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***** “Talking Peace, Making Peace: An Adventist Conversation”** co-sponsored by
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Adventist Refuses Combat Deployment

After receiving a family hardship discharge from the Army National Guard in October 2004, Sgt. James Marshal looked forward to a new chapter in life with his wife and their new-born baby. The soldier had done an “about face” in life during the summer of 2002, beginning a “walk with the Lord” that led to his baptism as a member of the Loma Linda Romanian Seventh-day Adventist Church in April 2005.

Just a month later, however, James was involuntarily recalled to active duty in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. He applied for re-classification as a 1-A-O conscientious objector, explaining that an “underlying reason” for his desire to leave military service in the first place had been “my unwillingness to take another life.”

Earlier this month, having waited five months for his conscientious objector application to be assigned to an investigating officer, James was stunned by word from his commander that his deployment to Iraq was going into process and that “my application will be hand-carried to Iraq and investigated there – in a war zone.” In a recent letter to *Sojourners* editor Jim Wallis, Marshal stated that he had “refused to process to deploy and will continue to do so.”

After reputed refusals to deploy to combat in Iraq, Marshal received new orders on December 19 assigning him to Alexandria, Virginia, according to an editor’s note in [SoJo Mail for December 28](#).

In his conscientious objector application earlier this year, James wrote that after his spiritual transformation began, he had “struggled with the issue of war.” After studying the Scripture and reflecting on God’s will for him in its light, he became convinced that God is “the Governing Authority over all mankind.” He felt an assurance that under that authority “my mission as a soldier would be to sustain life, not to take it.”

Further explaining his stand in his letter to Wallis, Marshal wrote that “I made a covenant with Christ that I would try and live out his words of love, compassion, and nonviolence even knowing the road would be difficult.” He told the prolific author and evangelical social activist that reading the recently-released second edition of Wallis’s book, *Call to Conversion*, had given him “the confirmation I needed that I was doing the right thing.”

Christmas Eve Vigilance for Peacemakers in Iraq



The status of the four volunteers associated with Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) abducted in Iraq on November 26 remains unknown. No updates have been heard since their captors' statement of December 8, in which they extended to December 10 the deadline for executing the peace workers if demands for the release of Iraqi detainees were not met.

In an essay posted on the web site of the British organization [Ekklesia](#), Lee McKenna duCharme, a Canadian who works with CPT, reflects on a Christmas Eve spent with her four colleagues on her heart:

By a few commentators, our friends have been called impractical, irrational, naïve, stupid, even. Why, after all, would anyone do such a thing? Taking Jesus' call to enemy-love and solidarity with the oppressed seriously, they placed their bodies, unarmed, disarmed and disarming, in the way of violence to offer a different word, a different witness. This is not a seeking after crucifixion; but it is a Jesus-walk that takes them down a path shadowed by a cross. It is our path.

Meanwhile we pace in the waiting room – for what? for the uncertain; for the certain. The Child will be born, the Light will come; the darkness will not overcome it. And, unknowing, we grieve, we lament – even as we hope; and the two are related. In our lament we point out to God the gap between who we understand God to be, what we understand God wants for humankind and creation – and the reality. But we do so out of hope.

...Each in their very different and particular ways, Norman, Jim, Harmeet and Tom took steps, made decisions, clear-eyed, expecting to be home by now – or in Bethlehem for Christmas. Aware, certain of the risks and the arithmetic of occupation; yet refused the calculus.

In the waiting room we pray, often with only groanings that cannot be uttered, refusing to hedge our bets, bow down to other gods – “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace ... BUT IF NOT, be it known to you that we will not serve your gods ...” (Daniel 3.16-19)

Full text of [“Watching and Waiting with the Christian Peacemakers in Iraq”](#) at the Ekklesia-UK web site.

E.J. Dionne: “When the Cutting is Corrupted”

Excerpts from a column by E.J. Dionne, Jr. on Congress and the budget bill (*Washington Post*, December 27, 2005):

Rarely does a single action by Congress serve as so powerful an example of how the system is working. The recent budget bill, which squeaked through the House and Senate just before Christmas, is a road map of insider dealing. It shows that when choices have to be made, the interests of the poor and the middle class fall before the wishes of interest groups with powerful lobbies and awesome piles of campaign money to distribute....

Consider federal health programs. The House bill proposed substantial cuts for Medicaid beneficiaries, but the Senate bill – partly because of pressure from moderate Republicans – did not include those cuts. Instead, the Senate proposed to save taxpayer money by eliminating a \$10 billion fund to encourage regional preferred-provider organizations, known as PPOs, to participate in the Medicare program. It also sought more rebates to the federal government from drug manufacturers participating in Medicaid.

Note the difference: Instead of imposing cuts on the poor, the Senate sought savings from corporate interests. Surprise, surprise: The final bill dropped the \$10 billion cut to the PPOs and most of the rebate demands on drug manufacturers. Instead, the agreement hammered Medicaid recipients with \$16 billion in gross cuts over the next decade....

And that is just one instance among many of corporate interests being shielded from cuts, while child support enforcement and foster care programs were sliced....

Sen. Norm Coleman (R-Minn.) opposed the original, milder Senate budget bill but turned around and voted for the final, harsher bill. According to *Congress Daily*, Coleman backed the final budget "after negotiators took out cuts affecting his state's sugar beet growers." Coleman told the paper: "Karl Rove called me and asked what I wanted. A few hours later it was out of the bill."

The good news is that this budget is not law yet. Sen. Kent Conrad (D-N.D.) used a clever procedural maneuver to force it back to the House for one more vote next year....

To monitor and take action on Congressional budget legislation, an informative source is the [Sojourners](#) web site and its e-mail service, SoJo Mail.

An Imperial Christmas: The President's Holiday Reading

Two books comprise President Bush's holiday reading list, according to a report by Jim Lobe of the Inter Press News Agency: *When Trumpets Call: Theodore Roosevelt After the White House* by Patricia O'Toole, and *Imperial Grunts: The American Military on the Ground* by Robert Kaplan.

Kaplan celebrates the imperial troops charged with taming the vast swaths of chaotic territory "from Columbia to the Philippines, including Afghanistan and Iraq" that he refers to as today's "Injun Country." His heroes are not the "elites" and "global cosmopolitans" of the State Department, Washington think tanks, academia and media but the soldiers on the ground – "people who hunted, drove pickups, employed profanities as a matter of dialect, and yet had a literal, demonstrable belief in the Almighty."

In this book, as well as his previous one, *Warrior Politics: Why Leadership Demands a Pagan Ethos* (2002), Kaplan's central concern is that the United States take more seriously its global imperial responsibilities, bringing to it a long-term vision and commitment that will make it more effective and lasting. Washington's "righteous responsibility to advance the boundaries of free society and good government into zones of sheer chaos" requires a more confident, dedicated imperial self-conception.

Lobe comments that Kaplan “offers remarkable praise for the war-fighting traditions of ‘the gleaming officers corps of the Confederacy’ – that is, the military arm of the slave-owning southern states, including Bush's Texas, during the Civil War – and for the present-day ‘martial evangelicalism of the South’.”

One reviewer, Andrew Bacevich, a retired Army colonel and self-described conservative, describes Kaplan’s outlook as “reactionary.” In the Introduction to his recent book, *The New American Militarism: How Americans are Seduced by War*, apparently not on the commander-in-chief’s reading list, Bacevich argues that:

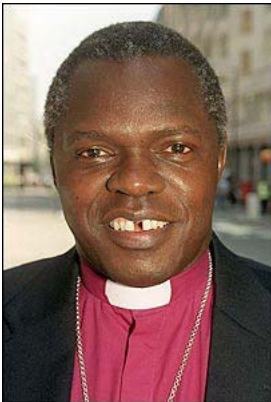
To a degree without precedent in U.S. history, Americans have come to define the nation’s strength and well-being in terms of military preparedness, military action, and the fostering of (or nostalgia for) military ideals.

Already in the 1990s America’s marriage of a militaristic cast of mind with utopian ends had established itself as the distinguishing element of contemporary U.S. policy. The Bush administration’s response to the horrors of 9/11 served to reaffirm that marriage, as it committed the United States to waging an open-ended war on a global scale. Events since, notably the alarms, excursions, and full-fledged campaigns comprising the Global War on Terror, have fortified and perhaps even sanctified this marriage. Regrettably, those events, in particular the successive invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, advertised as important milestones along the road to ultimate victory, have further dulled the average American’s ability to grasp the significance of this union, which does not serve our interests and may yet prove our undoing.

Sources: Jim Lobe, [“Anti-Imperialists Beware – Bush is Reading Again.”](#) Inter Press Service News Agency, 29 September 2005; John Gray, [“The Mirage of Empire.”](#) *New York Review of Books*, January 12, 2006, pp. 4-6.

Imagining 2006: Archbishop Sentamu’s Call to Corporate Discipleship

In his [Christmas sermon](#), John Sentamu, recently-installed Anglican archbishop of York, proposed a three-pronged approach to terrorism in England in the light of the gospel:



First, to create neighbourhoods that are flourishing, safe, clean and generous.

Secondly, to wake up to the truth that those who master-mind the terrorists networks are brilliant in inspiring those who come to their cause by giving them a vision which tragically is used solely for evil ends.

Thirdly, the only way to overcome terrorism is to out-imagine it....

Offering a vision of wholeness in a compelling and imaginative way that is so persuasive that would-be bombers would come to see this as their own vision. A vision that would turn them from outsiders, self-excluding and deluded despisers of others, into belongers....

At his inaugural service on November 30, Archbishop Sentamu spoke of the kind of church in which such imagination could emerge (emphases in text at the [Church of England](#) web site).

Victor Hugo said that, *“There is one thing stronger than all the armies in the world: and that is, an idea whose time has come”*. **Corporate-discipleship: fraternal-belonging was Jesus’ big idea, and plan for the renewal of society;** a catalyst and engine for building God’s Kingdom.

His idea, which has lasted over the centuries, was simply this: a mixed community of sinners called to be saints, a divine society where the risen Christ in the midst of it is grace and truth, and the Holy Spirit is at work within it. An inclusive and generous friendship, where each person is affirmed as of infinite worth, dignity and influence. A community of love, overflowing in gratitude and wholehearted surrender, because it participates in the life of God....

The scandal of the church is that the Christ-event is no longer life-**changing**, it has become life-**enhancing**. We’ve lost the power and joy that makes real disciples, and we’ve become consumers of religion and not disciples of Jesus Christ. **You see, the call to corporate discipleship is a call to God’s promised glory. For Christ did for us that which we couldn’t do for ourselves.**

The conclusion of his Christmas sermon helps us imagine the possibilities that we all have the opportunity to be part of in 2006:

Together, we can out-imagine, out-plan and out-think would-be bombers and turn would-be enemies into friends. On our own we can’t get it together. Together we can get it.

This is what God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit did on the day Christ was born 2005 years ago.

“Talking Peace, Making Peace: An Adventist Conversation”

La Sierra University is hosting a one-day peace conference on Sabbath, January 28, 2006, beginning at 9:30 a.m. in Matheson Chapel. “Talking Peace, Making Peace: An Adventist Conversation” is organized by Adventist Women for Peace and co-sponsored by Adventist Peace Fellowship and will feature morning presentations by theologian Ginger Hanks-Harwood and historian Douglas Morgan on Adventism’s past and future in peacemaking.

Afternoon presentations will address issues of justice and peace through art, peacemaking in the elementary school, and Christian conflict resolution. Music will be provided by local artists and the La Sierra University Chamber Singers. Register by calling (951) 785-2120 or 2257, or by e-mailing Prof. Lourdes Morales-Gudmundsson at lmorales@lasierra.edu after January 9, 2006.

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