

The Adventist Peace Fellowship: An Educational Resource

By Douglas Morgan

The Adventist Peace Fellowship (APF) offers a range of resources for peace education. By means of a Website, www.adventistpeace.org, the *Peace Messenger* e-mail newsletter, print publications, and presentations, APF seeks to raise consciousness about the centrality of peacemaking to the beliefs and heritage of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and to encourage action.

APF History

APF emerged in 2001 out of conversations between Ronald Osborn, then at the Center for Law and Public Policy at Columbia Union College, and myself. We both had long-standing interests in the relation of Adventist faith to matters of peace and social justice, and knew many others with similar concerns. We sensed a need to bring these people together and to give voice to peacemaking as a central and indispensable dimension of Adventism.

In 2002, about 20 Adventist scholars, administrators, pastors, and graduate students throughout the United States agreed to be members of an advisory committee for APF. After the launching of our Website and e-mail newsletter early in 2003, we received expressions of support from people throughout the world.

APF is more an informal network than a highly structured organization. In fact, it has no paid staff and no real office. It functions as a hub connecting Adventists—both individuals and organizations—and provides the following:

- Information about what Adventists are thinking, saying, and doing about peace;
- The names of other Christian organizations and alliances with whom we can make common cause on behalf of peace;
- Resources, such as books, DVDs, Websites, seminars, and conferences that nurture the formation of Christian peacemakers;
- News and analysis of current events from the perspective of loyalty to the principles of the Prince of Peace.

How can APF enhance peace education? Here are a few of many possibilities:

Information source and gateway

The “Adventist Peace Witness” section at www.adventistpeace.org provides full-text primary source documents on the Adventist heritage of noncombatancy and peacemaking. These include General Conference resolutions from the Civil War era, a 1921 statement on peace and disarmament, as well as more recent statements and essays.

The book *The Peacemaking Remnant: Essays and Historical Documents*, published by APF in 2005, can be used as a course textbook. It includes many of the same documents and more, along with essays by contemporary Adventists Charles E. Bradford, Charles Scriven, Zdravko Plantak, Keith Burton, Kendra Haloviak, and Ryan Bell, as well as historical analysis by Ronald Osborn and Douglas Morgan. Professors Ginger Hanks Harwood, Kendra Haloviak and Won-Il Kim of La Sierra University used the book as a required text for their course on Violence and Peacemaking in Scripture and Tradition in early 2006. Professor Hanks Harwood reported that “the class had a very positive response to the various chapters, and it served as a stimulus for engaged and constructive conversation.”

The APF Website functions as a gateway to online, print, and audio-visual resources on many peace-oriented categories, including current events, biblical and theological themes, historical perspectives, peacemaking method and theory, public policy and politics, and military and foreign policy.

The Website also provides links to resources and ideas on methods and tools for peace education. Computer games such as the *PeaceMaker* video game developed at Carnegie-Mellon University and *A Force More Powerful*, a game of nonviolent strategy, offer engaging possibilities for learning about peace. The Websites of organizations such as Celebrating Peace! and Peace Games also open up further vistas to explore.

Action Opportunities

The APF Website opens up a wide range of possibilities for the practical application of ideas. Whether it be on behalf of human rights, conflict resolution, humanitarian intervention, economic justice, or pro-peace legislation, endless possibilities for student participation in peace projects can be quickly found.

Collaboration With Classes and Other Campus Groups

APF has no organized local or campus chapters, but seeks to support and collaborate with various campus groups with overlapping interests.

A prime example is the *Adventist Women for Peace* at La Sierra University (Riverside, California), who in January 2006 presented the first peace conference in Adventist history. Academy teachers and pastors in California and Oregon report using APF materials in working with their students. At Southern Adventist University (Collegedale, Tennessee), Professors Donn Leatherman and Lisa Clark Diller have helped organize a thriving Adventist Peace fellowship. Union College (Lincoln, Nebraska) has a chapter of Amnesty International, guided by English professor (and APF advisor) Chris Blake, which has sustained a high level of involvement in peace-oriented action for several years. APF collaborates by publicizing the activities of these groups, which informs and inspires the broader Adventist community while offering affirmation to participants. In turn, APF materials and presentations have played a role in fostering various activities.

During the past four spring semesters, APF has collaborated with the department of religion at Columbia Union College (Takoma Park, Maryland) in one-hour credit course, "Readings in Discipleship." This course centers on reading and discussion of books on gospel nonviolence and peacemaking. APF has developed study and discussion materials for the readings: *The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions* by Marcus J. Borg and N. T. Wright (2003), *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger* by Ronald J. Sider (2004), *Mere Discipleship: Radical Christianity in a Rebellious World* by Lee Camp (2005), and *God's Politics: How the Right Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It* by Jim Wallis (2006). Future plans include an online discussion forum and making APF discussion guides more broadly available.

These are just some of the ways APF is serving as an educational resource. Suggestions from educators are highly valued (contact dmorgan@adventistpeace.org).

Log in often to www.adventispeace.org and request the free e-mail newsletter, the *Peace Messenger*, and you will be able to keep up with the evolving potential of this instrument of peace education.

Douglas Morgan, Ph.D., is Co-founder and Director of Adventist Peace Fellowship and Professor of History and Political Studies at Columbia Union College, Takoma Park, Maryland.