

The Advocate



Our Lady Queen of Peace Quarterly Newsletter, Fall 2016

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How VOICE Builds Bridges

By: Kathy Desmond

When Nicole Spence-Goon moved to Washington from Richmond eight years ago to take a job as an IT contractor for the US Trustee Program in the Department of Justice, she sought a faith community. OLQP was the second church she visited and she liked what she saw. Looking at different parish ministries, she was attracted by the interfaith aspect of the new group, VOICE (Virginians Organized for Interfaith Community Engagement). She attended the 2008 founding meeting of VOICE as a delegate for OLQP and ever since has been active in VOICE. She is our representative to the Arlington strategy team.

What attracted Nicole to VOICE was that it brought together Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, and Hindu communities to work for a shared purpose. Growing up, Nicole moved with her family from Jamaica to Canada to Jamaica to Miami. "I'm used to being the new kid on the block. This experience makes me more open to people who are coming into new environments and I'm able to empathize with them."

How does VOICE build bridges? The best way, Nicole says, is through relational meetings that give everyone a say. "We hold meetings with different congregations to meet and build relationships with people we ordinarily wouldn't meet. We always set aside time for this, for people coming together from different places to get to know each other." Another



way: VOICE members support each other's efforts.

VOICE is a non-partisan citizens organization of almost 50 faith and civic organizations that *Nicole Spence-Goon*

"organizes to build power and do justice in middle- and lower-income communities in Fairfax, Prince William, Arlington, and the city of Alexandria." Each institutional member pays dues to support several organizers and a small office in Arlington. Each has a Core Team "invested in doing justice and building a relational culture." The ten Arlington institutional members are nine churches, including OLQP, and Marymount University. Each member organization has two votes on the Action Team of 100. A small Strategy Team acts as the Board of Directors. (www.voice-iaf.org)

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VOICE's approach traces back to the Industrial Areas Foundation, begun by Saul Alinsky in Chicago in 1940, and it is a member of IAF's national network. There is power in numbers and people joining together. Today, Nicole says, VOICE is "more of a support group than an advocacy group. We aim to develop leaders and bring members of the community together with the powers that be so that their voices can be heard." In the beginning VOICE focused on small actions, such as working with Culmore Apartment residents to empower them to work with property management. The VOICE helped residents meet with fire marshals to discuss fire safety violations and then, together, they worked with management to make the necessary changes.

VOICE develops leaders through training sessions. In the past five years, it has trained thousands of participants to conduct one-on-one meetings and listening sessions of groups of eight or more to identify residents' concerns. And participants learn to plan research and more listening sessions to identify a specific issue and how to win it.

Nicole calls VOICE a "people empowerment group. We hear your issue. We help you take your issues to the political powers that be. We are with you. We will train you how to organize to win and bring about the change you want. "

For example, recently in Arne Valley, one-on-one meetings with the organizer identified residents' need for bus service on Sundays. After follow-up, they held a listening session for residents. Later that month, at the March 2015 County Budget meeting, a resident leader asked for Sunday service on ART bus route 87. The residents now have Sunday bus service and also greater ability to work together to solve other problems.

The members of the coalition believe in standing together in solidarity. The coalition sponsored two solidarity events last December. In the first, 150 VOICE leaders, 50% Muslim and 50% Christian and Jewish, marched from First Christian Church to Dar al Hijrah Islamic Center in Falls Church, where they packed blankets and coats to ship to Syrian refugees. In Prince William County, leaders prayed together, ate together, and were able to talk one-on-one with someone of a different faith. Again, half the participants were Muslim and half non-Muslim. They shared stories about where they came from and their hopes. Fr. Gerry Creedon said, "We are a nation of

Editor's Note

By: Paula Cruickshank, Editor

On February 18, 2016, Pope Francis said, "A person, who thinks only about building walls, wherever they may be, and not building bridges, is not a Christian." This issue of *The Advocate* explores the multitude of ways that we, as Christians, can build bridges and not walls in our relationship with others, regardless of our differences. Many of the articles are meant to raise questions: How can we hold civil discourse with those of opposing views? How can we be peacemakers and lead a life of nonviolence? How can we lead through example and teach our children what Jesus wants all of us to do and to be? How can all of us be bridge builders?

immigrants and refugees and we honor the religious beliefs of all who come here."

Over the past eight years, VOICE conducted campaigns and won victories on key issues in immigrant rights, foreclosure accountability, affordable housing and youth investment. Impressive accomplishments are listed in its 2015 Annual Report (<http://www.voice-iaf.org>). In Arlington, VOICE was instrumental in retaining \$12.5 million for the Affordable Housing Investment Fund and passage of the County's Affordable Housing Master Plan that mandates 17% of all housing be affordable. However, its campaign for "Public Land for Public Good" was more successful in getting 10,000 signatures of support than in enacting its specific recommendations. Opposition from groups interested in other uses— or no further use — of public lands in densely settled Arlington County resulted in a stalemate.

Consequently, VOICE had to regroup. The leadership decided to go back to its roots and conduct listening sessions to focus its future work. Each member congregation/ institution committed to conducting listening sessions in spring 2016: OLQP conducted five sessions. The top four problems identified were: schools, housing, immigration and criminal justice/gun violence.

Over summer, the task was to turn each problem into a specific issue that VOICE can win. To do this, VOICE teams

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would conduct more listening sessions and research to identify specific issues and solutions. OLQP members Patricia McGrady volunteered to work on affordable housing, Michelle Knight on immigration, and Nicole Spence-Goon on criminal justice/gun violence. In September these teams will meet with elected officials to brief them on the issues and prepare them for the 2000-person Assembly. This Assembly is scheduled for Sunday, October 16, from 3:30-5:30 pm at Oakton High School in Vienna. VOICE will unveil its issues agenda and ask local and state officials to respond.

Nicole says, "Being a part of VOICE has shown me that we do have the power to change things when we work together and support each other. **Getting involved in VOICE clearly demonstrates that you can effect change that impacts your daily life by being part of a powerful group that interacts with your local government officials."**

Following the Nonviolent Jesus: A Conversation with Judith Kelly

By: Bobby McMahon

Activist, Teacher, and now Author, long-time friend of OLQP Judith Kelly has travelled the world for the cause of peace and nonviolence. In response to this call, she has promoted the cause of peace with PAX CHRISTI (paxchristi.org), the Catholic peace movement. In her commitment to peace, Judith has engaged in nonviolent protest against the School of the Americas and just published a book in the United States and Canada about a contemporary Polish martyr: *Just Call Me Jerzy: Popiełuszko in the United States and Canada*.

In an interview by Advocate staff member Bobby McMahon, Judith talks about her work teaching the course "From Violence to Wholeness," the connection between her work and her faith, and her recent experience at World Youth Day.

Q: For those who've never heard of it, what is "From Violence to Wholeness?"

Judith: "From Violence to Wholeness" is the name of a workbook created by *Pace e Bene* Nonviolence Service (<http://www.paceebene.org/>) to introduce nonviolence philosophy and practice. Based on Franciscan tradition, this version is geared especially for Catholic parishes. A more

ecumenical version called "Engage: Exploring Nonviolent Living" goes even deeper.

You've taught classes around the area on this process—what do you see as the main takeaways for participants once they complete the class?

Participants are able to take the philosophy of creative nonviolence—sometime defined as "organized love"—and respond to conflict at all levels. Prayerful centering and focused listening help participants practice responding with love. Racism, economic disparity, environmental degradation, and other types of structural violence require creative, nonviolent approaches.

One key symbolic image is the "Two Hands of Nonviolence": one hand raised to the opponent, palm out, to clearly indicate that the violence must stop, but the other open hand extended, indicating a sincere willingness to engage with the opponent.

Stress and anger block real communication. The goal is to love, not to dismiss, disrespect, or demonize. It requires patience and a willingness to suffer the consequences. Not easy, but necessary in our work towards reconciliation. We need to build a more peaceful world together, where minds and hearts can change for the common good.

When did you first feel a calling to practicing nonviolent action as a part of your personal spiritual journey?

Pax Christi, the international Catholic peace movement, really inspired me to act on my convictions, especially the Vow of Nonviolence. In the run-up to the first Gulf War in December of 1990, I risked arrest for the first time to say no to war. Throughout the following decade, I continued to join in nonviolent actions, risking arrest, and taking the consequences. In 2000, based on an appeal by the Nobel Peace Laureates for the United Nations Year for the Culture of Peace (and their International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the Children of the World), I pledged to promote the teachings of nonviolence and become a trainer with *Pace e Bene* Nonviolence Service.

I am Polish-American, and in late 2000 I went to Poland for four months. While there I participated in a week-long Bearing Witness retreat at Auschwitz/Birkenau. I also began to study the life and witness of Fr. Jerzy Popiełuszko (1947-

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1984), a contemporary martyr to the faith from the Solidarity movement. His life is an inspiring model of nonviolence. I attended his beatification ceremony in Warsaw in 2010. When I found out he had traveled to the United States, I decided to try to find out where he went and who he met. It took years of research, but I have just published a book, *Just Call Me Jerzy: Popiełuszko in the United States and Canada*. I took it to Poland in time for World Youth Day events in July 2016. It is currently available through my website (<https://justcallmejerzy.com/>).

You've worked around the world in the cause for peace—Afghanistan, School of the Americas, the Middle East—can you talk about a specific experience where you felt a deep sense of connection between your work and your faith?

I try to live out my faith wherever I am, lifting up the nonviolent Jesus as a path to a more peaceful world. In Poland for World Youth Day in July 2016, I saw the love and joy of energetic young people of faith from 187 countries. I see great hope that the world will change with the endless energy of committed young people who want to overcome evil with good. Pope Francis gave everyone an inspiring pep talk on getting involved in positive change.

I felt a particularly deep sense of connection between my work and my faith when I revisited the Franciscan Church in Krakow where I first learned about Jerzy Popiełuszko from a young

priest in 1995. I knelt at the same altar where Pope Francis had just honored two young Polish Franciscan priests, martyred by Shining Path terrorists in Peru and recently beatified. I had served in Peru for two years as a Peace Corps Volunteer. I resonated strongly with Pope Francis' prayer to end terrorism, and these personal connections—martyrdom, Jerzy, Peru, Poland, Francis—renewed my energy to continue the nonviolent journey.

I also signed a copy of my book in Spanish for Pope Francis, and entrusted it to a friend at the Vatican who promised to get it to him. I'll let you know if Francis calls to say "Gracias!"

We're seeing so much violence on the news right now—Turkey, France, Dallas, and in many other places. How should we as Catholics respond in the face of these horrors?

Yes, it can seem overwhelming. Yet our call to be peacemakers is not optional. "The Challenge of Peace," written by the U.S. bishops in 1983, says: "Peacemaking is not an optional commitment. It is a requirement of our faith. We are called to be peacemakers, not by some movement of the moment but by Christ Jesus."

In essence, our baptism as Catholics calls us to peacemaking and the nonviolent Jesus. This is our historic moment to respond in love to violence—domestic and international—and not add negative

energy. It is important to stand with victims and survivors, and support organizations that work to end violence: Witness for Peace, Black Lives Matter, Witness Against Torture, the School of the Americas Watch. There are so many good efforts, and they all need support.

Pax Christi International and the Vatican-supported conference in Rome last April called for an emphasis on Nonviolence and Just Peace. It was a first for the Church and all are asked to endorse the Nonviolence and Just Peace conference's final statement, "An appeal to the Catholic church to re-commit to the centrality of Gospel nonviolence" (<https://nonviolencejustpeace.net>).

It has just been announced that Pope Francis' World Day of Peace message will focus on nonviolence. I hope everyone will read and support this groundbreaking effort, too.

People of faith need to be fully engaged in rolling back what will kill all of us—global violence—and live with a firm commitment to nonviolence. Jerzy's last public words in a closing prayer on October 19, 1984, the night of his martyrdom, are very clear: "Let us pray to be free from fear [and] intimidation, but above all, free from any thoughts of retaliation and violence."

I believe Catholics need to follow the nonviolent Jesus, teach their families this essence of Christianity, and pledge to stay strong for the long haul.



How A Circle Model Can Resolve Differences and Heal Wounds

By Bill Casey

More and more people lament the deterioration of discourse in today's public square and they yearn for a return of civil dialogue. However, when asked how to accomplish that, very few seem aware of any practical ways, much less are they open

Respectful dialogue about different perspectives is a lot easier said than done.

to engage in a conversation with people of opposing views. Respectful dialogue about different perspectives is a lot easier said than done.

Indigenous people around the world addressed this challenge through the use of a communication model known as a Circle, particularly when they needed to address conflict or harm in the community—long before there were any judicial processes. The Circle model refers to the physical arrangement of participants and an intentional process for discussing difficult situations in a manner that promotes respect, safety, and trust—often resulting in repair of harm and restoration of relationships when violations occurred.

Circles can be and are being used today for the same challenging conversations when people with differing or conflicting points of views are willing to trust the process. As they sit in a circle (with physical object between them), the visual effect is that everyone is on an equal plane. Power or authority rests in no one although a trained facilitator guides the process. A talking piece governs the flow of conversation. The one who holds the piece is empowered to speak, without interruptions from others, without evaluation of what each says, without cross-talk. Those not holding the talking piece are empowered to listen.

The facilitator invites participants to speak their truth (as they understand it) and pass the piece on until everyone in the Circle has a full opportunity to speak. Initially, the facilitator invites participants to name and reach consensus on values that will influence the conversation, The facilitator then poses questions that enable each one to speak to his/her

unique interests or needs until the conflict or the differences are sufficiently addressed.

Sometimes the focus of a Circle is to explore

different perspectives, sometimes it is to resolve a conflict, sometimes to make a decision. In reality, a Circle can serve any number of intentions but it always promotes a sense of safety, respect and trust for the participants.

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Is Circle a countercultural method? Certainly. Is it more time-consuming and less efficient than our common forms of conversation? Indeed. Does it lead to more productive and satisfying communication than arguments, debates, and public meetings? Yes, but you'd probably have to try it to be convinced.

Let me mention two forums in which Circles are being used very effectively today. When a juvenile in Fairfax County commits an infraction of a school behavioral code or commits a crime in the community, school officials, the police, or the juvenile court can divert the offense to what is called a **restorative justice conference** (an application of the Circle model). It enables all those affected by the harm (juvenile, parents, victims, school officials, law enforcement, or others) to acknowledge the harm and applicable responsibility for it, to express the impact of harm and to receive answers to questions, and to arrive at an agreement that satisfies the mutual needs and interests of all the participants. Imagine the quality of resolution in a Circle for offenses such as insubordination, fighting, bullying, property damage, larceny and the like, compared to official sanctions such as suspensions/expulsions or criminal prosecution and sentencing.

A second use of circles is to offer an experience of healing for those harmed (in any way) by the clergy sexual abuse scandal in the Catholic Church. The ripple effects of sexual abuse on a child by a priest are extensive and long-lasting. Certainly survivors are the most profoundly harmed, but so are their family

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members. Likewise are those who are derided for trying to support survivors whether they are clergy, or lay workers or volunteers, in parishes and dioceses. Similarly are those in the pews who feel betrayed, embarrassed or angry, not to mention those who left the pews because of the scandal. A professional facilitator guides the conversation with a series of questions that allows participants to speak their truth and

Laura Peralta-Schulte and NETWORK on the Hill

By Jack Sullivan



Laura Peralta

What is the best training to advocate effectively on Capitol Hill for the principles of Catholic social justice? In the case of OLQP parishioner Laura Peralta-Schulte, it was leading the Congressional lobby activities of a major pharmaceutical firm for a decade.

This unlikely path

brought Laura from OLQP to NETWORK, the organization that most famously caught national attention with its "Nuns on the Bus."

Laura's transition from "Big Pharma" to big issues resulted when Warner-Lambert, a firm for which she had undertaken lobbying efforts in Congress beginning in 1990, was bought out in 2000 by Pfizer Inc. Already holding a law degree from American University, she took time off to begin a family and to get a teaching certificate. After teaching high school government classes, she accepted the opportunity to become Senior Government Relations Advocate for NETWORK, an assignment that has taken her back to treading the halls of Capitol Hill.

Founded by nuns in 1971 and inspired by Vatican II,

(as importantly) hear the truths of others not only about their harm but also about the journeys of healing they have begun or are ready to initiate. Participants report a profound sense of trust, safety and an experience of healing from these Healing Circles.

For more information, contact Bill Casey at b13909@comcast.net.

NETWORK is a Catholic organization involved in education, lobbying and organizing around economic and social justice issues in the United States. "Although my work for Warner-Lambert was quite different from advocating on issues like social justice and income inequality, my knowledge of how the legislative branch operates was very valuable," Laura observed.

She acknowledged that the deadlock between political parties can offer obstacles to effective work on behalf of social justice. Despite that, Laura counted several achievements among NETWORK efforts in the current Congress. "We successfully backed changes in tax policy to expand the earned income tax credit and the child tax credit and extend the children's health program known as CHIP." Those accomplishments required working with both Democrats and Republicans, she noted.

In addition to economic justice and health care the lobbying efforts of NETWORK include immigration reform, trade policy, peacemaking, and the environment. Laura is shown here demonstrating on behalf of "Dream Act" immigration reform. She explained that the organization puts particular effort at reaching House members and Senators who are identified as Catholic. "We also contact Catholics on staffs," she added. "Much of our work is meeting with staffs rather than the members, who usually are very busy."

NETWORK received national attention in 2010 when the organization during the healthcare reform debate strongly backed the Affordable Care Act (ACA) of the Obama Administration. Its advocacy was cited in national media as important to the passage of the bill. Because of provisions related to birth control, however, that support brought a sharp rebuke to NETWORK from the Vatican in 2012.

"The beauty of what we do is that we avoid getting involved in the 'culture wars' and concentrate on issues in concert with Catholic social teaching. Thirty million Americans were

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without health care. It was a justice issue,” Laura said.

NETWORK is independent of the Vatican and although shaken by the rebuke was able to continue its mission. Partly in response, NETWORK created the "Nuns on the Bus" program that received national

attention as religious sisters and others toured from city to city to bring attention to issues of the gaps in incomes and access to services.

At the time of the interview, Laura was set to visit fifteen states and both the Republican and Democratic Convention after which she planned to return to Capitol Hill to continue the work of NETWORK, arguably the

most notable champion of Catholic social justice on the national scene. Thus continues the work that earned the organization’s founder, Sister Carol Coston, in 2001, the Presidential Citizens Medal, the Nation’s second highest civilian honor. Sister Coston was the first Catholic nun ever to receive the award.

Religious Education: OLQP Circles Stress Christian Action

By Sally Harrs

Children, let us love not in word but in deed and truth.—1 John 3:18

Katie Remedios, the Director of the OLQP religious education program, is the visionary for the Circle program. The Circles are the heart of OLQP’s religious education, which serves parish children from pre-kindergarten through sixth grade and their families. The goal of the Circles is to provide the family with the tools to follow the directive of John: “Let us love not in word but in deed.” Actions - not words - are the foundation of Circles at OLQP.

The original religious education program was based on a traditional weekly classroom model. Katie recalled that diversity was sacrificed and the primary goal of the program was its compatibility to parents’ schedules rather than its power to enrich. The current Circles are modeled on early American communities that lived the teachings of Jesus Christ by working and praying together. Women came together for

the common goal of using materials from their everyday lives to make quilts, share life experiences as they sewed, and enrich community life.

The Circles of OLQP are formed with parish children and their families who gather during the school year to share their daily life experiences as Christians and learn about discipleship. Parents are inspired to

The current Circles are modeled on early American communities that lived the teachings of Jesus Christ by working and praying together.

participate in their Circle’s activities as affirmation of the promises they made at their children’s baptisms. As Katie has said: “Our primary objective is to bring Jesus back to the kitchen table – a lived faith – by supporting and facilitating our parents as first teachers of the family.”

Parents who register their children for religious education at OLQP select from two models. The first is the *Neighborhood Circle* which includes from six to eight parish families who meet three hours each month totaling 24 hours a school year to explore individual grade-level lessons on the Gospels. Meetings of the Neighborhood Circles can include the entire family – grandparents, too, if

they are available. One theme for the Circles is selected each year. This year it is “Building Bridges” to explore the power of prayer and demonstrate the importance of bridges rather than walls for children.

The second Family Circle model is the *Home-Based Circle* in which independent families do whole family catechesis during planned times in

their homes. In Family Circles, an entire family unites to explore the year’s theme and select actions for discipleship. Parents learn with their children, and the diversity of families is celebrated.

Both the *Neighborhood* and *Home-Based Circles* plan special adventures during the school year. In addition to a monthly family meal in each Circle, field trips to museums, community events, and local churches are planned. The Circle meetings can be in a home or in the church hall or during a field trip to a museum. Both Circles – the *Neighborhood* and *Family Circles* – are never alone in

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making the Circles succeed.

Resources are available from Katie and Father Tim, and model lessons are provided to guide the theme for the school year.

Father Tim delights in participating in the Circles' field trips. The Circles participate enthusiastically in parish activities such as the Food Pantry, the

book drive, and Matthew 25. A project is underway for the children to create different-colored decades of the rosary to be distributed to members of OLQP so that all members of the parish will be able to pray as a church family.

On the first Saturday of each month, all the Circles gather at OLQP from 3:00 to 4:00 for "foundation classes" to **review** the year's theme. All

parents are committed to attending these monthly opportunities to share and learn. At 4:00 pm on Saturday afternoon, there is a children's Mass. Everyone is welcome at this monthly gathering.

The Circles bless OLQP children and their families as they are empowered to live their faith as Jesus taught.

JPIC Round-up

By: Michelle Knight

(Watch the bulletin for details on any upcoming events)

JUSTICE, PEACE AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION (JPIC) TEAM

The team is in the midst of celebrating a "Season of Creation" after the opening prayer service on the World Day of Prayer for Creation, Sept. 1. They will continue with information about caring for creation in the bulletin and will wrap up the season with an ED Talk on October 4, the Feast of St. Francis. (ED TALK, not TED talks, are presentations in honor of our former associate pastor, Fr. Ed Kelly, C.S.Sp. Their purpose is "Challenging your Mind, Soul and Heart."

CONSISTENT ETHIC OF LIFE TEAM

Our newest team is currently "under construction." In July, Fr. Tim gave a wonderful explanatory talk about the theme, which was well attended. We hope to use this phrase in a meaningful way around most of our social justice activities.

LABOR AND INCOME INEQUALITY TEAM

The biggest news was the newly initiated Labor Day Mass in honor of laborers everywhere, which took place on September 5 or Labor Day.

The team joined with others for a celebratory lunch after the Mass. They also have two upcoming events planned. The first is on September 25 and will be on the minimum wage and the Catholic response to it and is part of the ED Talk series. On October 30, there will be another presentation on The Gig Economy and the Future of Work. They will also undertake a voter registration drive on the weekend of Oct. 1, 2.

VOICE (Virginians Organized for Interfaith Community Engagement)

VOICE is now engaged in a national campaign, "Do Not Stand Idly By", seeking better gun safety measures. A group has already met with Libby Garvey, Arlington County Board chair and a group of clergy, including Fr. Tim, met with the Arlington County sheriff and deputy. The group is also gearing up for an action on October 16. They hope to have a minimum of 30 parishioners attending.

MATT 25 BAZAAR

The Backpack drive was a huge success. About 250 backpacks filled with school supplies were distributed in early August. Thanks to Circle One for making it happen. The store is still in need of a coordinator. Please contact Michelle Knight, mknight@olqpva.org

If you want to see discipleship in action, visit the Ministry Center any Wednesday morning. The building overflows with ministry!

FOOD PANTRY

As we head towards Fall, the pantry continues to draw large crowds. We served 204 families one week. However, our usual numbers are closer to 180.

Food Pantry Nursery

The nursery is going strong! They were very busy with school age kids but continue having many babies and toddlers now that school is in session.

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Tengo Mucho Poder

This group of Latina moms who come to the food pantry and the Gabriel Project meet together to support one another and to give the parish ideas of how we can help to empower them.

Food Pantry Garden

The garden has provided many fresh vegetables to our neighbors in need!

The volunteers keep the garden looking great and producing!

Hunger Security Team

The team will facilitate parish participation in Bread for the World's "Letters to Congress" campaign requesting global funding for food security support for mothers, newborns and young children. The Late October event will be announced and explained with bulletin

announcements prior to the event. The signed letters will be hand-carried to Congressional representatives.

Scarves for the Homeless

The group has expanded its recipient base to Shirlington Employment and Education Center (SEEC) and Families from the Food Pantry Community

A Vote Against the Proposed Virginia Right to Work Constitutional Amendment is a Vote for Workers, Unions and our Community

By Laura Bandini

In November, Virginia residents should vote against the anti-worker proposed state constitutional amendment to enshrine right to work in the Virginia Constitution.

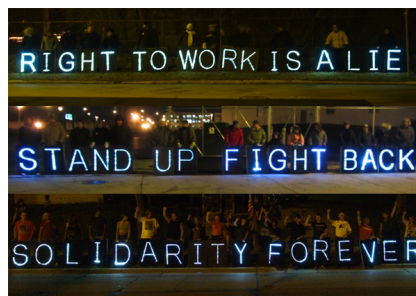
What Right to Work Means

The term "right to work" sounds harmless, maybe even desirable. However, famed labor priest Msgr. George Higgins explained that the phrase "right to work" is "a verbal deception, a play on words used to cloak the real purpose of the laws, which is to enforce further restrictions upon union activity."

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. explained the purpose of right to work laws most eloquently:

"In our glorious fight for civil rights, we must guard against being fooled by false slogans, such as "right to work." It is a law to rob us of our civil rights and job rights. Its purpose is to destroy labor unions and the freedom of collective bargaining by which unions have improved wages and working conditions of everyone...Wherever these laws have been passed, wages are lower, job opportunities are fewer and there are no civil rights. "

Right to work creates a legal right for workers to refuse to become union members and pay dues, even after their union has been certified, for instance, through a secret ballot election. This means that workers can enjoy all of the union benefits gained through collective action, including a collective voice at work, higher pay, health insurance, sick days, protection against arbitrary firing through a "just cause"



provision and grievance/arbitration procedure in a union contract – but be "free riders," refusing to pay their fair share needed to support the union in those efforts.

Harmful Impact of Right to Work Laws

As a result of right to work laws, solidarity is undermined and unions are ultimately left underfunded and diminished in power. Workers and the entire community in right to work states then suffer. According to the AFL-CIO, employees in right to work states earn an average of \$5,971 less per year than workers in other states, are more likely to lack health

insurance, and work in more dangerous environments (workplace fatalities are 54.4% higher in right to work states).

Because wages are depressed in right to work states, those states have a lower tax base and higher poverty and infant mortality rates, as well as significantly less state investment in children's education.

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Right to Work in Virginia

Virginia has been a right to work state since 1947, and union membership in our state is only at 5.4%. So this proposed amendment would cost taxpayers \$131,000 for public notices, but would have no practical effect on the state's labor relations.

It appears that the real impact is to try to increase anti-worker voter turnout, and, as one delegate openly admitted, to make right to work more difficult to someday repeal in Virginia.

Howard University Team Visits Medor

By Sue Carlson, M.D.

In May 2016 seven Howard University engineering students visited Medor. They are members of Howard University's College of Engineering



From left to right: Dave Carlson, Translator Markens Arthur, Dr. Bob Efimba, Matthew Clarke, Taylor Hines, Marcel Louis, , Chukwuka Ibecheozo, Tatyana Kincherlow, Omorade Payne, KaJalen Pogue

and Architecture (CEA) Service Corps . They were accompanied by Howard University engineering professor and Our Lady Queen of Peace (OLQP) parishioner, Dr. Bob Efimba, and OLQP parishioner, Dave Carlson, the "tour guide." Their goals: to discuss community needs with Medor's leaders and to plan an engineering

project to be implemented on a subsequent trip.

The team's first obstacle was getting to Medor. According to Taylor Hines, rising senior and team leader, "It took two whole days to travel to the community of Medor, a journey which was characterized by a warm sleepless night on the floor of Father Luckson's brother's home, a mountainside van ride, and mountain hike on foot across variable terrain."



Taylor Hines appreciates the beauty of Medor's mountains.

Upon arriving, the team was impressed, even "overwhelmed" in the words of Dr. Efimba, with the warm welcome the community gave them. Tatyana Kincherlow, rising junior wrote, "The people of Medor were so generous with their time and hospitality. For people with so little, they gave so much."

As the team walked around Medor, they learned about the community

Vote No in November

Dr. King's solution also speaks in our time. Discussing right to work laws, he said that we must "demand this fraud be stopped." According to King, "[o]ur weapon is our vote." And so it will be when we enter the voting booth in November.

Please email me at htlaura1@gmail.com to join the Labor & Income Inequality Team.

and its accomplishments and needs. Dave Carlson remarked, "We saw lots of progress from programs that are underway, such as the agro-forestry program (614,000 trees and counting) and the terrific growth of



Marcel Louis and Matthew Clarke take measurements in the secondary school.

the St Joseph schools – now hosting around 3,000 students. It was very clear to me that they appreciate the opportunity to attend school and that they recognize it may open doors in the future."

The team made many observations during its stay in Medor. Dr. Bob Efimba noted, "As a Civil Engineer, I noticed the lack of infrastructure, and the need for simple solutions to help the people of Medor to get even the most basic elements thereof, beginning with solar power, running

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water, clean stalls and tables in the existing market, and passable paths, or even streets, within the town.” Omorade Payne, rising senior, remarked, “It is one thing to see on television the struggles Haitians go through every day and then it is another thing to actually witness it and be a part of it. No running water meant families would have to walk for miles to get water from the nearest source. No electricity meant that at the night most parts of the island are pitch black.”

The team met with Medor leaders and students, listening to concerns and hopes regarding the community's future. They took measurements of classrooms, desks, and student dorm and the primary and secondary school kitchens.

The team tested the water at several different sources and they considered future project options.



Omorade Payne tests water quality.

Matthew A. Clarke, recent graduate and rising Stanford University graduate student, said, “Some major projects the team looked into include providing a clean source of drinking water, refurbishing school and dorm infrastructure, and other amenities needed to sustain development.” According to Dave Carlson, “One of the ‘kitchens’ operates with 8 wood and charcoal fires and the smoke generated is fairly intolerable and a solution may not be terribly difficult for our engineer magicians. The team is thinking of ways to re-direct and harvest what is currently runoff water damaging the soccer field and secondary school, to make it available for the secondary school kitchen, saving them a one mile walk for large quantities of water every day.” The team has many project options to consider!

Howard’s CEA Service Corps went to Medor to be of service. They plan to use their engineering skills to uplift the quality of life for the people of the community. But the team members learned that with service comes blessings. Each person on the team mentioned reaping personal benefits from the trip. Two team members summed up the sentiments of the group: Chukwuka Ibecheozor, rising senior, wrote, “The week I spent in Medor was a tough one which helped me grow a lot as a person. I learned

invaluable lessons that I couldn’t have gotten anywhere else for which I am very grateful. I will always remain thankful for this opportunity to serve.” Kajalen Pogue, Howard graduate wrote, “After taking the long journey to Medor, I had a new appreciation for the little things that I take for granted. The experience was eye opening and one that I will never



Chukwuka Ibecheozor and Marcel Louis pose with kindergarten children.

forget. I will especially remember the faces and smiles of the children and students of Medor that embraced us and showed us nothing but hospitality. They were thankful for us being there, but it is they who will leave a lasting impact my life. One day I would love to go back to Medor, and I hope that time will come soon!”

We at OLQP applaud the Howard team members and look forward to working with the Howard U Service Corps as we continue to nourish our relationship with the people of St. Joseph parish in Medor.

OLQP/UJAMAA 24th Annual Scholarship Awards Program

By Veronica Dabney

The annual Scholarship Awards Program sponsored by OLQP’s UJAMAA ministry was held on June 18, 2016. Twenty-one scholarships and two community service awards were

presented. Two of the scholarships were special awards to college students who submitted outstanding applications.

UJAMAA receives grant funding and donations to be used for its scholarship program. The majority of the scholarship fund is an annual grant from the Black and Indian Fund, which was started by Saint Katherine Drexel. Additionally, this year and for the past six years, OLQP has received a donation in memory of elder Warree Green from Mrs. Madelyn

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Humenay, who was one of Warree Green's many OLQP helpers and caretakers. Memorial donations were also received from the families of Arnold Thurmond and Shaun Herbert, as well as from Bob and Gail Meghan. OLQP and UJAMAA acknowledge and thank the Black and Indian Fund, as well as all of the contributing families for their generosity.

The 2016 student spokesperson and past scholarship recipient was Bernice Yalley who received an OLQP/UJAMAA scholarship this year and has received a scholarship in the past. Bernice has been a very active parishioner here at OLQP since 2013. She is a member of the Minkisi prayer group and participates in their special events. She's also a lay Associate member of the Society of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. This year's scholarship will make it possible for her to attend The Institute of Black Catholic Studies (IBCS) at Xavier University in New Orleans. The Institute provides the knowledge needed to prepare participants to bear witness to being Black and Catholic. Bernice has attended the Institute in the past, and she hopes to learn new methods of sharing meditation, faith and prayer and bringing this knowledge back into the Black Catholic community. In her remarks, she expressed her gratitude for the assistance she received from OLQP. She then imparted uplifting words for the scholarship recipients with her message of encouragement and perseverance.

Fr. Timothy Hickey CSSp., was the 2016 keynote speaker and delivered an inspirational message that focused on excellence and gratitude that recognizes the necessity to do well and give back to the community and the world.

Scholarships and Awards:

Over the past 24 years OLQP/UJAMAA has awarded more than 310 scholarships, valued at over \$210,000, to help students attend Catholic elementary and high schools, trade schools, colleges and universities throughout the country. Through a panel review process, the committee has provided student recipients with tuition assistance to attend the schools listed below for 2016.

2016 UJAMAA Scholarship Awardees

Monee' Dominique

Baker

Terry D. Davis

Mya Eggleston-

Willingham

Morgan State University

Hampton University

NC State University

**Christopher Esquivel
Philomena Fitzgerald
Kevilyn L. Frazier
Alexis D. Holmes
Grant F. Jenkins
Crystal Johnson
Tiara Marie Jones
Kenedi Jordan
Danielle Monique
McEaddy
Anamaria Mingo
Anthony Mingo
Sophia Ofosu
Caitlin O'Grady
Jordan Stewart
Bernice E. Yalley
Sierra N. Young**

**The Heights School
College of the Holy Cross
Mount DeSales Academy
Morgan State University
University of Alabama
George Mason University
University of Cincinnati
Elizabeth Seton**

**Johnson & Wales University
Bishop O'Connell HS
Bishop O'Connell HS
St. Bernadette's Elementary
Pepperdine University
Parsons New School For Design
Xavier Univ. of New Orleans
Virginia Commonwealth Univ.**

Special Awardees

**Shaun Herbert Award: Jaleel Moore, Univ. of Maryland
Eastern Shore**

**Anthony Smith Award: Christian J. Edwards, Univ. of
Maryland Baltimore City**

**Community Service Awardees: Barbara Harris and Nicole
Spence-Goon**

**Warree Green Awardees: Sierra N. Young and Mya
Eggleston-Willingham**

**Profiles of the 2016 Recipients of the OLQP/UJAMAA
Community Service Award Winners:**



Barbara Harris

Barbara E. Harris

Barbara and her husband, Charles Harris, joined OLQP in 1985 when the then president of the 9:30 choir asked her to join the choir. Barbara has been here ever since. She and her family have contributed greatly to our church community. Her husband assisted with the maintenance of the church and helped with the Carpenter's Shelter

ministry with another member, Dottie Williams, until his Homegoing was celebrated here at OLQP in February 2001.

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Her grandchildren, George Johnson III and Crystal Johnson, grew up at OLQP where they attended Montessori school, joined the youth choir, and took First Communion classes. Granddaughter Crystal received UJAMAA scholarship assistance throughout her undergraduate years at George Mason University, and she received a scholarship this year to assist in completing her Master's Degree.

Barbara retired from the U.S. Department of State in June 2014 after serving for 42 years. During that time she travelled to Pakistan, Ireland, Trinidad, Tobago, and Nigeria. While on those tours, she seized the opportunity to sing in their respective Catholic choirs. While in Islamabad, Pakistan for two years, she sang for Mother Teresa. During her two years in Dublin, Ireland, she taught the choir to sing gospel songs, including "Taste and See," an OLQP favorite. She also sang in the Catholic choirs during her five years in Port of Spain, Trinidad, and one year in Abuja, Nigeria.

In addition to sharing her love of music and gift of song, Barbara has done the same here in our community. For the past year, she has been a Volunteer Chaplaincy Vocalist at Mount Vernon Hospital in Alexandria. In addition, Barbara is a Eucharistic Minister, serves on the Parish Advisory Board, and is a member of the UJAMAA and Minkisi Ministries. Of course, she also sings in the 9:30 Gospel Choir and in the Homegoing Choirs.

Barbara received the 2016 OLQP/UJAMAA Community Service Award for her many years of service to this church, her willingness to volunteer, and for sharing her many gifts, especially her gift of song, in the gospel tradition, here and in other far flung countries around the world.

Nicole Spence-Goon

Nicole was born in Montego Bay, Jamaica, but has called several places home. She attended both elementary school and high school in Jamaica and Canada – a unique

accomplishment. Nicole then attended the University of Ottawa in Canada's capital city. There she was active in the Caribbean Students Association, organizing events like their Black History Month (BHM) program and contributing articles to their BHM booklet.

Nicole moved to Ft. Lauderdale, FLA and from there to Richmond, VA, where she was introduced to the Habitat for Humanity organization via her church home at the time – St. Paul's Catholic Church. She became part of the Family Services Committee for Habitat for Humanity, doing home visits with prospective homeowners to assess their current living conditions. During her time in Richmond she also became a Big Sister in the Big Brothers Big Sisters organization.

The next stop was Arlington, VA. In her search for a church home, she visited the area, found OLQP and fell in love - not only with the church but also with her now husband Lu Goon. They were married at OLQP by Fr. Tim.

Here at OLQP she has been actively involved in many ministries – the Parish Advisory Board, the Matt 25 thrift store, UJAMAA and Virginians Organized for Interfaith Community Engagement (VOICE). Nicole served as the secretary of the Parish Advisory Board for four years. In UJAMAA she assists the committee in organizing various annual events – the Martin Luther King Prayer Service, the Black History Month and the Scholarship Programs.

In VOICE, Nicole was one of the original OLQP core team members in 2008 and has taken part or led many of the organization's actions. **(Read more about Nicole's involvement in VOICE in an article by Kathy Desmond on page 1).**

Nicole received the 2016 OLQP/UJAMAA Community Service Award for her tireless dedication and service to this community and to our church and for her longstanding commitment to the improvement of the lives of the underserved and marginalized.

Queen of Peace: A Church of First Communion

By Jack Sullivan

Last year, 84 youngsters made their First Communion at OLQP. You might ask, as I did, how can such a modestly-sized church generate this number of communicants? Katie Remedios, the religious education director had the reason — or more accurately, several reasons.

First, OLQP is not a small parish. With more than 5,000 parishioners registered, as she put it, "Queen of Peace is bursting at the seams." Moreover, it is a "destination parish," recognized in the diocese as a place

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where Catholics worship outside of their local parishes. Katie said that families not only come from Northern Virginia, but also from the District of Columbia and Maryland.

The attraction for many, she said, is the church mission that emphasizes the Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 25, and the commitment to provide for the marginalized everywhere. Parents, she said, are eager to have their children imbued with that vision of Catholicism.

While some parishes require two years' preparation for the sacrament, OLQP accomplishes instruction in six months, involving the entire family in the process. Parents or grandparents prepare the materials backed up by six monthly mandatory workshops at the parish in which both parents and

children participate.

"It has been very gratifying that in some cases an adult who has lapsed has been persuaded by the process to return," she noted. Although about 75% of the families are registered in the parish, others are not encouraged to register until their child has taken communion and they commit to attendance," Katie said.

The large numbers this year required that the children, usually second graders although some are older, were divided into four groups, including a bilingual one. "On First Communion day, the children dress the altar and provide flowers — each one has a task," Katie said. Although the events take place on weekday afternoons and Saturdays, the church is always crowded. "Standing room only," she added.

Preparation for next year's group of First Communicants will begin in October. Parish records indicate that about 75 youngsters whose families are registered will be eligible for the sacrament as second graders. Katie Remedios expects that 25 or more families will want to participate, with the total First Communion class likely to exceed 100 in Spring 2017.

Advocate Staff:

Paula Cruickshank, Editor

Feature Writers: Veronica Dabney, Jack Sullivan, Sue Carlson, Michelle Knight, Bobby McMahon, Laura Bandini, Sally Harrs, Bill Casey, Kathy Desmond

Susanne DeSantis, Layout Design

Jeannette Gantz Daly, Distribution