

September 16, 2008

To: Ann Ferguson

From: Bonnie Blair

Re: Pilot project in Synod of Living Waters

(Idea came from United Methodist Women's "*For Christ's Sake, Turn the World Upside Down*" national seminar August 11-16, 2007 at Scarritt-Bennett Center in Nashville, TN.)

We are in the planning stages of this project. Here is what we know we would like to accomplish:

A Presbyterian Woman(or women) from all 16 Synods coming to Nashville where they will board buses and travel to communities in the Nashville area to see what it means to be homeless, an immigrant or without health care.

The idea is to broaden our knowledge (as it was for the UMW), to go beyond ourselves to gain insights and listen to the voices of those on the margins. What does our Presbyterian faith teach us about helping the oppressed?

As the UMW did, we want to visit a mosque, landfill, community clinics, farmers market, community garden, homeless shelters, public high school and Civil War monument.

Each visit would include one-on-one conversations and panel discussions and presentations on the related issue. Visits would be an extension of workshops held throughout the event focusing on one of the seven issues: economic justice, health care, public education, immigration, community food security (farmers market), environmental justice and militarism, peace and national security.

I spoke with Mary Lou Wurth, a UMW who attended the seminar, and she worked for several hours at the Farmers Market. She related that a retired man in Nashville got a grant and bought a truck so he could go to the Farmers Market and salvage fruits and vegetables that were not going to be sold at the Market and deliver them to housing developments. Several of the women helped him sort the food. He is known as "The Man for Good Food for Good People." Several ladies went with him and they knocked on the doors and said, "The food's here!" People came out and got the produce. And, they just didn't take for themselves; they took to give to neighbors too. Mary Lou said, "I was appointed by UMW to go to this seminar and I really didn't want to go. But now I highly recommend it to everyone. I learned so much. So happy to have been a part of this wonderful experience."

The visit was part of the workshop on community food security, which examines the need for every community to have access to a safe, affordable nutritious food supply. Many low-income areas do not have large grocery stores that carry fresh fruits and vegetables.

A visit to the local Civil War memorial in Nashville will be a time for exploring reasons for war and the far-reaching impact of war for women taking the militarism, peace and national security workshops. We will hear presentations from U. S. Army public affairs specialist about today's all-volunteer soldiers. We will see a documentary about the munitions-making military industrial complex and listen to testimonies from a panel representing organizations and ministries working for peace and helping military personnel and families.

We will work to meet at a mosque with Kurdish women from Turkey who have come to the United States as refugees and also speak with Hispanic women at a local immigrant advocacy program.

In a nutshell these are some of the things we are working on. We will have to come up with a name for this pilot project. The UMW used "**For Christ's Sake, Turn the World Upside Down.**" I like this but we will need our own name. We will look at several names from the Task Force before deciding. One might be "**Rock My World and Send Me Forth.**"

We need to know how to proceed for a pilot project, timeline, what's needed for a budget request, etc. Who in the office do we work with on this needed project?

Thank you for your support and prayers.

Blessings,

Bonnie