



Discipleship

MERCY AND ADVOCACY ARE THE TWO FACES OF DISCIPLESHIP

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From the Editor

The theme of this issue of *Discipleship* is violence in our communities and it is based on the Urban Violence Resolution approved by the Presbytery and the follow up actions by the Presbytery and its task force on urban violence.

“And the effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever. My people will abide in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.” Isaiah 32:17-19

A Resolution Against Urban Violence: An Update

Since the approval of the Resolution Against Urban Violence in February of 2006, a committee has been created: The Initiative Against Urban Violence Task Force. This group has done several things to raise the consciousness of the Presbytery of Baltimore:

1. The committee has had several meetings to discuss the problems of urban violence in its many aspects.
2. The committee has compiled An Urban Violence Reader to educate the Presbytery and to stimulate congregational discussion.
3. The committee held two workshops at the Big Event: One on personal stories of Presbytery members affected by urban violence, the second focusing on community mediation.
4. The committee then scheduled a panel discussion for the April Presbytery meeting. Experts in law enforcement, education, clergy and the academic communities led the Presbytery in a discussion of possible next steps.
5. Shortly after that, the committee had a brainstorming session for help in

discerning Presbytery’s role in stopping urban violence.

The preliminary findings of the committee reveal several aspects of the problem and avenues to help:

Educational: The children of the inner city are desperately seeking people to love them and role models to believe in them. They are children who have been told that they are under achievers. They are being steered away from the possibility of academic excellence. Urban violence is also driven by the rage of the disenfranchised. They find themselves within a social and legal system that works against their success and then labels them as being incapable of success. Mistakes with the law are compounded by the legal stigma of an arrest record, which moves an already low glass ceiling even lower.

Programmatic: Preliminary findings indicate that there is currently much work already being done in response to urban violence. Such programs that are already working always need both financial and volunteer help.

Our Mission

Discipleship is a joint effort of the Mission Committee and the Peace and Justice Committee of the Presbytery of Baltimore.

Discipleship informs its readers on mission, peace and justice issues. Its content is intended “to inspire, motivate, and equip both congregations and individuals to act as members of God’s Kingdom through service and advocacy in the world.”

Discipleship is a new venture in the life of our Presbytery. We hope that all who read it will find it both helpful and inspiring. We welcome the participation of all members of the Presbytery in future issues by writing letters, submitting articles, and informing us of what your congregation is doing in the areas of mission and peace and justice.

Ted Heun, editor
Elder, Catonsville Presbyterian Church



helpful and life-changing.

I became involved with this program as an outgrowth of my teaching about fear. For 22 years I have taught people how to transform their fear of computer

technology into enthusiasm. Sensing an ever growing level of fear in our nation, four years ago I began teaching and speaking on how to transform this fear to peace. My work with PPR has included both directing and facilitating the creation of a formal curriculum, as well as teaching sessions on fear as it relates to violence.

Just as a doctor cannot effectively treat a symptom without knowing the underlying cause, I believe we cannot successfully turn the tide of urban violence without understanding what is behind it. Many would point to conflict, poverty, prostitution, drugs and urban blight as some of the causes of violence in our cities. I believe that these are only curtains that keep us locked in violence. The real wall behind these that enables violence to thrive (and keeps us from peace) is fear. I believe that knowing how fear works biologically within each of us, and culturally among all of us, enables us to find more effective ways to stem the tide of violence. My work with PPR has confirmed this.

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Transforming Fear into Peace

Two years ago I became involved with a program in the Baltimore City Public School System that is working to reduce the violence in city schools. This program, known as Positive Personal Relationships (PPR), works with the adults in the school system, providing knowledge and techniques for building more positive relationships among students and other staff. By creating stronger relationships, teachers and staff are able to respond more effectively in dealing with the violence and disruptive behavior showing up among students. PPR is changing the lives of participants as well as their students and co-workers.

PPR is based on an inherent respect for all. It includes lecture as well as interactive experiential exercises to teach, reinforce and support the skills required for this to happen, skills such as listening, conflict resolution and understanding cultural differences. At the core is a commitment to modeling what is taught and to building a strong sense of community among those in attendance. Participants have included both new teachers as well as the most effective and experienced teachers in the city. All have found this program extremely

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TWO CHILDREN OF GOD

One of the students shot and wounded in a classroom at Virginia Tech on April 16 is the same young man who a few years ago used to cut my lawn. He was and is a fine young man: friendly, intelligent, a conscientious student and a loving son and brother. Such is the nature of our society that such illogical and senseless violence can strike so close to home. Fortunately, Justin is on the mend, but can we say that our society can heal the wounds of a culture of violence?

Is "violence as American as cherry pie" as black power leader H. Rap Brown said in the 1960s? I don't believe that. On the contrary, I believe Americans are a peace loving people who generally do not seek out violent methods to solve problems. But, it does seem we as a nation tolerate a great deal of violence in our everyday lives. From children's cartoons to violent movies to street wars over drugs, we are exposed to a seemingly endless list of violent images and messages: music lyrics, video games, talk radio, sports, Saturday morning cartoons, movies, internet sites, magazines. Even the local news focuses on the latest murder or the latest incidence of family violence.

And our response to these messages? Few cry out to criticize. We seem to ignore the subtle and not so subtle violence around us. Are we pretending it is not there? Are we pretending that it is not affecting our children? We shrug and think that the victims are not in our neighborhood, they are not people like "us," or "they" are just criminal types. My neighbor, Justin, belies those stereotypes. Justin is a child of God, blessed in many ways. But wasn't Cho Seung-

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Hui also a child of God? Mr. Cho was obviously a severely disturbed individual. He demonstrated none of the outward signs of a well adjusted person. He needed love, compassion, friendship and someone to listen to him. He needed someone to help him come out of his self imposed shell of loneliness and fear. He needed someone to recognize that he was indeed a child of God. But that never happened. For various reasons his full potential as a child of God would never be fulfilled; he succumbed to dark forces that he did not understand.

What do we do, as a people of faith about all of this? Hopefully as you read the related articles in this newsletter you will be inspired to come up with some answers. I submit that we need to speak out against anything that promotes the hatred or prejudice that might lead to violent behavior. And we need to reach out to those children of God, who are lonely, isolated, afraid, abused, and whom no one seems to love.

Ted Heun

EMBRACING RIGHT RELATIONSHIPS IN A VIOLENT SOCIETY

Last August I attended the National Memorial Service for celebrated civil rights activist, Victoria Jackson Gray Adams. She was one of the first women to run for U.S. Congress

from Mississippi. "Mama Victoria" once shared with me a fantastic and yet simple definition of Heaven: "The Kingdom of Heaven is a place of right relationships."

That definition struck me as highly profound particularly given its stark contrast to the quality of human relationships on Earth. If we were to take that definition of Heaven and revise it to describe the character of Earth; one might say with little argument: "Earth is a place of violent relationships".

Physical violence in our communities has been a perennial social cancer that seems to survive and even thrive with no regard for new political initiatives, borrowed police enforcement tactics, or even the latest campaign promises proclaimed during election years. Murder and assault appears to have a strangle hold on our community. According to former Baltimore Sun journalist, Eric Siegel, Baltimore City has experienced more than 8,000 homicides since 1977 – and those are just the ones that have been reported. What many in the surrounding counties are realizing as well is that they are not exempt from violence. Violence is indeed mobile.

With that in mind, the church must ratchet up its efforts to address this issue with a theology broad enough to support a substantive response. Dr. Frederick Haynes, pastor of the Friendship West Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas, points out that when Jesus reads Isaiah's scroll in Luke 4:18-19, he makes it clear that the anointing from God is for social impact – not social clubs! The church must courageously and creatively redefine what ministry looks like between Monday and Saturday. To

quell the scourge of violence, we must consider keeping the doors of the church open (figuratively and literally) so that we can truly create "sanctuary" in this often chaotic world. Youth mentoring/After School programs, congregational partnership initiatives, and the creation of community development corporations are just a few ideas of the many that are just waiting to be birthed in the life of many of our congregations. These types of endeavors provide people with the hope that helps prevent them from making the often times desperate decision of becoming an agent of violence.

In addition to direct service to the community; the church must also bear witness in the arena of public policy. Violent policies are just as deadly as violent interpersonal behavior. We must raise our voices against economic exploitation, community divestment, gentrification, media perpetuation of racist stereotypes, a substandard educational system, the rush to incarceration over drug treatment and other such policies that help to cultivate highly depressed communities. As one of the most powerful institutions in society the church must reclaim its position as a beacon of social justice.

When the church returns to its rightful place, we'll begin to see right relationships here on Earth and will be able to pray with greater fervor: Thy will be done, On Earth! – As it is in Heaven!

Rev. Heber Brown III is First Vice President of the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance and Chairman of the Youth Works Committee of the Baltimore City Branch NAACP.

THE FORUM

DEAR FRIENDS,

Advocacy can be done in a variety of ways. One is political, and another way is to make donations work for structural change to improve the world. I believe it is important to try to keep the problems from happening in the first place, that will minimize the need for charity. That is why I am part of the Peace and Justice committee of the Presbytery. I have participated in the 2nd Tuesday trips to Washington, and I firmly believe that our lobbying makes a difference. It also keeps me informed and I pass along the information I garner to other Presbyterians throughout the country. I firmly believe that it is important to be fully informed and to speak out. Self Development of People has had a long tradition amongst Presbyterians, and this is a way that our advocacy and mission efforts overlap. I appreciate the work of the Heifer Project, The United Nations Millennium Development Campaign, Bread for the World, the Southern Poverty Law Center and other organizations that are working towards change, including the National Council of Churches and others that are trying to make a difference in environmental and diplomatic efforts. My participation on the Peace and Justice Committee helps me to stay informed and to try to make a difference in the process of change.

Cheryl Thurber, Catonsville Presbyterian Church

DEAR FRIENDS,

The question that has the greater meaning for me is: "Why is the work of the mission committee important to the Presbytery of Baltimore?" Any presbytery-level team has these benefits:

- the satisfaction of addressing issues beyond the resources of any one church
- the blessing of meeting people from all areas of the state
- the perspective gained in learning about successes and experiences of others
- the unity of focus that transcends theological differences

The mission of greatest importance to me is the enabling of churches to develop partnerships to meet needs of the disadvantaged within the boundaries of the Presbytery of Baltimore, providing hope for a better future. What a blessing to be in the position to answer physical needs, while demonstrating and sharing Christ's love as treasured members of God's family! This is a practical, personal, precious way to expand the Kingdom!

Phyllis DeSmit, Central Presbyterian Church

Editor's Note:

We welcome your letters. Please send them to tedheun@bcpl.net in Word and identify yourself by name and church. Letters should be from 50 to 100 words, please. The editor reserves the right to edit all submissions for the newsletter for the purposes of clarity, brevity and to meet the requirements of limited space.



The Initiative Against Urban Violence Task Force

The Task Force met at Hunting Ridge PC on May 8 to consider appropriate actions for the Presbytery to take in response to the growing concern for the effects of violence in our communities. The group of approximately 20 people was led by Rev. Keith O. Paige to discuss three questions: (1) what brought you here tonight?; (2) what is your church currently doing in the area of urban violence?; (3) what should Presbyterian churches do?

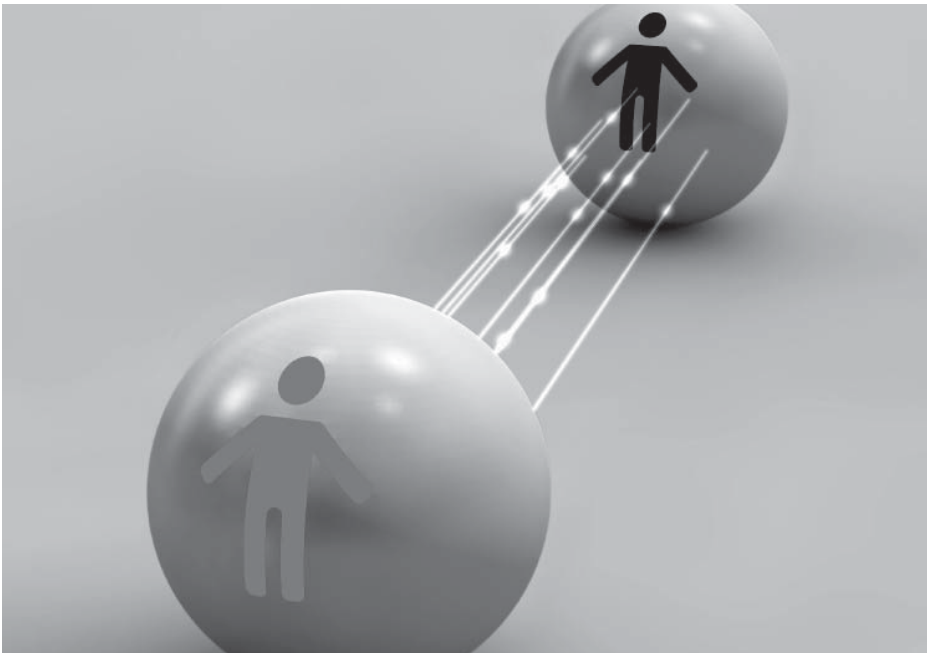
After brainstorming on these topics, the group decided that there were four areas in which we could work. These included advocacy, education, hands-on projects, and funding.

The Initiative Against Urban Violence Task Force was created by the Presbytery to carry out the intent of the Resolution Against Urban Violence approved by the members of the Presbytery last year.

The May meeting of the Task Force was a follow-up to the April 26 Presbytery meeting and in direct response to the panel discussion held during that meeting. The next meeting of the task force was held on June 5 at the Presbytery Office.

Ted Heun

MAKING CONNECTIONS



Brief Summary of Legislative Advocacy for 2007 Maryland General Assembly

The 2007 Maryland General Assembly Session ended April 9. This was a very cautionary year for the legislature, as the new governor wanted to look carefully at the budget and see where he could find some efficiencies in the state government. Budget analysts are predicting a \$1.3 - \$1.5 billion deficit for next year, so most legislation this year was very limited in what would be passed, so as not to increase this deficit.

A few of the bills that the Presbytery of Baltimore supported were enacted and have been or soon will be signed into law by Governor O'Malley. Among those are:

The Clean Cars Act of 2007 requires automobile dealers in the state to sell only cars and trucks that have the reduced emissions standards of California by 2011. Most cars sold in the state already meet those standards.

The Storm Water Management Act requires better design for storm water run off, thus reducing pollution and sediment into the Chesapeake Bay.

Increased Healthcare Coverage was a big consideration for this session but ultimately failed to pass. It is thought to be a major item for next year's session. The inclusion of the tobacco tax increase was the major sticking point for this bill.

Most of the welfare funding bills failed to pass, as they required increased revenues for funding. One of the bills that I supported, the Flexible Leave Act failed; but, it is expected to come up again next year for consideration and has a good chance to pass. The Living Wage bill passed, which requires contractors who have a contract with the state worth \$100,000 or more pay their workers \$11.30/hour in urban areas and \$8.50/hour in non-urban areas. Another bill passed that allows non-custodial parents, who have accrued large state-owed arrearages on their child

support payments will have those arrearages reduced by 50% if they pay child support for one year, and the arrearage cancelled completely if they pay the child support for 2 full years.

A bill to deny undocumented workers a driver's license failed, primarily because the federal Real ID Act will become law soon and all the states must decide how they will comply with this enactment. The children of undocumented workers who attend high school in the state for two years and graduate, who have resided in the state permanently for at least two years and whose parents pay income taxes will be denied in-state tuition.

Julie Erickson, Public Policy Advocate for the Presbytery of Baltimore. You may contact Julie at: jerickson@baltimorepresbytery.org

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Witness in Washington

The Presbyterian Church USA advocates for its social justice polices with the U.S. Congress. You can learn more at: www.pcusa.org/washington or ga_washington_office@pcusa.org. To order online reports: <http://capwiz.com/pcusa/mlm/signup/>

Quotes of note

"DO YOU REALIZE THAT GOD NEEDS YOU? DO YOU REALIZE THAT YOU ARE GOD'S PARTNER? WITHOUT US, GOD HAS NO EYES, WITHOUT US, GOD HAS NO EARS, WITHOUT US, GOD HAS NO ARMS."

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, God Has a Dream: A Vision of Hope for Our Time

THE WORK OF MISSION AND JUSTICE

DID IT MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Did it make a difference? Referring to the March 16th Christian Peace Witness for Iraq, my friend poses a frequent question raised after such an action.

On a wintry March evening over 3,000 Christians gathered in DC at the National Cathedral and New York Avenue Presbyterian Church to worship, to grieve the losses of this war, and to bear witness to a greater hope for our world.

Sitting in the awe-inspiring space, referred to as the altar of our nation, with over 200 Christians from Baltimore, and led in worship by those who gave voice to the many people and nations affected by this war, I was struck by the power of the love that draws us together in this fellowship.

6 With dreams of an interfaith witness being equally powerful, I began to see the need for a Christian witness as well. With national and international media videotaping this ecumenical service, Christians fully expressed their hopes for peace using the

beautiful liturgy, music, and symbols of our faith tradition.

Christians fully expressed their hopes for peace using the beautiful liturgy, music and symbols of our faith tradition.

From the Rev. Raphael Warnock, Pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, we were reminded of the huge toll the Iraq war has taken on the impoverished communities in



our own nation with the diversion of billions of dollars to the war.

Powerful stories were shared of the great losses in Iraq, followed by a compelling address from Celeste Zappala, mother of Sgt. Sherwood Baker, a slain US soldier in Baghdad. As a witness to the true cost of this war, she referred to the evening's worship as "a time to lay before God the sorrow that lives in all of us because of this war". Ms. Zappala

prayed that as "an ocean of tears spreads

across both countries. I ask the Lord to help us...our souls broken open, ready to rise to witness, ready to rise to love God's world to peace".

Following the service, thousands marched down Massachusetts Ave. in a candlelight vigil encircling the White House. Over 200 clergy and laypeople were arrested for praying in front of the White House for peace.

Did it make a difference? The answer lives in the hearts of those who shared a collective grief and hope for

a brief moment, with a gentle spirit prodding us on to be that answer.

Cheryl Finney, Elder, Brown Memorial Park Avenue Presbyterian Church

<http://www.presbyterianchurchusa.com/christianpw/index.php>

PEACEMAKING IN A VIOLENT WORLD

This task group of the Peace and Justice Committee was formed in September, 2002, for the purpose of examining and promoting pro-active, nonviolent ways of settling conflicts at all levels of human interaction.

Focusing on the peacemaking ministry of Jesus and the scriptures that support that way of living, as well as other sources, opportunities are sought to dialogue with church groups and individuals about how to embrace nonviolent methods of conflict resolution as an integral part of one's life. In a world where a culture of violence permeates our everyday lives, this approach enables Presbyterians to fulfill their Christian calling as peacemakers.

Leadership is available to help Christians focus on creating a culture of peace. The following individuals are

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available to offer one hour seminars:

1. "Modern Examples of How the Nonviolent Way Works" Ellen Tharp, 410-737-4571, E-mail: n.tharp@verizon.net
2. "Creating Environments that Prevent Conflict" Nelson Tharp, 410-737-4571, E-mail: n.tharp@verizon.net
3. "Justice at the Local Level" Cheryl Thurber, 410-747-5557, E-mail: cthurb@yahoo.com
4. "Social Movements, A Historical Perspective" Cheryl Thurber (same as above)
5. "Nonviolence: Let It Begin With Me" Bill Galvin, 202-498-3486 (cell), E-mail: galvinbill@yahoo.com
6. "Conscientious Objection and Related Issues" Bill Galvin (same as above)
7. "The Bible: A Resource for Violence or Conflict Resolution?" The Rev. David L. Pollitt, 410-638-6022, E-mail: DavidLPollitt@netzero.com
8. "Our Culture of Violence and Jesus' Nonviolent Way" Rev. David L. Pollitt (same as above)

Six weekend retreats, focusing on nonviolent ways of resolving conflict, have involved 170 people. Participants have included persons from a variety of religious traditions, including Presbyterian, Methodist, Episcopal, Quaker, Unitarian, Jewish, Muslim and unaffiliated. These twenty hour weekend retreats are sponsored by a single church or a group of churches, and usually are ecumenical.

A nonviolent training retreat helps participants distinguish between violent and nonviolent actions, gain insight into the ways of peace

illustrated by the life and teachings of Jesus as well as from other religious traditions, develop peacemaking skills in everyday practical situations and apply the principles of peacemaking in situations of conflict at all levels of human interaction, such as one-to-one relationships, family, church, business, national and international relations.

A pilot project for peacemaking is focused on youth. Youth violence includes aggressive behaviors such as verbal abuse, bullying, slapping, fighting or the use of deadly force. Youth violence is a dynamic and complex public health problem as well as a social and spiritual abomination. Teaching youth active nonviolent techniques as an alternative to violence is an effective way to resolve conflict. (Contact person: Nancy Fayer at 410-750-1479, Email: RnFyr@aol.com).

For more information or to schedule an opportunity to improve your peacemaking skills, contact Rev. David L. Pollitt, Chairperson, at 410-638-6022 or DavidLPollitt@netzero.com

SEEKING TO BE FAITHFUL TOGETHER:

Guidelines for Presbyterians During Times of Disagreement (Adopted by the 204th General Assembly, 1992) The first three items appeared in the last issue of Discipleship. We continue with statements 4-6.

In a spirit of trust and love, we promise we will . . .

4. Share our concerns directly with individuals or groups with whom we have disagreements in a spirit of love and respect in keeping with Jesus' teachings.
5. Focus on ideas and suggestions instead of questioning people's motives, intelligence or integrity.
6. Share our personal experiences about the subject of disagreement so that others may more fully understand our concerns.



continued from p. 1

1. The Law Enforcement Community:

Many police don't desire to detain individuals. They are very open to working with our churches as well as other community organizations to provide other alternatives for many young people who are just looking for something to do.

2. The Economic Community: Drug

dealers and other businessmen are in business illegally because there is no incentive to make money by other less dangerous means. On the other hand, there are entrepreneurs who have done just that.

3. The Educational Community:

Teachers and schools play a big part in young children's lives. Tracking children's progress and making sure that they do not "slip through the cracks" in our educational system will give the streets fewer opportunities to adopt disillusioned students.

4. The Religious Community: Our

religion is only as strong as it empowers us to work for positive change within our communities. From pastoral care to evangelism, the church is often besieged by specific byproducts of urban violence.

The Resolution Against Urban Violence provides a unique opportunity for our Presbytery to combine the faith that we profess with the social action that we encourage.

Respectfully submitted, Rev. Keith O. Paige, Cherry Hill Community Presbyterian Church

Task Force Members

- Roger Powers Elizabeth Johnson
- Nancy Fayer Bill Galvin
- James Parks Onajae Hopper
- Julie Erickson Deb Milcarek
- Bonnie Clarke Ledonia Kimble
- Anita Hendrix

COMING IN SEPTEMBER



THE PRESBYTERIAN HUNGER PROGRAM COMES TO MARYLAND

Three representatives of the Presbytery of Baltimore recently attended the National Gathering of Hunger Action Enablers: Deb Milcarek, Associate for Mission and Justice, Reverend Elizabeth Johnson of Dickeyville PC and Ted Heun of Catonsville PC. We learned great deal about the work of the Presbyterian Hunger Program and met with many dedicated Presbyterians working in this area of Christian concern. At the conclusion of the four day conference Ted was commissioned as a "Hunger Action Enabler". This position is one that extends over the entire Presbytery. The major goal of the Hunger Action Enabler is to empower congregations and other groups to create and sustain a long-term commitment to hunger action.

Below is a very brief overview of the program:

The Presbyterian Hunger Program seeks to mobilize the human and financial resources of the church to respond with compassion and justice to poor and hungry people in local communities, in the nation, and throughout the world.

There are five categories of the program:

Direct Food Relief

- 1. Lifestyle Integrity
- 2. Influencing Public Policy
- 3. Education and Interpretation
- 4. Development Assistance
- 5. Self Development of People

Over the course of the next few months you will be hearing much more about the program, because there is so much to tell. Our first task is to form three sub-committees to create a Hunger Action Team. If you would like to learn more about these opportunities, please contact me as soon as possible.

Ted Heun

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Our next issue of *Discipleship* will be focused on the issue of hunger and the work of the Presbyterian Hunger Program.

"Discipleship" is a collaborative publication of the Mission and Peace & Justice Committees of the Presbytery of Baltimore.
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