six ministry areas: church development, health, family counseling, the New Hope Community Center, mission education, and the Just Trade Center.

Through Frontera de Cristo, Mark brings together people from both sides of the border, building relationships and understanding between them. He is a minister member of Presbytery de Cristo, PC(USA)., and a fraternal member of the Presbytery of Chihuahua (National Presbyterian Church of Mexico).

Miriam Maldonado Escobar works in the Mission Education ministry of FDC and is a leader of a bi-national Permaculture project with Jose Luis Ramirez of Dougla Prieta Trabaja. She and Mark are married and have three children.

For more information, and to register, go to

http://www.ghost ranch.org/index.php?option=com_oscommerce&osMod=product_info&cPath=117&Itemid=199&products_id=1091

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Network News

from Presbyterian Voices for Justice

Winter 2011

Presbyterian Voices for Justice
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