

Conference to Lead Journey Into Peace

BY THE REV. REBECCA JONES

“Journey Into Peace: Creating a Culture of Non-Violence” - a weekend of worship, training in spiritually-grounded peacemaking techniques, and recreation – will be Aug. 6-8 at St. John’s Cathedral.

The event is sponsored by the Colorado chapter of the Episcopal Peace Fellowship (EPF), in partnership with St. John’s, Jubilee Ministry of Colorado and several other peace and justice groups. Sponsors hope to draw participants from around the western United States.

The centerpiece of the event is a daylong series of workshops on Saturday, Aug. 7, led by Janet Chisholm, founder of Creating a Culture of Peace, a nationwide program for community peacemaking. Chisholm is the former national chairperson of the Episcopal Peace Fellowship.

The standard Creating a Culture of Peace course is a 20-hour curriculum that includes training in “constructive nonviolence” to create new and fruitful relationships, and “nonviolent resistance” to oppose injustice and oppression. The Saturday session, entitled “Preparing Ourselves for Peacemaking,” will be an abbreviated version of the full training, and will include storytelling, small group sharing, brainstorming, role playing, thought-provoking exercises, meditation, music and movement. Participants will learn skills to effectively raise and deal with issues in whatever areas concern them, from neighborhood conflict and video games to racism and militarism.

On Saturday evening, EPF members from throughout the western United States will have the opportunity to gather over dinner for networking and planning.

The Friday night session, “Celebrating a Community of Peace,” will include a Peace Partners Fair with informational booths showcasing the work of many like-minded organizations, and the opportunity to network over wine and cheese.

That will be followed by a Wilderness-type worship service in St. John’s cathedral, created by Kate Eaton of Mishkhah. Eaton, the wife of St. John’s dean Peter Eaton, was instrumental in the development of The Wilderness, the cathedral’s enormously popular alternative Sunday evening service, that engages all the senses through its use of lightness and darkness, flickering candles, incense, music and movement. Eaton founded Mishkhah in January to help other churches hoping to develop their own alternative worship experiences. “During this service, we will prepare our hearts for listening to the needs of those whose lives are affected by issues of aggression and violence,” she said.

Donations received during the Friday worship services will be used as seed money to stage the full 20-hour CCP training in the future.

The Sunday session, “Practicing Peace in God’s Creation,” includes a trip to Rocky Mountain National Park, the opportunity to hike or sightsee, and an informal worship service in the park.

Lynn Huber, convener of EPF Colorado, hopes the weekend will lead to deeper ties among EPF members throughout Colorado and among EPF chapters across the West, and will increase ties among the other secular and faith-based peace and justice organizations.

“I hope participants will have a stronger sense of how to live all of life as a peacemaker, and some new ties and new directions to live that,” she said.

Huber, a dues-paying member of EPF for many decades, helped found the Colorado chapter in 2006. The group grew out of the Peace and Justice Group at St. Joseph’s Episcopal Church in Lakewood, where Huber’s husband, the Rev. Frank Huber, was rector.

Since then, EPF Colorado has become one of the most active in the country. Among its accomplishments:

- Monthly PeaceFlix gatherings, which include a film on a peace-and-justice issue, reading a related book and having prayerful discussion about the implications.
- The annual Urban Pilgrimage for Peace, including Stations of the Cross in the neediest areas of Denver.
- MThe summer “Peace in the Mountains” events.
- MOccasional special events such as the recent showings of Traces of the Trade and Pray the Devil Back to Hell.
- MThe launch of a Website, www.epfcolorado.org, which provides links to related organizations and to book and film resources.

Putting together a national event like this has taken the Colorado chapter to a new level of commitment.

“National EPF has been hoping to work with regions and chapters more directly, and to facilitate more interaction among members,” Huber said. “Our little chapter, it turns out, is one of the more active ones. So we agreed to work on this. Meanwhile, I’d been hoping to have something from Creating a Culture of Peace for our diocese. This seemed like an answer to both prayers.”

Huber said the steering committee has identified more than 60 organizations they’re hoping to involve in the conference in some way. Dealing with that many details can be excruciating. “But the positive side is that almost everyone we’ve contacted is willing to do something to help,” she said. “That seems like confirmation from the Holy Spirit that this is touching something in folks that we want to engage.”



Journey into Peace: Creating a Culture of Peace

When: Aug. 6-8

Where: St. John’s Cathedral, 1350 Washington St., Denver

Cost: \$85 for the whole weekend (\$75 for those who register by June 30), \$70 for Saturday only and \$20 for Sunday only. Limited partial scholarships are available.

Information: Full conference agenda and reservation information is available at the EPF Colorado Website, www.epfcolorado.org, or call Lynn Huber at 303-587-0288.