



Common Ground

Social Justice Newsletter for the UU Church of Bloomington Indiana

Plant A Row For the Hungry

– By Dixie Welch, *Help Your Hungry Neighbors Task Force*

Nutritious fresh vegetables are a luxury for those on tight food budgets. Please help us provide some for them. Gardeners now planning their spring gardens, consider dedicating a row for the hungry. When the crops begin to mature, bring us your surplus on Sunday mornings. Place it in the marked bin located near the grocery coupon sales table. A member of our committee will deliver the produce Monday to Mother Hubbard's Cupboard or the Community Kitchen. This effort will continue through the summer.



Support Still Need to Rebuild Damaged New Orleans Homes

– By David Parkhurst, *Katrina Relief Task Force*

We appear to have a full complement of 20 volunteers for our spring break trip to work in New Orleans. This includes several students and others who need financial support to go. Sadly, albeit understandably, we've received no contributions since the earthquake in Haiti. Even small contributions would help our work, so please consider giving us a little. Tax-deductible contributions can be sent to UU Church of Bloomington with Katrina Relief in the memo line. If you mail a check, please send it to 2120 N Fee Lane, Bloomington, IN 47408. Thank you for your consideration.

The Insecurity Budget

– By David Keppel, *Just Peace Task Force*

In his State of the Union address, President Obama proposed a freeze on all non-security discretionary spending. That includes education, alternative energy, and (politicians' favorite target) aid to the global poor. According to the Center for Defense Information, 54 percent of Federal spending goes to pay for current and past military operations, and 36 percent is for the current military, compared with 11 percent for general government expenses. The military budget President Obama proposes for Fiscal 2011 is \$708 billion. He has recently escalated the war in Afghani-

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stan, where it costs the United States \$1 million to maintain each soldier per year. Yet even this level of spending does not satisfy some members of Congress.

Please contact Senator Evan Bayh, Senator Richard Lugar, and Congressman Baron Hill and ask them to reexamine their priorities. In his Riverside sermon in 1967, Martin Luther King warned that “the nation that continues year after year to spend more on the military than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.” He also noted: “It is a sad fact that, because of comfort, complacency, a morbid fear of communism, and our proneness to adjust to injustice, the Western nations that initiated so much of the revolutionary spirit of the modern world have now become the arch anti-revolutionaries.” Indeed our fear of communism led us to support Islamic extremists, who today have replaced communists as the chosen enemy. It is time for new priorities.

The “Second Chance Act” Offers a Golden Opportunity

– *By Vid Beldavs, for the Friends of Prisoners Task Force*

The Second Chance Act, passed unanimously by Congress, makes substantial funds available for reentry programs - mentoring, reentry courts, jail to community transition programs and others. The bulk of grant funds are avail-

able to government units with a smaller amount available for not-for-profits. This is a golden opportunity for Monroe County to secure funding needed for a comprehensive program to reduce jail overcrowding. The grant requires two key elements: 1) that the County have a plan to reduce recidivism; 2) that the County is organized to implement the plan with a Reentry Task Force representing the courts, probation, Sheriff, police, the jail, social service agencies, faith-based organizations, housing, shelters, jobs programs and other stakeholders.

Recently, the Urban Institute completed the Transition from Jail to Community (TJC) program for the National Institute of Corrections. TJC reflects the best thinking in the country on reducing recidivism through effective reentry. TJC is being piloted in six communities across the country. The Urban Institute and the National Institute of Corrections have been invited to Bloomington along with representatives from the six pilot communities to discuss how TJC can be implemented under Indiana local government structures.

The location, date and time of the conference are will be announced soon. Hopefully, the leaders of our community will make a serious effort to secure a Second Chance Act grant. Winning this grant would be a major shift forward for the entire community.