



BAPTIST PEACE FELLOWSHIP NEWSLETTER SPRING 2012



From the President:

Although the Westminster Assembly in May appears to have a rather disjointed structure, the BPF Committee decided to have a presence – a display board in the exhibition area (wherever that might be!). What should go in our display board? Definitely an advert for the seminar with Jean Harrison talking about her 3 months with the EAPPI; a statement of BPF beliefs and then either a display about the 4D campaign of the Uniting for Peace group or the Joint Public Issues Team's 'Better off without Trident' campaign (see *page 3 for further details of our Assembly presence*).

The BU has a new voice, Dr Stephen Keyworth of the Northern College, on this JPIT group together with the URC and Methodist representatives.

Uniting for Peace is campaigning on 4Ds. These are Disarmament, Demilitarisation, Democracy and Development (see *page 8 for more details*)

We watch the government trying to **militarise** us through Armed Forces Day and see the rising proportion of our spending on military weapons. We hope the population is aware of the government propaganda focussing on the bravery of the armed forces to deflect attention from the stupidities of the government.

Our call for **disarmament** continues with opposition to Trident and drones – see the JPIT campaign against Trident (*further details on page 7*). I note now that the stoppage of spending on Trident is backed by many among the Liberal Democrats - not necessarily on moral grounds but opposition all the same.

Democracy as we know is like motherhood and apple pie, we are all in favour of it, but look what happens when we try to impose it on countries like Egypt, Iraq, Libya, etc. Israel has democracy but is that a good thing for the Palestinians?
Development. Do we help development as we put arms exports as a high priority – I read that our minister for development touts for arms sales while on development missions.

Here are many issues for a letter to your MP.

The theme of the Assembly is “Beyond 400”. Perhaps after 400 years of sitting on the fence on the issue of war and peace the Baptists will take a clear stand for nonviolent peacemaking. If we don’t prod them to take that stand who will?

There was some interesting material in the final commemorative issue of the Baptist Times. These items concerned the denomination’s attitude to war in 1914 and 1939.

I have written a piece for Peacelinks of the FoR on this coverage of war/peace matters. See Peacelinks March/April 2012.

As I take my leave from the presidency I fear that I do not leave the BPF in a healthier state. The idea of Peacemaker Congregations has not taken off. There are not enough young people involved in the BPF and we have to find new ways to engage them. The FoR is doing some enterprising youth work including its ‘Performance for Peace’ training course in conjunction with St Ethelburga’s Church in the City of London. They also have a presence at each Greenbelt festival. We continue to send a disc of BPF material to each ministerial student leaving the Baptist Colleges.

Daniel Berrigan has written: One is called to live nonviolently even if the social or political change one worked for is in fact unlikely or even impossible. But one thing is in our favour in such an attempt: the total inability of violence, as a social or personal method, to change anything.

Shalom, *Norman Kember* (President)

Should I dream?

‘Sometimes I wonder, “Should I dream” or “It’s better not to dream in order not to be disappointed”. What is the value of the human being without dreams? I have to dream because I want to live. I want to prove that I am strong I swear that my dreams won’t cost the Israeli government and won’t cost the whole world any price, neither any effort. My dream is so simple, I just want to live in peace, to breathe purely and get my freedom back. Believe me, I will ask you for nothing more than that. I am just asking you to open the way for me to shout and say, “I am a Palestinian”.

Walaa Ghabboun, Bethlehem, Palestine

The BPF at the 2012 Baptist Assembly

As well as a display board situated somewhere in the various Exhibition areas, the BPF will be holding its meeting on Sunday 6th May from 12.45 - 1.45pm. This will take place in the Chapel at Central Hall Westminster. At this meeting Jean Harrison, a member of Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church will be speaking about her experiences during 3 months as an ecumenical accompanier in Bethlehem (see below for more information about Jean). Following her talk there will be a very brief AGM to transact the necessary business. Norman Kember will be stepping down from being President for 4 years and we thank him very much for all he has done in this role. We are glad that he will be staying on the committee. The Revd Bob Gardiner has agreed to be nominated as the new president, for a period of 2 years. Also to be elected this year, each for 3 year terms, are the Secretary and the Treasurer. Revd Paul Henstock has agreed to continue as Secretary and Tine Parsons as Treasurer (also serving as Membership Secretary): we thank all these members for being prepared to take on or continue in these

Jean Harrison returned to the UK in December 2011 after spending 3 months in Bethlehem, in the Occupied Palestine Territories. She served with an international team, on the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme, set up in 2002 at the request of the Jerusalem church leaders. Jean's work involved monitoring the abuse of human rights and providing a protective presence for vulnerable communities. Much of her time was spent at the Bethlehem 300 checkpoint, the main pedestrian route through the Separation Barrier (the Wall) between Palestine and Israel). Every morning between 4.0 and 8.0 some 2,500 Palestinians negotiate the multiple queues, turnstiles and military checks to get to work. It is a stressful experience for them, fuelled by ever-changing permit rules, gun-touting soldiers, huge queues and unnecessarily long waiting times. Jean's presence as an international observer helped to defuse the tensions, and at times she was able to intervene to ease the passage of the workers. She also provided protection from military aggravation for Palestinian children on their way to school; she visited and supported families whose homes had been destroyed, whose land was threatened by confiscation, or whose olive trees and vegetable plots had been destroyed - all actions taken by the Israeli authorities against the Palestinian people, actions that are forbidden by international humanitarian law and constitute the abuse of human rights. She will present an illustrated talk about her experiences.

Book Review: To End All Wars
How the First World War divided Britain

Author: Adam Hochschild Publisher: London McMillan 2011
(xx plus 448 pages 36 B&W illustrations, 7 maps)

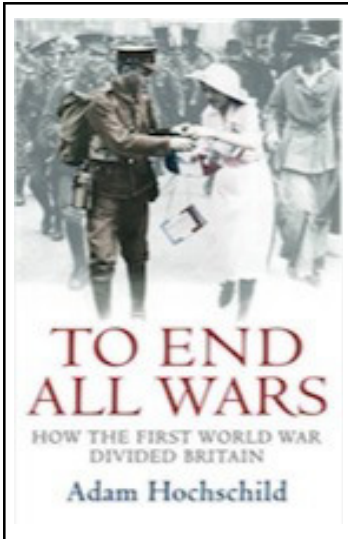
There are 360 notes on sources and 12 pages of bibliography. Full index.

This is a formidable work of scholarship by a lecturer in Journalism at Berkeley. It covers most aspects of WWI on a broad canvas. However, it could be likened to Frith's painting of Derby Day – an accurate overall view of the scene but with fascinating detail. It is in the detail that the enjoyment of this book lies.

The introductory chapters introduce the main protagonists and the book then proceeds by chronicling the war year by year with both major incidents and stories of individuals. It is in these small portraits that the author seeks to make his point about a divided Britain but fails to prove a general split in society. Most of the population seems to have supported the war in spite of the death toll in every strata of society. Reports from the trenches were censored while John Buchan and Rudyard Kipling were recruited for the generation of propaganda for government and war office (even though Kipling's son was killed in the trench warfare). The public was convinced that the Germans were sub-human brutes undeserving of the mercy of an early armistice. This propaganda about WWI continues to this day since, as far as I am aware, no official apology for the needless loss of life has ever been made and is echoed in the present campaigns to justify the deaths of soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. By concentrating on the bravery we are directed to overlook the reasons why. Was it only Tennyson who admitted the blunders of the Charge of the Light Brigade?

Well recorded is the frightening obduracy of Generals Haig and French who accepted the appalling loss of life in the attrition of trench warfare but still believed that cavalry would eventually prove effective against machine guns in achieving a breakthrough on the Western Front. Haig is quoted as saying in the 1920's that horses still had a major part to play in armed conflict. Such a refusal to abandon old tactics was reflected in the German High Command and also in the British navy whose senior commanders felt it demeaning for their fighting vessels to escort slow moving freighters in convoys.

The writing focuses on relationships within certain families. Charlotte Despard opposed the war in speeches at public rallies but remained on good terms with her brother General John French until they clashed on Irish home rule. The Pankhursts suffered an unreconciled split between Sylvia who opposed the war



and Emmeline & Christabel who supported it enthusiastically. The Hobhouse family were well connected in society but produced Emily who went to Berlin on a private peace mission and Stephen who registered as a CO, but his Eton connections got him an easier ride than the majority of objectors. Keir Hardie although an MP, was a thorn in the flesh of the establishment and made fiery anti-war speeches continuing his opposition even after a severe stroke.

The author follows the basic drama of the conscientious objectors remembering that Britain did allow for such a position in the conscription legislation although it was obviously expected that such people would agree to non combatant duties. Those who refused any government direction suffered much mental torment at the hands of the military that shipped some of them off to France where they could be accused of disobeying orders on the battlefield. Bertrand Russell paid a large part in publicising the government's manoeuvres and, although many CO's were condemned to death, this sentence was invariably commuted to 10 years in prison.

Each reader will find certain facets of the book of particular interest. The story of Albert Rochester was new to the reviewer – Albert was a railwayman who enlisted at age 32 and noted that in the infantry alone there were no less than 60,000 servants (batmen) to the officers and then there were head quarters staff servants plus all the manpower required to maintain the staff officers' horses. Rochester wrote a letter to the Daily Mail claiming that there were half a million men performing tasks that were “not necessary to the winning of this war”. The letter was not published but Rochester was put on trial for conduct ‘to the prejudice of good order and military discipline’ where he was found guilty and sentenced to 90 days of Field Punishment. Later he witnessed the execution of 3 men for cowardice in a battle episode of utter confusion in the trenches.

Another unfamiliar facet was the belief of the war establishment that the Trade Union Movement was effectively a fifth column seeking to undermine the war effort of the nation. This belief deepened after the successes of the U-boat campaign. The Wheldon family lived in Derby – known to be a centre of union activism. The mother ran a second-hand clothes shop and had 2 daughters who were teachers. The son was on the run having been rejected by the CO tribunal. Two agent provocateurs who were sent into the household discovered that a number of deserters were sheltered there and then claimed that the family had plans to assassinate the Prime Minister. The whole family were arrested and in a

show trial found guilty of planning murder. In spite of the unreliability of the evidence they were not released until after the war.

The penultimate chapter describes the immediate aftermath of the war and the way WWI led to WWII. The horrors of latter war were foreshadowed in the introduction of new weapons and the inhumane treatment of civilians – ‘total war’.

There is discussion of the effects on the peoples of the Empire* and on its leaders who came to distrust the English ruling classes over tragedies like Gallipoli. In the final chapter we discover the fates of all the major players in his narrative while the last section reveals the author’s true sympathies through his ‘Imaginary Cemetery’. He sees a cemetery that holds the graves of all who opposed the war or suffered as ‘deserters’ or conscientious objectors.

**A quotation: ‘Here the ladies tend us as a mother tends her child,’ wrote a wounded Sikh to his father. He was astonished that British nurses emptied the bedpans of wounded Indian soldiers.*

Reviewer: Norman Kember

PEACEMAKING SUNDAY

Peacemaking Sunday marks the United Nations International Day of Peace on **21 September 2011**. The Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Methodist Church and United Reformed Church have produced material for a service, including hymns, prayers, reflections and a powerful visual meditation based on a piece of work from the Methodist Art Collection. All these resources are available to download from the JPIT website:

www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/peacemakingsunday/

Below is a prayer taken from the service booklet, written by the Revd Caroline Homan, a Methodist minister.

Gathering Prayer

God of peace, we come as we are,
God of justice, we come as we would love to be.
We come bringing with us those who are happy and those who are worried,
those full of energy and those achingly tired,
those we find it easy to love and those we find it hard to love.

You whose love is infinite, inspire our worship this day:
that we may find rest in you,
enlarge our finite love for you, for one another and for your creation,
and celebrate all that you are to make peace in every place. Amen



Better off without Trident

The Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) representing the Baptist Union, the Methodist Church and United Reformed Church, have produced some excellent resources in support of their 'Better off without Trident' Campaign. Going to the main website (www.jointpublicissues.org.uk) the campaign material is highlighted on its front page. In particular, the glossy 4 page booklet can be found at

<http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/Better%20off%20without%20Trident.pdf>

Background information is also available on their website at

www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/jpitpeacemaking.htm

including a Trident White Paper - Submission of evidence to the Parliamentary Defence Select Committee (2007), a letter from the Baptist, Methodist and URC General Secretaries to the UK Foreign Secretary on the eve of the 2009 Non-Proliferation Treaty Preparatory Committee meeting and their submission to the BASIC Trident Commission, (July 2011)

JPIT are encouraging us to do 3 things in response to the campaign:

1) **Write to our MPs**, asking the Government not to spend £55 billion to keep the Trident nuclear weapons system and explaining why we believe we will be better off without Trident, letting them have a copy of any replies at

hucklesbys@methodistchurch.org.uk

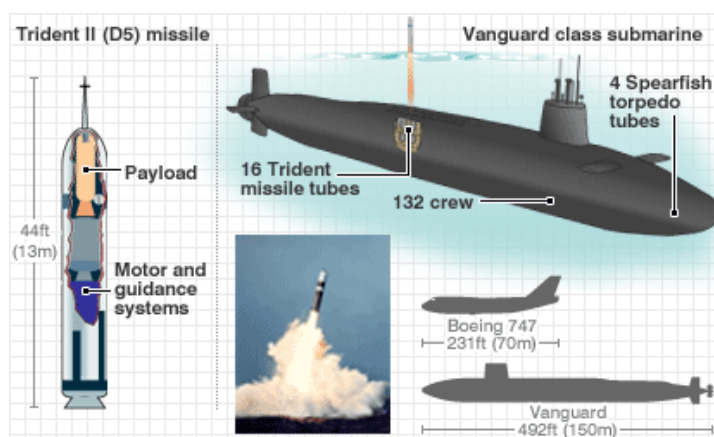
2) **Pray** – using their resources from

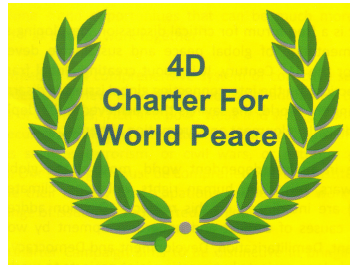
www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/peacemakingsunday

3) **Read** – Peacemaking: A Christian Vocation, (Methodist Church and URC, 2006), available at

<http://www.methodist.org.uk/index.cfm?fuseaction=opentoworld.content&cmid=1866>

This campaign provides an excellent opportunity not only to take individual action ourselves, but to get peace issues into church magazines, onto church noticeboards etc. by promoting a peace campaign which has BUGB support. It also has the potential to provide us with opportunities to co-operate locally with other peace activists in Methodist and United Reformed Churches.





“People Talk of Peace but Prepare for War” Vijay Mehta

Q. How are we going to achieve World Peace?

- a) We carry on the \$1.6 trillion a year military spending **or**
b) We unite behind the 4D Charter to release the money needed (\$300 billion per year) for realising peace and development

A. b) Sign up for a Safer World.

At a time when 24,000 children are dying every day due to mainly preventable causes, the Economy is sinking into a recession and the higher food prices are making life unbearable for the world's poorest:

The World is Over Armed and Underfed

The 4D Charter through working together on disarmament, demilitarisation, development and democracy can achieve world peace by campaigning for:

- Demilitarising the global economy to shift resources towards health, education, development and human security programmes.
- Promoting an effective and credible United Nations for Protection of human rights, social justice and **D**emocracy.
- Global advocacy for creating and promoting a culture of peace and sustainable **D**evelopment

Together we **can** make a change. Join other thinkers and peace activists in supporting the 4D vision. Sign up to the 4D Campaign for a Safer World. The co-ordinator for this campaign is the Revd Brian Cooper, a BPF member. For a free copy of the 4D Charter for World Peace booklet by e-mail or post, please contact hur@unitingforpeace.com or send a text to 07572 433345. For further details of the campaign see www.4dworldpeace.org from where the charter can also be downloaded.

This newsletter was produced on behalf of the BPF who may be contacted through the Secretary, Revd Paul Henstock, 355 Stroud Road, Tuffley, Gloucester GL4 0BB, or the Treasurer/Membership Secretary Mrs Tina Parsons, 17 Vicarage Close, Littlemore, Oxford, OX4 4PL