

Guest speaker from IVAW counters popular understanding about Iraq War

On Sunday, July 8, about 30 of our congregants stayed after church to hear Michael Hoffman, the founder of Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW), offer his testimony about being recruited into the Marines and his personal journey to help found and lead IVAW. No longer on active duty, he is a freshman at Muhlenberg College, committing his time to actively speaking out against the war.

Starting Iraq Veterans Against the War from his one bedroom apartment, Michael shared about his personal transformation: "The hardest thing someone can do is invest their very souls, their friends, their lives into this war and then admit that it is wrong." IVAW is committed to three outcomes: immediate withdrawal of all occupying forces from Iraq, proper support for vets, and reparations for Iraqis. Other organizations, such as Veterans for Peace and Black Vets for Social Justice, are working together on the same basic issues.

In his talk, Michael cited that because there is no draft, no rationing, and no increase in taxes, response to the Iraq War has been somewhat tepid. At the same time, "individual refusers" – those in the military who refuse to go to the war, are on the rise, and IVAW has approximately 500 members. He spoke of retired, high-ranking officers speaking out against the war, and credits the Internet with providing a forum for 24/7 communication, including blogging, to get true testimonies about what is really going on in Iraq. While it is true that the military has built schools and supported hospitals, Michael says that the number of civilian casualties ("collateral") is too costly.

The event, sponsored by the Thomas Merton Center, included a Q&A period in the end, where the event touched on how to broaden our own anti-war activity. Here's how:

Paul Abernathy is the local contact for the Iraq Veterans Against the War. To become involved and to support and organize, please call him at 412-334-0917. They need more members, cash donations, and help in spreading the word. Check out their weekly Sunday meetings at 2:30 p.m. at the Thomas Merton Center in Bloomfield-Garfield. Request a speaker for your organization or community high school.

John Clendaniel, who spoke on July 8th, as well, is planning more events, including more speakers, and he may be reached at 724-466-9932. He is also working a "military listening project" where he is reaching out to vets in our community to hear and record their stories – please send him contacts.

For more information about Iraq Veterans Against the War link to <http://www.ivaw.org/>
For more information about Veterans for Peace link to <http://www.veteransforpeace.org/>

News from the Session of the Community House Presbyterian Church

Darlene Durrwachter-Rushing, Jen Saffron, and Joyce Baskins are planning a Holiday Arts Open House on Saturday, December 1 from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. at our church. This festive event will feature artists (primarily from the North Side) with excellent holiday crafts and

arts for sale, as well as refreshments and a general holiday atmosphere. If you know of a crafter or artist who may want to set up shop (even you!), please contact Darlene at 412-231-6105. Volunteers, please call Jen at 412-322-2110.

Cultural and Spiritual Enrichment in Six Easy and Enjoyable Steps

This year's season at the International Poetry Forum might be of special interest to Community House members and friends. The six readings will feature eight poets, under the broad theme: "War and Other Losses." It's a chance to reflect on war – and a wide range of challenges from race to family losses, from Hurricane Katrina to the Middle East -- through a human rather than narrowly "political" lens. And, precisely because of that, it's an opportunity to open up conversations with friends and relatives who may not share your political views.

The series begins Wednesday, October 10th, with

Sam Hammill, national founder of Poets Against War. It concludes April 2, 2008, with Brian Turner, a soldier-poet, whose recent collection *Here, Bullet* is a moving first-person account of the Iraq war. In between, you'll hear fiddling, stories and poems from Alaska's Ken Waldman; diverse lyric poems from Andrea Hollander Budy and Bill Zavatsky; a Lebanese-American perspective from Hyan Charara; plus nationally-prominent Pittsburghers Terrance Hayes and Sheryl St. Germain.

For details and tickets, see www.thepoetryforum.org or talk with Rick St. John

My Week at Camp Crestfield by Ethan McLure Part 1

This was my 2nd year at Camp Crestfield. I was so excited about going there again, you do so many fun things and you also learn about God. This year, my friend Zach went, and also Tyler Kunkle (who also goes to our church). It was great! Our daily activities started at 7 am every morning and we went into the freezing water of the pool - they gave me an award called The Polar Bear Award because I went into the water almost every day.

We also had a Morning Celebration each morning where we requested praise and worship songs that the

Praise Band performed. Ben was the drummer, Daurcie was the lead singer and Steve played keyboards, with Rachel as the guitarist. It was a great way to start our day, followed by Bible study.

One of the best Bible stories that I heard was about Sampson, who God created and had super human strength. He was one of God's followers. The strength that God gave him, he once killed 30 bad men with a donkey's jaw bone.

(to be continued in the September Unity)

A HEARTFELT THANKS!

Thank you to all of our wonderful adult volunteers for working with the children of our church from September 2006 through August 2007! This month we thank —

Nursery

Jonathan Springer	Molly Peck	Claudia Detwiler
Amy Constantine	Gay Fogarty	Scott Stegman
Bob Baumbach	Jen Saffron	Lilian Akin
Lynne Sowiski	Robin Bower	Susie Ferline
	Cissy Battle	

Affirmations and Intentions

- Congratulations to Michael Crawford, Cheryl Lowitzer's husband, for passing his real estate exam! Michael, a chef, is making a major career shift.
- We continue to affirm Betsy Graf in her recovery from knee surgery.
- For Bailey Donovan during his search for healing.
- For students, graduates and others beginning new life paths

Please send good news or prayer concerns to Jen Saffron, jensaffron@comcast.net, or Bobbi Donovan, bobbilee@comcast.net.

Our Stewardship Progress

Our year-to-date total contribution of treasure is \$66,360. Our giving to-date puts Community House on pace for an annual total of \$99,364.55 That's down from our giving pace of \$100,796 last month. We set a goal of \$115,000 at the beginning of 2007. Thank you to all who are helping to keep Community House a vital part of the worshipping community in the Presbyterian Church. Don't forget to think about what tasks you can take on as a way of contributing your Time and Talent.

What's coming up? Camp PRAISE! Opportunities

They're going fast, but at press time there was still one date, Sept. 2, that we need two adult volunteers to spend some casual, fun time with the youth of the church during the sermon time. No previous experience or pre-planning needed -- just an open heart and a willing attitude. We have wonderful children in this church and it's fun to spend some time with them as they play games, do crafts, work on puzzles, etc. See Darlene to claim your chance for this fun opportunity!