

Stop the Violence

by Alder Brian Soloman

Greetings Allied neighbors and friends. I am sure you were as troubled as I was last week to hear that a homicide occurred in Avalon. While details are still sketchy, and it clearly was the freak result of a fight rather than a shooting, it still represents two fewer lives in our community. Both young, male, and black. One is dead; the other likely headed to prison.



What do you all think about having a stop the violence / peace vigil / memorial? In order for Allied to move forward, we definitely need to work on jobs, housing, transportation, mental health, child care, and education. But we also have to stop the violence. I don't want to do anything without the support of the community, but if you are interested, I'll do whatever I can to help pull it off. If it were up to me, we'd plan one of these every time we lost a member of our community to violence.

I leave tomorrow for Florida. I'll be back the weekend of the 28th.

Please let me know what you think.

Here are the last few lines of my Allied poem. We have to help people hear the humanity.

Brother, we are more than what you see and hear
More than what you think you know.

More than violence.

Can you hear that silence?

Listen carefully, beyond the catastrophe and calamity.

Listen instead, to the humanity .

Hoping for a more just and peaceful community, Brian

Advocating for Fairness and Justice

by Linda Ketcham



Twenty years or so ago there was a skit on Saturday Night Live, part of a news commentary that contained the line "and remember, the meek will inherit the earth but that's okay because when they do we'll just push them down and take it back." It seemed funny at the time, now it seems rather haunting. Haunting because, at the national, state and local levels we have policy makers, community leaders and elected officials to adhere to this sort of twisted theology.

In early March First United Methodist Church voted unanimously to continue to serve as an overflow shelter for homeless men. As a result of the congregations commitment to living their call they lost some parking for congregants on Sundays that had been made available to them (for \$50. per month rent) by a local businessman. Some members of our community would prefer that our homeless brothers and sisters be exiled to outside of the main downtown area, maybe even outside of Madison, without recognizing that the homeless are already in exile.

Locally, undocumented immigrants are being picked up and detained in increasing numbers, tearing apart families and putting hundreds of children at increased risk. I recently had a conversation with a long time community activist who was working to help a pregnant wife and mother of a four year old, who is living in fear and isolation, on the fringe of poverty after her husband was picked up by ICE and is being detained pending deportation.

"you shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt." Exodus 22: 21

In our offices, on a daily basis we see men and women who struggle to rebuild their lives after incarceration. Employment, housing, just two of the challenges facing them. We advocate against legislative efforts to continue punishing our brothers and sisters through increasingly wrongheaded and discriminatory bills designed at appealing to fear, racism and whatever other base instinct they can in an effort to claim themselves "tough on crime." Many of the legislators obsessed with forever punishing people are acting in ways contradictory to their professed faith.

"Then Peter came and said to him, 'Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'not seven times, but, I tell you, seven times seventy.' Matthew 18:21-22

On Easter Sunday the death toll among U.S. Service members reached the 4,000 milestone. Much less emphasis was paid by our media to the number of wounded, both U.S. and Iraqi, and the number of Iraqi citizens killed. At a cost of billions of dollars per month an unjust war drains our economy, pulling funds from crucial human services and other non-profits while creating record profits for Federal contractors and oil companies.

"He shall judge between many peo-

ples, and shall arbitrate between strong nations far away; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; and nation shall not lift up sword against nations, neither shall they learn war anymore;" Micah 4:3

Hunger in our country is increasing.

In Wisconsin, one in eleven households is what our federal government calls "food insecure." What that means is that those households are regularly skipping meals or reducing their intake to make their food last. At MUM we call that hunger and morally unacceptable.

More families are becoming homeless as the housing market crashes, in part due to exploitative practices by lending institutions. Our government moved slowly to offer help to families losing their homes, they are seen as foolish for having purchased homes they could not afford. Last week the Federal Reserve pledged to essentially bail out one of the largest financial institutions in the country as it faces collapse due to its role in the sub-prime mortgage scandal.

"God commands justice and fair dealing." (Quaran 16:90)

"When all the people of the world love, then the strong will not overpower the weak. The many will not oppress the few. The wealthy will not mock the poor. The honored will not disdain the humble. The cunning will not deceive the simple." Mo-Tse

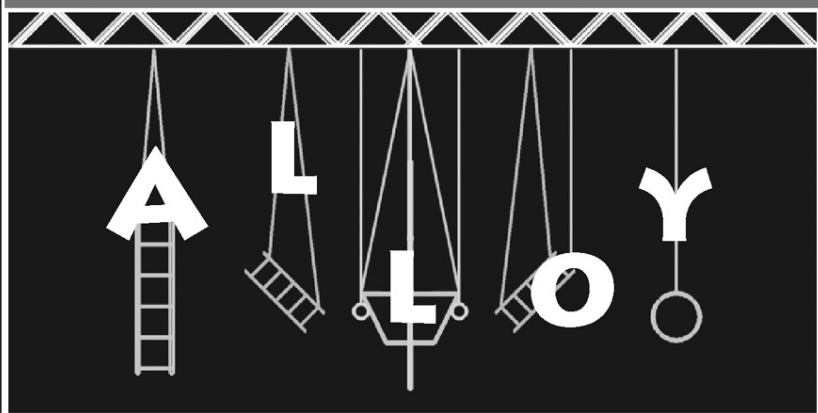
"for I was hungry and you gave me food, : I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink: I was a stranger and you welcomed me: naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me: I was in prison and you visited me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you at stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you? And the king will answer them, 'Truly, I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.' Matthew 25:35-40

As an interfaith organization we are at no loss for guidance on what our response to injustice ought to be. It can be more difficult to put our theology into practice. I started this article expressing my discouragement about the twisted theology that has subverted the common good and social compact in this country. I end it with a sincere profession of faith in justice, and in my neighbors and our local faith communities, it is how MUM has managed to survive for thirty-five years.

W.E. B. DuBois wrote: "The prayer of our souls is a petition for persistence, not for the one good deed, or single thought, but deed on deed, and thought on thought, until day calling unto day shall make a life worth living." And so, each day we, people of divergent and diverse faith traditions and communities, arise to work another day for our common call for justice. It can be no other way and we give thanks for each of our companions on this walk.

Linda Ketcham is the Executive Director of the Madison Area Urban Ministry .

Cycropia Aerial Dance presents original steel apparatus works.



Sunday, April 6th
4 pm and 7 pm

Boys & Girls Club of Dane County
2001 Taft Street, Madison, WI 53713

Suggested donation: \$10 (Doors open 1 hour before show)

For more information visit: www.cycropia.org

Youth Services of Southern Wisconsin – Briarpatch's core service, the Crisis Intervention and Counseling Program helps teens when they need it most. Trained volunteers and staff help teens and their families deal with homelessness, drug and alcohol abuse, domestic violence, education troubles, and other complicated issues of adolescence. Confidential counseling is available twenty-four hours a day (without charges) through Briarpatch's Help Line (608-251-1126, toll-free 800-798-1126). Teens and their families can also get free drop-in, in-person counseling at Briarpatch. Our office hours are 9am-10pm, Monday through Friday.