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Series C: Interreligious Activities. 1952-1992

Box 44, Folder 11, Religious Task Force Mobilization for Survival, 1981.

Religious Task Force

mobilization FOR SURVIVAL

85 SO. OXFORD ST., BROOKLYN, N.Y. 11217 (212) 858-6882

September 8, 1981

Rabbi Mark Tanenbaum
American Jewish Committee
165 E. 56th St.
New York, N.Y. 10022

Dear Mark;

It has been too long since our last contact, the Special Session on Disarmament I to be exact. The enclosed will inform you of our planning for the SSD II in 1982.

It would be so good to have you at our meetings. Venerable Gyotsu Sato of the Japan Buddha Sangha has just informed us that he plans to be here for our September 15 meeting. We are having a luncheon for Ven. Sato on Friday, September 11 at noon so religious people will have a chance to discuss his trip to Europe and international plans for SSD II. The luncheon will be at the Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church which is the same address as this office. We hope that you will attend. Please call to confirm your presence.

Your advice would be most helpful as we prepare to take on this ambitious project. May God enlighten and strengthen us during these perilous times.

Shalom,

Paul Mayer
Paul Mayer

P.S.: I'm happy to report that David Saperstein was part of our delegation to the World Assembly in Tokyo in April.

Directions to Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church:
Take downtown A train to Lafayette Avenue (4th stop in Brooklyn). Walk straightahead one block. The church is on the corner of Lafayette and So. Oxford. (Take the So. Oxford St. exit off the subway platform).



Zero Nuclear Weapons

Ban Nuclear Power

Stop the Arms Race

Fund Human Needs

"Therefore choose life so that you and your children will live . . ." Deut. XXX. 19

Religious Task Force

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July 30, 1981

Dear Friends:

As we face the increasing militarization of the American economy and conscience at the cost of a decent life for our people, you will be happy to hear about exciting plans being laid here and internationally for the United Nations Special Session on Disarmament II (SSD) scheduled for May-June, 1982.

In April 600 religious leaders and activists from 54 countries gathered in Tokyo for the World Assembly of Religious Workers for Nuclear and General Disarmament in order to prepare for the SSD. Because of the location of the SSD in the U.S.A. in New York City we have been asked to begin the ambitious task of getting the work underway.

Enclosed you will find:

- 1). A tentative proposal for a religious campaign climaxing in the SSD in 1982.
- 2). The minutes of the most recent meeting of the Religious Task Force/MFS, which brought together theater people, artists, poets and others to search for religious images and symbols which will inspire and unite us, and perhaps others around the world for the SSD. (The minutes include a proposal by Louise Bruyn of Boston AFSC on the symbol of the Ark).

We ask that you help to gather religious people in your area for discussion about plans, time-lines, symbols, events etc. leading up to the SSD. Feel free to use the enclosed proposal as the basis for your discussion or create your own.

On September 15 (10 am-5 pm) at the Church of the Reformation
222 E. Capitol St. NE
Washington, D.C. 202/543-4200

there will be a consultative meeting in Washington, D.C. in conjunction with activities at the Arms Bazaar planned by Sojourners and others. At this meeting we hope to formulate semi-final plans for religious events at and leading up to the SSD.



Zero Nuclear Weapons Ban Nuclear Power Stop the Arms Race Fund Human Needs

"Therefore choose life so that you and your children will live . . ." Deut. XXX, 19

We want you to be part of shaping this campaign. Please send a local representative from your area or at least a written proposal (by August 8). You would also be welcome at our next RTF meeting on Sept. 1 (1-4 pm) at the National Council of Churches, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, N.Y. (Leber Room, 9th floor).

Please let us hear from you so that we know how many people to expect on Sept. 15 (or Sept. 1). Use the attached coupon.

The people of the world see the SSD as a great-hopefully not last-opportunity to say with one voice that our children need bread not bombs. We as people of faith need to say from the depth of our sacred traditions that all life is holy and that in the twentieth century war, especially nuclear war, is the great sin.

Shalom,

 Paul Mayer

AMERICAN JEWISH
 ARCHIVES

Reminder!

September 1 RTF Meeting
 at National Council of Churches
 475 Riverside Drive
 New York, N.Y.
 1-4 pm
 room: Leber Room, 9th floor

Sept. 15 Consultative Meeting SSD
 at Church of the Reformation
 222 E. Capitol St. NE
 Washington, D.C.
 10 am-5 pm
 202/543-4200

 Please detach, fill out, and return to us as soon as possible.
 Check appropriate circle:

- () _____ is coming to SEPT. 15 meeting in Washington, D.C.
- () We cannot attend SEPT. 15 meeting. We are sending or will send our suggestions for SSD II.
- () We haven't been able to meet but would like to be kept informed.
- () _____ is coming to SEPT. 1 meeting in New York.

Name:
 Address:
 Organization:
 Comments:

Religious Task Force

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85 SO. OXFORD ST., BROOKLYN, N.Y. 11217 (212) 858-6882

The International Religious Campaign for Human Survival:
A Project for the United Nations Special Session on
Disarmament II

Background:

At this moment in history the human family faces an unprecedented threat to its survival. The United States and the USSR between them possess approximately 50,000 nuclear warheads and the capacity to destroy each other's civilian population dozens of times. Today the U.S. is in the process of creating a new generation of even more dangerous first-strike nuclear weapons and a strategy based on the possibility of engaging in limited nuclear wars. The Soviet Union and other nuclear powers will undoubtedly follow suit quickly making the possibility of nuclear war either by intent or by accident greater than ever before.

At the same time the growing international sale of nuclear energy technology will shortly enable new countries such as Brazil, Argentina, South Africa, Pakistan, and Libya to join the nuclear club. In addition to the escalation on the nuclear front, the even more costly conventional arms race squanders the earth's riches which the developing countries of the Third World desperately need to overcome the daily threats of poverty, hunger, diseases, and despair. Nor are the peoples of the industrialized societies, especially the poor, immune to this theft of their daily bread and of the possibility of a dignified life by the global military buildup.

The United Nations Special Session on Disarmament II (U.N. SSD II) planned for the spring of 1982 is seen by people all over the world as one great last chance to stay the hand of the nuclear executioner. It is significant that it is being called primarily by the non-aligned and Third World countries, who see themselves held in a kind of nuclear blackmail by the superpowers, while the arms race consumes the resources upon which they depend for social and economic development. It is especially the peoples of these non-aligned nations joined by some courageous voices from other countries who are calling for massive action by independent citizens movements all over the world in support of the aims of the SSD. Here in the U.S. the Mobilization for Survival (MFS) and its Religious Task Force (RTF) is already taking the initiative in exploring plans for the Spring of 1982.



Zero Nuclear Weapons

Ban Nuclear Power

Stop the Arms Race

Fund Human Needs

"Therefore choose life so that you and your children will live . . ." Deut. XXX, 19

In April 1981 the World Assembly for Religious Workers for Nuclear and General Disarmament in Tokyo brought almost 600 religious leaders and others from 58 countries to Tokyo. There the representatives of all the great world religions began to lay plans for internationally coordinated religious activities during the SSD in 1982. The RTF helped to organize the U.S. delegation which included the President of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, representatives from the National Council of Churches, Reformed Judaism, the Black Church, and various religious peace groups. The World Assembly's plan to have the global religious community focus its spiritual energies on the SSD has given additional impetus and inspiration to activities that were already being planned and discussed in the U.S. by the RTF and other groups. (The RTF hopes that its experience in coordinating the successful religious activities during the SSD I in 1978 will enable it to be of help in facilitating the kind of religious campaign which corresponds to the even greater crisis existing two years later.)

Project:

The International Religious Campaign for Human Survival will be an effort to arouse and activate religious persons, local religious congregations and groups, national denominations, and world traditions both in the U.S. and worldwide to recognize the SSD both as a unique opportunity and as a sacred responsibility. The ideal of the Campaign would be to create a new level of religious consciousness concerning the imminent threat to human survival, and the need to make the work before and during the SSD a major priority for religious believers the world over. The work of the Campaign for Human Survival would include:

1. An appeal (or separate appeals) would be issued in early 1982 by world religious leaders such as Pope John Paul II, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Mother Theresa, Venoba Bhavi, Venerable Fujii, Billy Graham, Philip Potter of the WCC, along with other leaders of Judaism, Islam, and all of the world religions to signal the opening of the SSD. The appeal would call on believers to engage in a broad variety of activities focussed on the SSD including a Survival Weekend of intense prayer, fasting, celebrations and vigils in synagogues, churches, mosques, pagodas, and temples all over the world at the beginning of the SSD. It would also urge communities to send delegations to the religious gathering in New York City during the SSD.
2. Coordinate other activities in local congregations in the U.S.: educational material, worship and sermon resources, speakers, discussion group resources. Begin process of organizing delegations to N.Y.C. for SSD.
3. Communicate with religious bodies and leaders in other countries (especially those from the Third World/Non-aligned nations) concerning coordinated international activities and those in New York during the SSD.
4. Establish and/or strengthen links and cooperative efforts with Black, Hispanic, and other minority religious communities before and during the SSD linking social injustice and military spending as a kind of domestic implementation of the development vs. the arms race focus of Third World countries at SSD.

5. Organize the Survival Weekend in N.Y.C. in coordination with national and international efforts.

6. Coordinate the International Religious Convocation for Human Survival during the early period of the SSD in New York City (to be coordinated with other events of the national MFS and other groups such as a mass rally, international conference of peace representatives etc.) The Convocation would include:

a. Witness for Survival- opening religious events in the South Bronx or Harlem linking the arms race and domestic poverty and organized by the indigineous leadership with our cooperation, which would be attended by international religious representatives.

b. Interreligious Worship Service- a major celebration involving religious leaders from all countries and traditions.

c. Planning conference to discuss ongoing coordinated religious activity for survival in the U.S. and abroad.

7. Explore the possiblitiy of a religious expression of non-violent civil disobedience during the SSD inspired by recent activities such as the actions of the Plowshares 8; the call of Archbishop Hunthausen of Seattle to tax resistance and the statement of the World Religious Assembly in Tokyo:

"Individuals should respond to the calls of their spiritual leaders and give spiritual laws priority over human-made laws. Actions could include non-violent responsible direct action."

The full details concerning time-line, budget, adequate staffing, involved groups and funding sources are still in the process of being negotiated. Activities during this period would include:

1. Establish basic communication with world religious leaders either directly or through the network of the Tokyo World Assembly to prepare for the release of the World Appeal in early 1982.

2. Communicate with the broadest possible network of religious denominations and organizations to secure their commitment (financial, staff time, material production, etc.) to cooperate with coordinated planning for the Campaign. This would require a major meeting/planning conference in the early fall 1981.

3. Secure funding or in kind commitment from a broad range of foundations, individuals, denominations, and other religious organizations.

4. Set up meetings in early fall 1981 here and possibly abroad to begin working on preparatory local activities, on the specifics of the Survival Weekend, May 1982, and on the events during the International Religious Convocation

for Human Survival in New York City during the SSD.

We believe that this Campaign could have a significant impact on world public opinion concerning the SSD, on the U.N. delegates to the SSD and on the religious consciousness of believers all over the world. With God's help millions of people could be affected and perhaps some change in the world's political climate could be created. It needs to be noted that the significant mass activities now being planned outside of religious circles would also be a major part of these efforts on behalf of human survival.

Religious Task Force:

The RTF of the MFS is organized to mobilize the religious community within the United States in support of four goals: 1). Zero Nuclear Weapons 2). Ban Nuclear Power 3). Stop the Arms Race 4). Meet Human Needs. The RTF is one of seven task forces within the MFS which is a national coalition of over 100 peace, environmental, religious, anti-nuclear energy, community, and labor organizations.

The RTF is a coalition of religious groups which includes Clergy and Laity Concerned, Fellowship of Reconciliation, Jewish Peace Fellowship, Friends Peace Committee, Intercommunity Center for Justice and Peace, the Unitarian Universalist Association, Catholic Peace Fellowship, New York Friends Meeting House. Other groups which work with the RTF on a regular or occasional basis include Leadership Conference of Women Religious, Riverside Church Disarmament Program, National Council of Churches, National Association of Women Religious, Pax Christi, National Conference of Black Churchmen, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn, Central Conference of American Rabbis, the Episcopal Diocese of New York, the Integral Yoga Institute, the Women's Division of the Methodist Church, the YWCA, the YMCA, various Native American spiritual groups and many individual religious bodies.

Religious Task Force

mobilization FOR SURVIVAL

85 SO. OXFORD ST., BROOKLYN, N.Y. 11217 (212) 858-6882

Religious Task Force/MFS

July 7, 1981 Meeting

National Council of Churches

475 Riverside Drive

New York, N.Y.

1. Introductions

2. Agenda: I. Creative Brainstorming on Symbols/Images for Religious Work on SSD
II. Reports on Current Activity
III. Immediate Strategy

Participants:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Address & Organization</u>	<u>Telephone</u>
1. Bob Moore	MFS, 3601 Locust Walk, Phila., Pa. 19104	215/386-4875
2. Edwin Luidens	Office for East Asia & Pacific, NCCUSA Room 616, 475 Riverside Drive, N.Y.C. 10115	212/870-2371
3. Frank Panopoulos	Catholic Peace Fellowship, 339 Lafayette New York, N.Y. 10012	212/673-8990
4. Dan Ebener	FOR, Box 271, Nyack, N.Y.	914/358-4601
5. Ken Brown	NSUS, Plandome, N.Y. 11030	516/627-6560
6. Eugene Bronstein	N.Y. Friends, 188 E. 75th St., apt. 4c New York, N.Y. 10021	212/TR9-5976
7. Paul Mayer	RTF/MFS, 85 So. Oxford St., Brooklyn, N.Y.	212/858-6882
8. Ginny Newsom	P.O. Box 589, Woodstock, N.Y. 12498	914/246-7575
9. Irving Sarnoff	P.O. Box 65032, Los Angeles, CA 90065	213/255-2016 851-0162
10. Louise Bruyn	AFSC, 2161 Mass. Ave., Cambridge, MA 02140	617/661-6130
11. Arthur Berk	New Call to Peacemaking, 15 Rutherford Pl., New York, N.Y. 10003	212/673-5750 212/691-9339
12. Arthur Strimling	264 W. 19th St., #44, N.Y.C. 10011	" "
13. Deborah Whitcomb	264 W. 19th St., #43, N.Y.C., 10011	" "
14. Deborah Fortson	167 Babcock St., Brookline, MA 02146	617/731-9697
15. Mary Ann Vincient	Intercommunity Center for Justice & Peace, 20 Washington Square North, N.Y.C. 10011	212/475-6677
16. Joan Steans	Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace, 36 Culver Ave., Jersey City, N.J. 07305	201/451-6057

Zero Nuclear Weapons

Ban Nuclear Power

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Fund Human Needs

"Therefore choose life so that you and your children will live . . ." Deut. XXX. 19

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|---------------------------------|--|-----------------------|
| 17. Elizabeth Cattell | Friends, 15th St., & FOR, 188 E. 75th St.,
N.Y.C., 10021 | 212/879-5976 |
| 18. Naomi Goodman | Jewish Peace Fellowship, 40 W. 77th St.,
New York, N.Y. 10024 | |
| 19. Lynn Gottlieb | Jewish Peace Fellowship, 126 E. 27th St.,
New York City, 10016 | 212/684-7536 |
| 20. Bill Ofenloch | Catholic Peace Fellowship, 339 Lafayette,
New York, N.Y. 10012 | 212/673-8990 |
| 21. Currie Burris | Clergy & Laity Concerned, 198 Broadway,
New York, N.Y. 10038 | 212/964-6730 |
| 22. Margaret Morgan-
Hubbard | ICCR, Energy Program, 475 Riverside Drive,
New York, N.Y. | 212/870-2926 |
| 23. Grigsby Morgan-
Hubbard | " " | " |
| 24. Dan Berrigan | 220 W. 98th St., New York, N.Y. 10025 | 212/662-6358 |
| 25. Lothar Bountanakles | Riverside Church Disarmament Program,
490 Riverside Drive, N.Y.C., 10027 | 212/222-5900 ext. 238 |
| 26. Robert Northrup | Room 618, 475 Riverside Drive, N.Y.C., 10115 | 212/870-2021 |
| 27. Robert Alpern | Unitarian Universalist Association, 100
Maryland Ave., NE, Wash. D.C. 20002 | 202/547-0254 |

I. Creative Brainstorming: Louise Bruyn Proposal:

We need to think about strong images early. There is more awareness of survival issues now than 3 years ago. There are more possibilities. The image of the die-in at the SSD has remained a strong one that people still remember.

Noah & the Ark: (see proposal)

1. The earth must become the Ark in which all living things are to be saved.
2. Caring about living things to save them, sending out birds to see if flood is gone, events might last 40 days and 40 nights.
3. God's promise not to destroy the earth again. Rainbow as a sign of promise.
4. Going 2 by 2 - a few people can make a difference.
5. Two events during 40 days at UN plus decentralized activities and a walk across country with 5 simple questions to ask people on the way.

Discussion on Noah's Ark & Brainstorming:

1. Noah's Ark might be patriarchal and elitist (2 by 2). Are there other images without these problems?
2. Shadow-graphs might be used (like the shadows left from Hiroshima's vaporized victims).
3. Noah's Ark would be appropriate because:
 - a. Nama (Noah's wife) could call/speak to the animals. Nama had a dream/vision of upcoming flood.
 - b. Waters of flood-Jewish tradition of "flood of fire" from heaven and earth.
 - c. New covenant-new rainbow-the story repeats itself.
 - d. The human family on the Ark - the 4 tribes of the earth from the 4 directions.
4. Abstract images must be combined with concrete. Alternative: everyone might bring or send pictures or photographs of living and/or loved things to the UN.
- b. Our goal should be to provide positive support and mass audience for the UN SSD II- civil disobedience would be inappropriate.
- c. Rally at the end of SSD instead of the beginning.
5. Do we need a Symbol(s): for all? only religious? SSD work should be seen as a whole campaign not as a single event.
6. We should sound warning but we don't want to numb-Image of Earthrise as seen from moon by astronauts. Perhaps we can get an astronaut as speaker or for poster.
7. No uncritical support for UN.

8. Symbol: for whom? Do what with it?
9. Can the image of the Ark and the Earthrise be connected? Can both be used?
10. Humans as caretakers of earth: "Incinerator or Preserve" slogan.
11. Include many religious traditions on Ark.
12. Flood goes beyond Judaeo-Christian tradition-it is universal.
13. Should have a religious symbol-possibly garden (earth) rebirth, birth waters, creation story.
14. Have people from around the world bring their songs and dances to the U.N. This would be a good media image.
15. Carry wooden frames making an Ark (similar to Trident monster) in procession to UN where a new temple/shrine would be created-a new sacred meeting house.
16. Do we need a symbol more directly related/connected to disarmament?
17. Universality of dove, rainbow (German button). Need to communicate "Bread not bombs"- meeting human needs.
18. Corita Kent to help visualize-colors of rainbow-possibly use ribbons.
19. Scales of justice-weighted towards arms side, less weight (food) on the other side.
20. In the story Noah is a man "who works the earth". After the flood he plants a vineyard to celebrate.
21. It should be clear that we are using the UN to address the people of the world. The best symbols are politically charged with civil disobedience. We need to plan something that's more than aesthetically exciting. We can't separate symbols from political implications.
22. Zen approach-do both. Reach out broadly without sacrificing principles. World Assembly in Japan summons people to obey higher law and break human law- if necessary. Should the RTF organize a religious civil disobedience?
23. Build an Ark as civil disobedience on White House lawn or at GE or pentagon etc.
24. Slogan "Choose Life" from SSD I.

Reports:

A. Bob Moore on the MFS SSD Working Group:

He reported that an SSD working group, with representatives from most of the major peace groups as well as a number of local groups in the N.Y. area was established this spring and has met five times to date. In addition a consultation of the International MFS was held in Frankfurt, Germany, May 24, with a major focus on International planning for SSD.

Out of these meetings a tentative time-line has begun to emerge. First there will be additional international planning at the World Conference Against A & H Bombs August 3-9 in Japan. MFS is sending a delegation of 8-10 to the conference.

Next will be internationally coordinated activities during World Disarmament Week Oct. 24-31. In the U.S. it is proposed that we have decentralized activities in as many places as possible which advocate disarmament and highlight the upcoming SSD.

Throughout the fall, winter, and spring there would be meetings with U.S. government officials, petitions, letter-writing campaigns and other efforts to influence the U.S. proposals and postures to the SSD. Other nations will be holding similar campaigns to influence their respective governments.

During the first week of March, 1982 the Pacific peoples are planning concentrated activities for a nuclear-free Pacific. Others are urged to act in solidarity for nuclear free zones throughout the world.

Finally during the actual SSD, slated to last five weeks beginning in mid-May,

1982 plans are for a religious convocation; a major international demonstration; an international conference; and visits to UN missions of nuclear nations.

B. Robert Northrup on Japan Conference of Religious Workers:

1. Made new connections.
2. Not enough connection between the work of the 3 commissions, 600 people attended from 58 countries, strong U.S. delegation.
3. They are in touch with Pacific People's Movements, re: waste dumping, etc.
4. Survival Weekend, try to get world religious leaders to issue call at the beginning of 1982. The Survival Weekend will include international fasting, prayer, and religious services in support of the SSD. It will happen the weekend before SSD is to begin.

Bob Northrup also reported that the Church World Service has changed its focus to militarism, armaments, and food.

C. Dan Berrigan:

Fast on the 6th day of each month.

D. Irving Sarnoff, So. California Alliance for Survival:

1. 4 continental marches in the U.S. organized by the Buddhists and Native Americans beginning from Montreal, San Francisco, L.A., and New Orleans. Marchers will need support and activities along the way. The RTF agreed to sponsor the marches.
2. Year of Shalom meeting June 29 called by UMC Bishop of L.A.-broadest gathering in So. California in sometime. Year of Shalom time-line emerged.
3. Use of coordinated church media to help Year of Shalom.
4. Use of model UN's in high schools so they can discuss SSD II.
5. Plan to open New York and L.A. offices.

E. Dan Ebener, FOR, World Peace Pledge:

The World Peace Pledge has been very popular with many groups besides FOR distributing it. Over 100,000 have been given out. Perhaps the WPP could be coordinated with RTF activities.

F. Robert Alpern, Unitarian Universalist Association, Ground Zero:

1. We are seeking to bring together national organizations to deal with issues of nuclear war. 21 groups we have dealt with so far including NEA, NCC, NASW, unions, AAAS, etc.
2. We will begin a series of events culminating in April, 1982 such as articles, publications, etc. Bill Mylander write to Bob Alpern for more info.

G. Louise Bruyn, AFSC, Boston:

Many new groups have begun in Boston, over 39 disarmament networks in one year. Nuclear Freeze support has been tremendous with lawyers, educators, physicians supporting it.

August 9-16: The Gathering, theater people coming together in Minnesota to talk about current crisis.

H. Diane Thomas-Glass (report sent in), Northern California:

1. Planning a major retreat July 31 in Santa Rosa to plan strategy
2. Creating a Manual: a history of UN Disarmament, reality of U.S.?Soviet economics.
3. Training Sessions for religious communities using UN SSD:
 - a. as a focus
 - b. modeled on Survival Summer training

I. Lynn Gottlieb, Jewish Peace Fellowship:

Flood month October in Jewish tradition. Ninth of Av presence in Washington D.C. in Lafayette Park and at the Soviet Embassy for vigil and demonstration. The Ninth of Av commemorates the burning of the Temple and this year it falls on August 9, Nagasaki Day.

J. Paul Mayer, RTF:

Archbishop Penney of St. John's, Newfoundland represented Canadian Catholic Conference at Japan World Assembly. I spoke to him recently and he is open to having Social Action Dept. of Canadian Catholic Conference approach Pope John Paul II about joining world religious leaders in SSD appeal.

III. Immediate Strategy:

1. We do not yet have a consensus on Ark symbolism. We must continue discussion and search for powerful images and symbols. Consult with artists, poets, theater people and others.
2. Circulate the RTF SSD proposal as widely as possible around the country and encourage local groups to have discussions on the hopes and plans for SSD.
3. Use the key contact lists of RTF member groups and others to identify people who will call these local meetings.
4. Schedule a national consultation meeting on Sept. 15 (10 am- 5 pm) in Washington in conjunction with Arms Bazaar activities sponsored by Sojourners and others. Urge local groups to either send representatives or written proposals. At this meeting we will finalize symbols, time-lines, and other plans for religious activities at and leading up to SSD.
5. The RTF will meet again on Sept. 1 (1-4 pm), National Council of Churches, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, N.Y. in the Leber Room, 9th floor.

RTF Meeting

Sept. 1 (1-4 pm)
National Council of Churches
Leber Room 9th floor
475 Riverside Drive
New York, N.Y.

National Consultant Meeting
Sept. 15 (10 am-5 pm)
Church of the Reformation
222 E. Capitol St. NE
Washington, D.C. 202/543-4200

(Louise Bruyn proposal on back of this page)

SYMBOLS TO RAISE UP THE U.N. SPECIAL SESSION ON DISARMAMENT

The U.N. S.S.D. needs some image to carry it into the homes and hearts and minds of the people of the world. It needs to be linked with a sign of hope. Without becoming maudlin, sentimental, or irrelevant, we need to tap into those images with which people can truly confront the issue of survival.

The story of Noah and the Ark has some of these elements. It allows us to look lovingly at those creatures/creations (cultural as well as biological) which we hold dear. The story of the ark gives us a familiar structure through which we can view the present situation. Without taking the story literally, we can link common elements.

The earth is our ark. We have no other vessel in which to save all the species. The U.N. is the symbol of the earth. It represents humanity. Its concerns are global. Though it represents nations, it is the only institution that exists that represents all the people of the world.

The element of 40 days and 40 nights is associated with the story. The length of time the rains fell. That could be the time set before the opening of the session or the day of the rally (if there is to be one) to call attention to the coming event. During this time two processes could go on - one decentralize; and one focused at the U.N. At the U.N., either on the grounds, or across the street, people could bring those things to an "ark" which they hold precious - plants, animals, songs, dances, art, pictures of children, etc. The ceremony would last for perhaps 1/2 hour. Afterwards, the items collected would be displayed in the U.N. They could be from many different countries. Media would (could) cover the events. It would be filmed.

At the same time, people all over the country would be walking in the cities, on country roads, wherever there were people, asking five questions:

1. Do you think we will have a nuclear war?
2. What can you picture in your mind's eye being destroyed that is most precious to you?
3. If you could imagine one million people doing something at the same time to stop the impending holocaust, what might that be?
4. If there were something you could do, with others, to stop the holocaust, would you do it?
5. Would you sign this petition and go to others to ask them these same five questions?

The initial people might be dressed in grey, to set them apart. Media would be asked to go with them. If each person asked would agree to ask the same questions of others, one each day for the 40 days and nights, an incredible number of people would be reached.

The initial people, walking from town to town, might initially be theater people, carrying symbols of the ark, perhaps going two by two. Perhaps a long procession would lead to the U.N. at the end of that time, bringing the petitions, or people's responses. The items could be passed on from group to group without needing to have anyone go the whole distance.

This whole process, both across and country and in N.Y.C. could be filmed.

The symbols of hope, the rainbow and the bird of peace with the olive branch in its beak are both rooted in this story.

Louise Bruyn
AFSC 2161 Mass. Ave., Cambridge
MA 02140