



Church of the Good Shepherd
Faith Action
A Just Peace, Whole Earth, Open and Affirming Church

United Church of Christ

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April 2009

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“Hope for a Better World”

Honestly, if I hear of one more mass murder, I think I'll lose my ever-loving mind! When is this going to end? To quote numerous people of faith down through the millennia of human history, “Why, God, why?” Why indeed.

A few weeks back someone murdered eleven people in two small towns in Alabama. The same week, I believe it was, eighteen people were slaughtered at a school in Germany. Last Sunday, someone shot and killed eight people at a nursing home in North Carolina. A few years back, we thought the Columbine shootings were bad. They were, no doubt. Thirteen people died. That was awful.

But here in early 2009 we've had about three Columbines in the first quarter of the year. And at the nursing home, the majority of the victims were folks who were very old and very ill and wanted nothing more than to die with dignity, to die peacefully. They never got that chance. They died violently and horribly. It's just sickening.

I have a tremendous amount of sympathy for the victims and their families. Who doesn't? And I do want to know what was going on in the heads of the shooters that would drive them to commit such horrible acts of violence. I guess an explanation really wouldn't help all that much, though. Explanations don't make the grief go away. Nevertheless, I want to understand.

However, I have to admit that, when I hear of such things, my thoughts often take a rather self-centered turn. I begin to wonder if such a thing could happen to me and my loved ones. And the answer is, “Of course it could.” It could happen at a restaurant, in a movie theater, at the mall, at a grocery store, doctor's office, anywhere. Someone could even invade our home and shoot us to death right there. Or at church. It happens.

And you get scared if you dwell on this too long. My first impulse is to run away, just go somewhere

where there are very few people and “hole up” for a long, long time. Take along enough tuna and canned salmon and cat food and guns and ammo to last a few decades and then come out of the cave when you believe things have settled down.

But I know that's no answer either. First of all, that's no way to live unless you have no choice, such as in the aftermath of nuclear war. And, honestly, who really WANTS to survive in the aftermath of a nuclear holocaust? In such an event, the ones at ground zero are probably the lucky ones. If you survive, you get your pick of dying of radiation poisoning or dying from a long, hard and brutal nuclear winter. Sounds like the kind of fun that's . . . not!

However, in the end, I come to my senses and realize that dropping out and giving up is not the solution. I have to find a better way of coping with all this bad news. We all do. After all, if people of faith, and indeed people of goodwill whether they are religious or not, abandon the world to the perpetrators of violence, won't that just lead to more atrocities, to greater horror? No, that's not the way to go.

No, all we can do is to stay faithful to the human family and to God's creation. We must embrace life and show those who are inclined to resort to violence that there is another way, a better way, a more loving and more peaceful way. And we must persevere in the way of love and peace even if it kills us. After all, that was the way of Jesus and he paid the ultimate price; he gave his life “in the name of love,” to quote the U2 song. In so doing, Jesus gave the world hope, hope that a day will come when, if we embrace the way of non-violence, we will no longer have to hear such sad and painful stories on the evening news. Yes, if we commit our lives to following the example of Jesus and other men and women of peace, we too can give our brothers and sisters hope for a better world.

Sam Foskey

Good Shepherd News

Happenings

Recurring Events

First Sunday: Communion

Adult Sunday School: 9:30 am

Overeaters Anonymous:

Mondays at 7 pm.

Circle of Peace:

Tuesdays at 5:30 pm. For more information call Wil Davis at 549-4836.

Choir Rehearsal:

Wednesdays at 6 pm. New members welcome.

“The Bible and Handel’s Messiah” Study:

Wednesdays at 7 pm.

Cousin Andy’s Coffeehouse:

Fridays at 7:30 pm.

Upcoming Events

April 5: Hospitality Committee meeting

April 9: 7 pm Maundy Thursday drama and communion

April 12: 6:30 am Easter Sunrise Service with continental breakfast; 10:30 am Easter service with Easter Egg Hunt after worship

April 14: 6:15 pm Ad Hoc Covenant Committee

April 17 & 18: World Hunger Sale, Newman Center

April 18: 12 pm Peace Vigil on corner of 51 and 13

More Upcoming Events

April 19: Whole Earth Sunday; Neighborhood Clean-up after service

April 25: 7 pm Community Music Fest, Grace United Methodist (Rehearsals @ 10 am on April 18 and 25) Call Kay Deffley @ 351-0295 for information

April 26: Guest Speaker, Louie Vitale at COGS; “Love Your Enemies; Transforming ‘us versus them’ thinking”

May 2: Plant and Flower sale

Birthdays

Apr 4 Ettelye Horrell

Apr 11 Diane Muzio

Apr 14 Terri Street

Apr 19 Dwight Welch

Apr 20 Leland

Moreland

Apr 25 Julieta Leitner

Apr 27 Marsha

Bockmann

Apr 27 Joyce Magedanz

April Line-up for Cousin Andy’s Coffeehouse

Submitted by Vern Crawford

April 3: Curtis & Loretta

April 10: CLOSED for EASTER

April 17: Wishing Chair

April 24: IRISH FEST WEEKEND



Cousin Andy’s is located, as you know, downstairs at COGS on Friday evenings; performances begin at 7:30 pm. For more info, go to www.cousinandy.org Hope to see you there!

Green Tip of the Month

Submitted by Bob Tyson



Detergents, fabric softeners, and bleaches can be toxic to humans and the environment. Some surfactants and fragrances in detergents contain chemicals that cannot be removed by wastewater plants and end up harming wildlife. Chlorine bleach can create dangerous byproducts, such as dioxin, when flushed down the drain. Get your clothes clean by switching to eco-friendlier cleaners. Companies such as Ecover, Sun & Earth, Seventh Generation, Oxy Prime, and Clorox Green Works make less-toxic alternatives to traditional laundry detergents. Try non-chlorine bleach such as Oxyboost, Ecover’s hydrogen peroxide-based option.

Good Shepherd News

Thank You

- Thanks to those who helped with the special showing of "Milk." Terry Moore, Richard Cox, Jim and Kate Baba, Sam Foskey, Kelley Hessian, Jack Raino, and Rose Bender. Over 30 people attended the event.
- Thanks also to the group who put together the pancake breakfast, which served both to introduce our meatless Sundays as part of a covenant commitment and as a fundraiser held to raise money for beautifying the church. The group consisted of Kelley Hessian, Rose Bender, Kay Tyson, Gary Shepherd, Henry and Christopher Hexmoor, Margie Parker, Retha Daughterty and Kate Baba. The breakfast raised \$263!
- Special appreciation is extended to those who have been helping with raking, weeding and cutting around the church grounds, including Larry Ellet, John McNeal, Richard Cox, Terry Moore, Bob Tyson and Janet McCready.
- Many thanks to everyone who contributed \$526 to One Great Hour of Sharing on March 22.

- Thanks to everyone who contributed the 255 food items to the Region 1 Food Pantry Challenge. With recent average attendance at 51, that came out to exactly 5 items per member. Zion UCC in Marion collected 12.5 per member; St. Paul UCC in Pinckneyville had 4.2; and Zion UCC in Metropolis had 3.9. As noted before, the real winners are the hungry people who receive the food. Our collection has been delivered to the Good Samaritan Food Pantry.

Congratulations

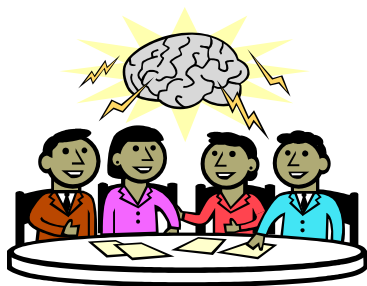
- Congratulations to Maggie Baba and the entire CCHS Pep Band for being selected as the number one in the state. The band performed at the Illinois High School Championship in Peoria on March 21.

Condolences

- We extend our condolences to George and Margie Parker on the death of Margie's mother, Grace Ainscough on March 13 in New Smyrna Beach, Florida.

Monthly Council Meeting Summary

Submitted by Gary Shepherd



The Search Committee plans to have the profile ready to go out in July. A letter regarding the timeline and steps will be sent to the congregation shortly. Sam reported that the SWOT analysis proposals included developing orientation packets for new members, enlarging the Building and Grounds committee, developing job descriptions for all committees and working on a talent, skills and availability inventory. Barb and Kate will work on the orientation packets. Kate, Margie and Rose will construct the new skills inventory.

Terry reported the Justice and Witness Committee is co-sponsoring the visit by Father Vitale, who

will speak at COGS on April 26. The expenses for the weekend are projected to be about \$1,000. The church council voted to give \$50 toward his visit. Terry also read a letter of support for the passage of the civil unions bill. The council voted to circulate this letter to the other churches in the Conference. Terry and Richard Cox are raising money for the AIDS walk and that for \$50 the church can have its name on the back of the shirt. It was decided to try to get both the name and logo.

Rose reported that there will be a sunrise Easter service at 6:30 followed by a continental breakfast. The Hospitality Committee will hand out packets to visitors during the 10:30 service; the council approved spending \$100 on these packets. A Maundy Thursday service will be held April 9. A pulpit exchange with the Metropolitan Church in Paducah is planned for June. Dale reported that he is working with Kim Magwire to sell antiques she brought back from Vermont, with the proceeds donated to the church. He also reported that Belinda Cole has offered to mow the church lawn as a donation.

Good Shepherd News

Vegetarian Challenge

Submitted by Kate Baba



Beginning March 1st, the Ad Hoc Covenant Committee is challenging and encouraging YOU to eat vegetarian the first Sunday of every month. This is an activity that is in accordance with our covenants and won't be too taxing. Start slowly. As we often say, "baby steps" at first. But just a few reminders, pancakes, doughnuts, sweet rolls and cheese quiche are vegetarian foods.

COGS Annual Flower and Plant Sale

Submitted by Jan Ritzel



The flower and plant sale will be Saturday, May 2nd, from 8:30 am - 2:00 pm at COGS. Plants will be provided by McNitt Growers, 78 Oak Ridge Lane, Carbondale (618-687-3563 mcnittgrowers@gmail.com). We will have coupons which you can buy for \$15 each, which can be redeemed at McNitt's through May 2nd or redeemed at COGS at the sale. The coupons are not redeemable for cash. One coupon will purchase one 10" hanging basket or one tray.

SUPPORT THE CWU HUNGER SALE

APRIL 17-18

Submitted by Margie Parker

In these difficult economic times, it's more important than ever to help those who are hungry. Church Women United's Annual World Hunger Sale aims to do just that. This year the giant yard sale and auction will be held on Friday and Saturday, April 17 and 18, at the Newman Catholic Student Center, 715 S. Washington, Carbondale. The sale will be held from 12 noon - 6 pm Friday and 8 am - 1 pm Saturday. There's plenty of parking in the lot just north of the Newman Center.

An auction of antiques, collectibles and other special items will be held Saturday at 10 am with Carolyn Ferdinand as auctioneer. A major feature will be the large dry cast limestone planters donated by Longshadow Gardens. If you have something to donate that might be sold in the auction, please contact Chair Margie Parker (549-7193) by April 8 so it can be

listed in the Auction Corner ad. Saturday will also feature beautiful plants from McNitt's Greenhouses.

Donations of all kinds are welcome, especially plants and baked goods. Any good usable items can be taken to the Newman Center from noon to 8 pm Wednesday, April 15 and all day Thursday, April 16. Call Margie Parker at 549-7193 for help in transporting large items.

If you like working with others for a good cause, call Margie to volunteer. The work schedule is:

- Wednesday, April 15: 1 - 8 pm (Sorting)
- Thursday, April 16: 9 am - 8 pm (Sorting and pricing)
- Friday, April 17: 9 am - 12 n (Pricing)
- Friday, April 17: 12 n - 6 pm (Selling)
- Saturday, April 18: 8 am - 1 pm (Selling)
- Saturday, April 18: 1 pm - 6 pm (Clean-up)

The success of the sale depends on three ingredients - donors and volunteers, and... shoppers. There's something for everyone. Do you garden?

(Hunger continued on page 5)

Good Shepherd News

... (*Hunger* continued from page 4) There will be house plants, bedding plants, and hanging plants. Do you have a sweet tooth or hunger for homemade bread? You'll want some of our baked goods. Do you love bargains? Check out our wide variety household items, books, clothes, and toys, and don't forget the auction! Don't feel like cooking? Enjoy our hot sandwiches, chili and delicious treats which will be sold both Friday and Saturday.

Last year's sale raised a record \$11,271, which was divided among CROP, UNICEF, ECHO, Heifer Project, Marion Medical Mission, For Kids' Sake

(orphans in Bangladesh), Good Samaritan Ministries, the Women's Center, Eurma Hayes Day Care Center, Senior Citizens, Attucks and I Can Read Tutorial Programs, New Zion Baptist Church's Summer Lunch Program, Bethel AME's "Feed My Sheep" soup kitchen, Family Advocacy Services and the Guadalupe Fund to help farm workers. Together we can feed the hungry - the needs are great both at home and abroad.

Start your spring cleaning now and we'll see you at the sale!

Getting to Know Cassie Simpson, Our New Secretary

Submitted by Peggy Igleheart, Hospitality Committee



Cassie was born in Tucson but moved with her parents to Pleasant Plains, Illinois (west of Springfield) when she was 2 years old. She graduated from high school and attended Drake University in Iowa to study advertising. As she got into her

classes, she lost interest in advertising and decided to take a break from school. She returned home to her mother's house and was promptly informed that she needed to get her own apartment and support herself if she wasn't going to be in school. So, Cassie got her own apartment that she shared with her two cats, Hammie and Mocha, and worked temp jobs to support herself. She later moved in with her boyfriend, Shane, when he returned from the Air Force. Both decided to go back to school. While Shane decided to study dermatology at Lincoln Land Community College, Cassie came to SIU to study Fashion Design in the fall of 2008. They get to see each other every other weekend and talk about five times a day! Cassie is classified as a senior; however, she has two years until she finishes her degree. Cassie and Shane have been together three years and plan to consider more serious decisions

about their relationship once they both finish school.

Cassie's mother still lives in Pleasant Plains and her father lives in Rochester. She has three older sisters and one younger brother, who she maintains close contact with throughout the year. She also has two half sisters and two half brothers. Her younger brother is attending school at John A Logan now, so they get to see each other on a regular basis.

During her free time, Cassie enjoys sewing and designing purses. She started her own website a year ago, where she sells her designs at cassandrasheryl.etsy.com. She has a fashion show coming up April 18th from 5:00 to 8:00 pm, where items will be auctioned for a charity to raise money for a Youth Center. It will be on the SIU campus. The exact location has not been determined yet. If you can attend, sounds like it's for a good cause and they'll have lots of original clothing designs, including Cassie's purses! Cassie said her mother taught her to sew and she started designing her own purses when she was 12 years old. When Cassie isn't sewing, she enjoys watching movies, hanging out with her cats, and spending time with friends and family.

Cassie found out about the job at COGS from the ad in the paper, and she said she hopes to be with us for a long time. She also has a job taking notes in some classes for students who are physically unable to take their own notes.

Cassie was raised attending Calvary Baptist Church while she was in high school. She said she would go with her pastor and other church members...

(Simpson continued on page 6)

Good Shepherd News

...(Simpson continued from page 5) and witness to people. She said she hasn't gone to church regularly since she graduated from high school but she considers herself a spiritual person and is not drawn to attend any particular denomination now.

While you might think Cassie is quiet and shy on first meeting her, she is actually quite delightful and has a wonderful sense of humor. When pressed for a funny story, she divulged that her friends get on

her all the time because she can bend her elbows backward and frequently stands that way when just talking to folks. She says it can come in pretty handy when she's trying to reach for something around a bend! I encourage you to get to know Cassie... stop in to see her when you can at the church office. She is always ready and willing to help with anything that might be needed and she's great on the computer!

“Love Your Enemies: Transforming Us vs. Them Thinking”

Submitted by Margie Parker



How do we relate with individuals and countries that believe differently than we do? How do we deal with our so-called enemies? Is torture morally acceptable? How do we respond to terrorism?

Father Louie Vitale has been grappling with these and other related questions for nearly half a century since he began his journey by enlisting in the air force as a young man, and having a conversion towards nonviolence. He will be speaking on the importance of dialoguing with our enemies instead of warring with them at 4:00 pm on Sunday, April 26, at the Carbondale Civic Center.

Just back from Iran he will discuss his experience there and the development around the forging of new relationships with the Iranian people and government. Suggested next steps include both continuing to build people-to-people ties with Iranians, as well as advocating with our government to talk with the Iranian government.

Background: Fr. Louie is a co-founder of Pace e

Bene Nonviolence Service (www.paceebene.org), and has been witnessing and speaking against social injustice for more than 4 decades. He recently journeyed to Iran with the Fellowship of Reconciliation as part of an Iran Civilian Diplomacy Delegation to dialogue with the government and people of Iran, our supposed

“ e n e m y . ”

He was recently released from a 5 month prison sentence for praying on the property at Ft. Huachuca in Arizona (the military installation where our tax dollars teach American Intelligence Officers "Enhanced Interrogation" tactics such as water boarding, among other torture methods).

A 75 year old Franciscan priest, he has participated in situations and peace actions where he knew physical danger and/or incarceration were possibilities because of his ethics and morals. Fr. Louie believes too much in the inherent value of human beings to sit back and do nothing. He is well worth listening to. In these dark times, he speaks with incredible joy and much needed hope!

Note that Church of the Good Shepherd is a co-sponsor of his talk, along with the Peace Coalition of Southern Illinois/FOR, Program and Social Action Committees of the Carbondale Unitarian Fellowship, Interfaith Center/Gaia House, St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church, Students for Peace and Democracy, and Southern Illinois Quakers.

- *Father Louie Vitale will be speaking at COGS on April 26th.*

Good Shepherd News

Adult Class and Justice and Witness Committee Give a Microloan to Grace Kwartemaa

Submitted by Margie Parker

Towards the end of an Adult Class study on Christians and Trade Justice, Bob Tyson proposed that we consider taking action by giving a microloan to help someone become more self-sufficient. Members immediately endorsed the idea and chipped in \$25. The Justice and Witness Committee similarly endorsed the idea and added \$25 from our budget. That gives all of Good Shepherd a small stake in this enterprise.

After checking out the Kiva website (see the following article for more information on Kiva), the investors agreed on making the loan to Grace Kwartemaa, a 41-year-old married Ghanaian woman with seven children. According to her bio, two of her children are in high school and the rest are younger. Her dream is to give them a better education.

Ghana, with a population of 19 million, has a per capita GDP of \$2,643. The literacy rate is 64.5% and 31.4% are below the poverty line. Life expectancy is 57.42 years.

Grace's family lives in a rented apartment. She is a food vendor in the Abofour community market, where she sells rice with stew, which is mostly purchased by the traders. Her food tastes good, attracting lots of customers to her table. She also prepares and sells pastries at the roadside.

Grace requested a loan of \$775, which she has now received from a pool of investors. She will use the loan to buy more bags of raw materials like rice, meat, charcoal, flour and margarine to help increase her stock. The proceeds will be used to support her kids' education. Watch for updates as we receive information on Grace's progress. The microloans are usually repaid within a year, and can then be relented to another entrepreneur. The article on page 8 gives more information on Kiva.

Community News

Interfaith Earth Week

Submitted by Sam Foskey



This April, the Carbondale Interfaith Council is sponsoring Interfaith Earth Week. The theme is "Making a World of Difference: Hearing Each Other, Healing the Earth." Interfaith Earth Week events will take place from April 18-23 and include:

- April 18, 1 pm: Interfaith Earth Week Opening Ceremony at the Town Square Pavilion in Carbondale. World faiths represented in southern Illinois will offer brief presentations related to the theme.
- April 20, 7:30 pm: "Not Just Rhetoric: Interfaith Dialogue as Essential to Global Survival". The event will be held at the Congregation Beth Jacob, located at 904 N. Norwest Drive in Carbondale. You will be able to learn more about the Parliament of the World's Religions, a major international interfaith organization. This year the Parliament meets in Melbourne, Australia from December 3-9.
- April 21: There will be a special invitation-only event for students at the Interfaith Center, which will feature a representative from the Council for a Parliament of the World's religions.
- April 22 (Earth Day), 6 pm: First Presbyterian Church, at 310 S. University Ave, will host "The Life of Gaia and the Vision of Gaia House," a multimedia dinner presentation and table talk. This will allow attendees to explore the concept of "gaia," a universal symbol of interfaith unity and ecological harmony. The group will also learn more about the vision of the Interfaith Center's proposed Gaia House. Dinner will consist of soup, bread, and fruit.
- April 23, 6 pm: Interfaith Earth Week activities will conclude with a candlelight walk from the Labyrinth at the Interfaith Center to the Peace Pole, which is located downtown on the town square in Carbondale. The event will also include brief meditations from Hugh Muldoon and Mike Batinski.

Good Shepherd members wanting more information should contact Hugh Muldoon (549-1051) or the pastor.

Community News

Celebrate May Friendship Day on May 1

Submitted by Margie Parker

Join the Church Women United's celebration of their annual May Friendship Day on Friday, May 1 at St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church. Bible Study (10:30 am), Sack Lunch (11:30 am), Worship Celebration (12:15 pm). Watch for more details or call Margie Parker at 549-7193.

Good Shepherd Covenants

Just Peace, Whole Earth, Open and Affirming

A MORE EXCELLENT WAY

By Andrew Wilkes www.sojo.net 3-2-09

Summarized by Bob Tyson

We need to ask questions like "how do people of faith speak on the public square? What kind of citizens are we producing?"

We all appreciate low-priced consumer goods, technical innovations, and efficient allocation of market mechanisms. However, when frigid, career-oriented benefit analysis drives our decisions, we have gone too far. College students pull all-nighters for term papers and endlessly prepare for job interviews-but complain when church runs a little too long. Professionals shuffle appointments on blackberries for networking events and sacrifice time to cultivate

healthy friendships. We find it easier to invest discretionary money in mutual funds than to give to charity. Could it be that the principalities and powers of consumerism, along with market morality dominate our lives, especially our civic imagination? Is there a more excellent way? What if a Christocentric love for justice, wholeness and peace fortified our identities as citizens? What if we saw ourselves, not as assets or liabilities on a balance sheet, but as dual citizens who exercise our democratic citizenship according to the person-prioritizing ministry of the prophet from Palestine?

If we vote, organize, and intervene in public policy discussions, driven by a love for concrete human beings and a love that reflects the social bonds within the Triune God, then maybe we might show our fellow citizens a more excellent way to serve.

Kiva's Microloans Help Alleviate Poverty

From Kiva's website

Submitted by Margie Parker



Kiva's mission is to connect people through lending for the sake of alleviating poverty. Kiva is the world's first person-to-person micro-lending website, empowering individuals to lend directly to unique entrepreneurs in the developing world.

The people you see on Kiva's site are real individuals in need of funding - not marketing material. When you browse entrepreneurs' profiles on the site, choose someone to lend to, and then make a loan, you are

helping a real person make great strides towards economic independence and improve life for themselves, their family, and their community. Throughout the course of the loan (usually 6-12 months), you can receive email journal updates and track repayments. Then, when you get your loan money back, you can relend to someone else in need.

Kiva partners with existing expert microfinance institutions. In doing so, we gain access to outstanding entrepreneurs from impoverished communities worldwide. Our partners are experts in choosing qualified entrepreneurs. That said, they are usually short on funds. Through Kiva, our partners upload their entrepreneur profiles directly to the site so you can lend to them. When you do, not only do you get a unique experience connecting to a specific entrepreneur on the other side of the planet, but our microfinance partners can do more of what they do, more efficiently.

Good Shepherd Covenants

Just Peace, Whole Earth, Open and Affirming

Conditions must be improved at Tamms Correctional Center in Illinois

Excerpts from Amnesty International, March 25, 2009. Submitted by Margie Parker

Amnesty International is calling for measures to improve conditions at Tamms Correctional Center, Illinois – the state’s only super-maximum security facility – stating that the harsh conditions of isolation endured by many prisoners for years on end appear to be unnecessarily punitive and may breach international standards for humane treatment.

The organization welcomes a bill currently before the state legislature (HB2633) which would bar seriously mentally ill prisoners from being sent to Tamms and provide for a fairer review process, stating that it is concerned that many prisoners are sent to the facility and remain there for years without being fully informed of the reasons. The bill also provides that prisoners will not remain at Tamms for more than one year, unless transferring them to another facility would endanger the safety of staff or other prisoners.

According to Amnesty International’s information, prisoners at Tamms are confined alone for 23 of 24 hours a day in sparsely equipped concrete cells, with no work or group educational or recreational programs. All meals are taken in the cells. Prisoners exercise alone for a maximum of 5-7 hours a week in a high-walled, bare, partially-covered yard with no view apart from a small section of sky. The cell doors are made of heavy gauge perforated steel and are difficult to see through, compounding the sense of isolation. The narrow horizontal windows in each cell are positioned too high to see outside, unless the prisoner stands on his bed.

Contact with the outside world is also severely restricted, with prisoners denied phone calls and allowed only non-contact visits, conducted through a thick glass screen and intercom system. Prisoners are

chained to the floor during visits and some have their wrists shackled together, allowing little movement. Despite the stringent security measures, prisoners are reportedly subjected to strip searches, including body cavity searches, before and after each visit. Because of the conditions imposed, and the remote location of the facility, many prisoners reportedly receive visits only rarely.

More than 80 prisoners (around a third of the total) are believed to have been held in the facility for at least ten years, many since it opened in 1998, without any reasonable means of gaining release from their indefinite solitary confinement.

There is a significant body of evidence in the USA and elsewhere that prolonged isolation can cause serious psychological and physical harm, particularly if accompanied by other deprivations such as lack of external stimuli, confinement to an enclosed space and inadequate exercise. Such conditions can have a severe impact on individuals with no pre-existing health problems, and may cause particular harm and suffering in the case of those who are already mentally ill.

The USA has ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 10 of which requires that “all persons deprived of their liberty shall be treated with humanity and respect for the inherent dignity of the human person.” Both the Human Rights Committee (the treaty monitoring body) and the United Nations (UN) Committee against Torture have criticized the excessively harsh conditions of isolation in some US supermax facilities.

Amnesty International believes that Bill HB2633, if enacted, would be an important step to providing fairer standards, accountability and oversight of the operation of Tamms. The organization is also urging the authorities to alleviate conditions for all prisoners who remain at the facility, including improving the exercise facilities, reviewing visitation conditions and providing some opportunity to participate in rehabilitation programs.



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April 5, 2009

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