



Bishop's Perspective

Do not despair: God never gives up on the human family

This is a letter I wrote my grandson on that fateful day, Sept. 11, 2001.

~Ray Chamberlain

Dear Connor,

Tonight I desperately want to hold you in my arms as tightly as I do in my heart. But we are divided by hundreds of wretched miles. I want to assure you all is well. But it is not. I want to convince you of a peaceful world. But I cannot.

Etched eternally in my heart is that evening when you were just four weeks old and the two of us were alone together on the deck. I held you close. I promised you I would cherish you until the moss settled on my eyebrows. I told you I would pray for you every day of my life. I vowed to invest my life in working with God and others in making earth a little bit more like heaven. I longed for you to experience a world free of violence, bitterness, prejudice, injustice and exploitation. I prayed you would enjoy a safe and beautiful life.

But tonight, pathos weighs on my soul. My dreams for you have been terrorized. On this dreadful night, I am crudely awakened to the reality that in your lifetime, humanity has failed you. During your 12 years, tens of thousands of innocent children and women have been raped, beaten and starved. Hundreds of thousands have been exterminated in the name of ethnic cleansing; harsh unrelenting genocide has swallowed up countless thousands in Africa. In your lifetime, we have built modern towers of Babel symbolized by technology and medicine, and yet millions are displaced and wander as rootless, homeless refugees.

Connor, this is the world we are giving you, and it is a dismal, shocking contrast to my whispered prayer for you on the deck just a little over a decade ago.

When we talked on the phone this afternoon, I asked what you thought about all that happened in New York and Washington. You replied, "It is very disappoint-

Others will clamor for revenge.

Connor, as your papa, let me offer you some thoughts on how to respond to your disappointment. Remember:

- God is terribly disappointed, too.
- Jesus abhorred violence of all kinds, including the violence of discounting people because of their race or religion. Jesus



'A TIME FOR PRAYER MORE THAN BLAME' — Citizens hold hands during a prayer service at the Oak Ridge Civic Center.

ing." At first I was not sure the word "disappointing" was strong enough. But it is. The word "disappoint" literally means, "to fail to fulfill the expectation or hope." That is what our world has done for you. We have failed to fulfill what you have a right to expect.

So now what? You will hear angry condemnations. Some will denounce others because of their religion or nationality.

condemned the violence of economic exploitation, but returned good for evil. Even for those who nailed him to a cross he prayed, "Abba (Papa!), forgive them, for they know not what they do." This was not some soft, wishy-washy response. Jesus demonstrated that love is stronger than hate.

- There are people of every religion (including Christianity) who distort their

beliefs. All of the great religions of the world embrace justice, respect and love for God and others.

• Do not despair. God never gives up on the human family. I won't either. I pray you never will.

• This is a time for prayer more than blame. It is a time for humility rather than arrogance or mere patriotism. It is a time to reflect on what God wants us to do differently as a nation. We are a violent people not withstanding the goodness of so many Americans. More than 20,000 people were murdered last year in our country by *our own people*.

Finally, let me tell you about some words that helped me when I was your age, when I wondered if a future could be possible with the threat of an atomic bomb. The words are by St. Francis, who was asked what he would do if he knew the world would end tomorrow. He responded, "I would go on hoeing my garden."

What St. Francis means is that every day is so precious, we must live it the best way we can. Every day is a spectacular gift full of mystery and miracle to be relished and enjoyed. Connor, you do that so well!

I hold you in my heart with as much love as any grandpa in the world. And I believe you and I can be partners with God in helping to fulfill his dream for creation and humanity.

Love, love, love,

Papa

Papa

Children's Sabbath observed Oct. 19-21

By United Methodist News Service

WASHINGTON (UMNS) — United Methodist congregations will join other faith groups in observing the 10th annual Children's Sabbath Oct. 19-21.

"More United Methodist churches are doing the Children's Sabbath than any other denomination," said the Rev. Eliezer Valentin-Castanon, a staff executive with the Board of Church and Society. "That has been the case for the last several years."

Children's Sabbath has been part of the promotions of the Children's Defense Fund, the Washington-based children's advocacy organization founded and led by Marian Wright Edelman. Other efforts of the fund have included the 1996 "Stand for Children" rally of 300,000 people in Washington and the trademarked "Leave No Child Behind" campaign.

The Children's Defense Fund makes available a resource that includes ideas for Christian, Jewish and interfaith worship and

children's activities. The 164-page resource book on this year's theme, "Write the Vision: Creating Communities of Shalom for All Children," includes such materials as worship suggestions, clip art and a children's activity bulletin that may be copied.

For free manuals, contact Claudia Howard, conference children's ministries coordinator, at (423) 928-2156 ext. 243 or claudiahoward@holston.org.

What's Your Size?

The Call uses the following symbols to identify articles about small, medium or large churches:

- Churches with average 85 or fewer in principle weekly worship service(s)
- Average 86 to 225 in worship service(s)
- Average 226 or more in worship service(s)

In Memoriam

Leslie C. Adams

KODAK, Tenn. — Leslie C. Adams, 70, died Sept. 15, 2001 at St. Mary's Medical Center. He was a retired Holston minister who had served Fairview, Nolichucky Circuit, and Bridgers United Methodist churches, among others.

The Rev. Adams is survived by wife Mary Ann Johnson Adams; several nieces and nephews. Funeral services were held Sept. 17 at First Sevierville UMC with the Rev. H.B. Hauk Jr. officiating. Interment followed on Sept. 18 in Phillippi Cemetery in Mountain City, Tenn.

The Exchange

WISE, Va. — The Wesley Foundation at University of Virginia College at Wise seeks a **new or used large stove** with at least four burners to cook meals for 40 or more students. Large-size cookware is also needed. Contact: Rev. Ginger Howe at (276) 328-6826 or Rev. Dennie Humphreys (276) 523-3025.

The Call seeks **photographers** — both professional and wanna-be's — for occasional small assignments in your area. If you have a good camera and a good eye, contact: Annette Bender, Editor, phone (865) 690-4080 or AnnetteBender@Holston.org.

Hubert L. Diggs

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. — Hubert L. Diggs, 67, died Sept. 17, 2001, at St. Mary's Medical Center. He had been a Holston minister, serving at Copper Ridge, Heiskell, Moore's Gap, Bells Campground, Strawberry Plains, and Bethel (Amherst) United Methodist churches. He was presently serving Inskip UMC.

The Rev. Diggs is survived by wife Mary (Cox) Diggs; two daughters, Debra Herron, Knoxville; Karen Taylor, Morristown; two sons, Steve Diggs, Knoxville; Timothy Diggs, Knoxville; two sisters, Mary Cox and Betty Moulton, both of Indiana; six grandchildren; two great-grandchildren; and several nieces and nephews.

Funeral services were held Sept. 19 at Inskip UMC with the Rev. James Whedbee, Rev. G. W. Boles, Rev. Carl Oaks, and Rev. Robert Pardue officiating. Interment followed on Sept. 20 at Mt. Herman UMC Cemetery in Powell.

Memorials may be made to the Emerald Youth Foundation, 1718 North Central Street, Knoxville, TN 37917, or Inskip UMC Youth, 714 Cedar Lane, Knoxville, TN 37912.

Coming soon in *The Call*:
New church starts in Holston



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