

BFM Peace & Social Justice Committee Annual Report
October 2010 through September 2011

The Peace & Social Justice Committee has as its mission to promote the prospects for peace by deepening the Meeting's engagement in peace building and social justice and by empowering all of us as individuals. Advocacy, education, vigils, and financial support of community groups are among the ways the committee pursues its mission as well as through its liaison with the American Friends Service Committee, Friends Committee on National Legislation, the Quaker UN Office, and other like-minded groups.

We are appreciative of the many ways Bethesda Friends are involved in activities and programs which promote peace and social justice, even if they are not formally a part of the P&SJ. This became apparent during the grant-making process in which there were a dozen applications for the \$5,000 grants and additional inquiries from others who are involved in worthy projects.

The committee and the larger meeting have sought to fulfill the committee's mission over the past year in the following ways.

- BFM Grants-making. We worked closely with Stewardship & Finance regarding the grants-making process, including a report in September from the four organizations who received the \$5,000 grants.

- Walkathon for the Homeless. We co-sponsored with Religious Education the Miniwalkathon for the Interfaith Housing Coalition, involving 18 young and older walkers who raised more than \$1,697 on October 17, 2010. There will be another walkathon later this month, on October 16. Please join the effort if you can!

- Thanksgiving in February. In lieu of eating out in February at a participating restaurant, about 10 committee members and friends enjoyed a delicious meal prepared by Dion John at her home and made a donation to TinF. Together with contributions to the Social Concerns box, these totaled \$580 which went to local organizations providing food to needy area residents

- Action in Montgomery. We held an AIM house meeting at Ellie Fink's (October); participated in an AIM Retreat in January; supported major efforts to pass the Maryland Dream Act; and joined in celebrating AIM's 10th Anniversary Celebration in May. We will be reporting to Meeting on AIM's work at the rise of Meeting on October 16 and encouraging individual donations to fund a second AIM organizer.

- Fund Our Communities. A new coalition of groups has come together to shift the federal budget from the military to funding our communities. We sponsored a program on the subject in June 2010, participated in a workshop in February, leafletted in Bethesda in April, and recommended BFM's joining the coalition. In the same line, we joined Peace Action in petitioning the County Council to rescind a tax break for Lockheed Martin.

- Mary Jane Simpson Scholarship Fund. Thanks to the enthusiasm and dedication of Tia Duer and the engagement of the Meeting, we have expanded our role in support of the Mary Jane Simpson Scholarship Fund for DC students to contribute more money than we have in the past but also to learn more about the amazing achievements of the students in overcoming major obstacles to success. She reported to Meeting for Business in September.

- NRCAT & WRRCAT. These are National and Washington Regional Religious Coalitions Against Torture, which committee members were active in the early years, but less so more recently. We participated in a petition drive re long-term solitary confinement in US prisons. Ralph Steinhardt has agreed to be our liaison to these organizations. This was also the topic of the BYM Networking Day in mid-September

- Reports to BFM from groups getting substantial grants from BFM. In addition to the reports to BFM mentioned above, we facilitated four reports from different aspects of the work of the African Great Lakes Initiative (two by Dave Zarembka, one by Alex Douglas, and one by Brad Moody). We also arranged for John Salzberg to report to Meeting for Business on the work of the Friends International

Center in Ramallah.

- Social Action. When the Friendly Gardens Board returned our check from the social concerns box collections, we realized that an activity which was important to us as a community had disappeared. We decided to sponsor a service day at A Wider Circle in August (in which 12 people participated) and will be sponsoring another on October 22 in support of the Manna Food Center.

Submitted: Oct. 2, 2011, for presentation at the Meeting for Business