



Episcopal Network for Economic Justice Newsletter

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Worker Justice Issues and Building God’s Kingdom

By Mike Maloney

*A labor leader turned priest talks about his life, worker justice issues, and the Kingdom of God. I interviewed **Tim Yeager** on October 29 by phone.*

TY: I’m the Team Vicar of St. George’s Church in the parish of East Greenwich in the Anglican Diocese of East Southwark in the metropolitan area of London. I’ve been there for eight weeks now. I was born and raised in the state of Iowa and spent 23 years in Chicago.

MM: Tell us something about your background and how you got to where you are now. And I don’t mean just location-wise.

TY: I was born and raised in Charles City, Iowa. My parents met singing in the choir at the First Presbyterian Church at Iowa City. We were raised in the Methodist Church, in part because they had the best choir in town. I basically left the church, left the faith during my college years. I moved to Unitarianism then to Marxism and rejected religion altogether. I got a job working as a lawyer in the Legal Services Corporation of Iowa in Davenport. I graduated from law school in 1977 then became a lawyer for poor people. Somewhere along the line I ran into the Rev. Gilbert Dawes, a Methodist minister and a liberation theologian in Clinton, Iowa. He showed me the progressive foundation of the Judeo-Christian tradition which I hadn’t picked up before. I was district organizer for the Communist Party in Iowa. I made a deal with Gil that I would join his church and he



Dianne Aid and Tim Yeager at Gloria Brown Luncheon in Newark.

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Church, Poverty and Privilege

By Dianne Aid, TSSF

I am hearing stories from all over the U.S. and from other provinces of the Anglican Communion from people who feel a financial burden of maintaining church membership, or at least being in the center of congregational life. We expect poverty as the standard for those who receive services from a variety of outreach ministries. The stories I am referring to are coming from the “perceived” middle class people sitting in the pews on Sunday morning.

Perception really traps people into expectations.

One of my favorite movies is “A Million to Juan” (Paul Rodriguez). Juan is given a check for one million dollars, but is told not to cash it, and, he will have to return it after a week. Juan simply shows the check to a banker, and doors fly open for Juan, he did not have to spend a cent.

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Tim Yeager

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would he join mine. That's what we did and I became a Methodist. I became the organist in his church. Then it wasn't a question of fully embracing the faith. That happened later when I met my current wife -- my final wife. She was from England and was worshipping in the Episcopal Church. I came with her to a service there and the choir was doing the recessional hymn and marching down the aisle to the recessional hymn, "Crown Him with Many Crowns" and they sang "awake my soul and sing" and I burst into tears and I realized my soul hadn't sung in a long time and I wanted that. She looked at me and wanted to know why raindrops were falling on her head. I said, "I think I'm home." It wasn't long after that that I realized what I needed to do was to explore the servanthood of priesthood. I had spent twenty-some years working for the labor movement full time as an attorney, negotiator and organizer for the United Auto Workers union the branch that organized legal aid workers and non-profit workers in social service agencies. After some 20 some years doing that, I was ordained a priest in the Diocese of Chicago. I took a small inner city church in Chicago for a couple of years. My wife wanted to move home. I said we could do that and home for her means London. So we came over here to London in August. I'm serving a parish here in team ministry with another excellent priest with whom I'm very happy to be serving. Together

we're trying to make a difference in East Greenwich.

MM: Alright, sounds like you landed in a very good place. How did you get involved in the labor union movement?

TY: I was raised a Republican even to the point of working for Barry Goldwater as a teenager in the 1964 election. So, it wasn't something that naturally flowed from the political orientation of my family. My dad had been a member of the United Amalgamated Meat Cutters when he was working in a packing plant in Sioux City, Iowa. But how it really happened came from my family which had a strong ethic of service to others. My dad was a community leader doing things for poor people and trying to make life better for people on the lower end of the economic spectrum in his own way – something he inculcated in both of his sons. So, this notion of Christianity as primarily an ethic of service to others was involved. From that point of view, it wasn't a great leap understanding the importance of working people working together for their own advancement. I became acquainted with the whole concept of solidarity – staying together and being united in the struggle. I graduated from college in 1972 with a degree in Russian Language and History. I didn't know what I was going to do. I went to work in a factory. I was elected a union steward in the shop in an auto parts factory. And found that I was very keen on being an advocate for my fellow workers and the rest was history. From 1972 onwards, I always had some connection with the labor movement. In 1991, when the

opportunity came for me to work full time for the union of which I was a member, I took it. I served with the United Auto Workers for 23 years. That's basically how it happened.

MM: What are some of the things you learned from that experience?

TY: I learned that comparing the things that my dad and mom did in their family and what I was doing in the labor movement were really quite similar. So I became very concerned about the necessity for people of faith and good will to come and work together regardless of denominational differences and political and ideological differences. I became committed early to building unity between Christians with whom I became involved and with labor in the struggle of working people. It should have been no surprise. Our Lord was a carpenter. He was a working man with callouses on his hands. And the people he recruited in his movement – several of them were fisherman. They were all 'lower level' people, with the possible exception of Matthew. People of faith could work together to make a difference in this world and to build something akin to the Kingdom of God. A relationship between the Kingdom of God and a better way for working people is not a great leap. They're just two different ways of saying the same thing. I also learned about the absolutely essential role played by unity among working people. Unity is the greatest gift and tool that workers have in advancing their own interest. Ultimately it is the only thing they have because we can't match dollar for dollar the

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Tim Yeager

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power of the wealthier class – the owning class, the capitalist class. We can however with our numbers and our unity of action make a real impact in which way the society develops. And I found what a joyful experience it was to help workers who felt powerless to suddenly become empowered. The best thing I liked about my job was helping unorganized workers to get organized and be with them on the night they win their recognition election. Just to be with them to celebrate. And to revel in the sense of empowerment and dignity that was suddenly in their midst – a bit like a Pentecostal experience. Like flickering flames over their heads – a real sense of zeal and enthusiasm and hope. So the labor movement is not unlike the excitement you read about in the early church.

MM: I'm also community organizer. I know that when I have a good meeting, it feels like a good liturgy. I understand your comparison between the organizing experience and the religious experience. But you mentioned the Kingdom of God. It sounds like you believe that that's something that we can help bring about. What do we need in order to do that?

TY: We are called to be God's hands and feet. We are called to cooperate with God's plan in the world. It's not something we do apart from that. But Jesus was asked so many times during his ministry as reported in the Gospels what the Kingdom of God is like. He would say the Kingdom of God is like this and then spin out a parable. Like the parable of the day laborers in which he says in the kingdom of god, the last will be first and the first will be last.

Note: The rest of this interview can be found on ENEJ's website.

ENEJ Resources You Can Use

The following resources are available at www.enej.org:

Economic Justice How-to Action Manual: A Guide to Economic Justice Ministries for Episcopal Congregations, 2006.

Economic Justice Issues: A Guide to Church Teaching and Action Steps for congregations and individual activities on 26 issues facing the United States, 2011. Issue Papers include:

- Predatory Lending
- Taxes and Economic Justice
- Racism and Economic Justice
- Prisons and Incarceration
- Immigration
- Affordable Housing
- Fair Trade
- Human Trafficking

Twenty Years Later: Response to A Crisis: Strengthening Economic Justice Ministry in the Church in a time of Fiscal Crisis. This report addresses current national and international issues including the international economic crisis and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, 2009.

Community Investing: An Alternative for Religious Congregations Seeking Social as well as a Financial Return, 1999.

Share the Wealth. ENEJ's Community Investing Brochure, 2011.

Economic Justice Education Modules, six popular education units on such issues as inequality, worker justice and the impacts of recession. (Developed in conjunction with United for a Fair Economy)

Related Resources

"From Mammon to Manna: Sabbath Economics and Community Investing" is a 6 part, 2 disc DVD, produced by Bartimaeus Cooperative Ministries, featuring biblical scholar/activist Ched Myers and Andy Loving, social investment advisor. It was produced for study groups interested in exploring biblical faith and practical economic justice. It is available at (www.bem-net.org) for \$25 (plus \$2.50 shipping and handling). A facilitation guide is available without cost from the same website.

Money and Faith: the Search for Enough, edited and compiled by Michael Schut, with a substantial study guide for small groups. There are readings on many aspects of money by such authors as Walter Brueggemann, Henry Nouwen, Bill McKibben, Ched Myers, William Greider, Maria Harris, Andy Loving, and Michael Schut. The book is available from Morehouse Education Resources (www.morehouseeducation.com) with a retail price of \$20.

Immigration: The Franciscan Action Network has a new film on the need for immigration reform. This five-minute documentary can be accessed at www.franciscanaction.org. 202-527-7565. It can be used as a conversation starter.

Must Reading

Take Back the Economy: An Ethical Guide for Transforming Our Communities (J.K. Gibson-Graham, Jenny Cameron, Stephen Healy, University of Minnesota Press, 2013) is required reading for those involved in sustainable community economic development. Order it through your local bookstore or at amazon.com.

The New Globalization: Reclaiming the Lost Ground of Our Christian Social Tradition, by Richard W. Gillett, Cleveland, Ohio: The Pilgrim Press, 2005 (219 pages)

Church, Poverty and Privilege

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It is highly unlikely that anyone reading this is going to be given a million dollar check for leverage, but, we come from a church system which assumes enough wealth to be a solid, pledging church member with additional discretionary money for expensive charity/fund raising dinners. Attending conventions and conferences (even if expenses are covered, it is always the extra out of pocket money that adds up. And yet unofficially required for full participation). It is time to unravel the assumptions and systems which have brought us further and further from simplicity being a spiritual value and has added additional financial pressure on families simply trying to keep basic food and shelter intact.

CHURCH AND NEIGHBORHOOD

The 1990's were proclaimed THE DECADE OF EVANGELISM for the Episcopal Church. We were entering an age of turbulence, globalization and increasing demographic shifts. The church I grew up in, Sunday attendance, several youth and family activities during the week was giving way to time consuming and changing lifestyles of work, mobility and technology. The church needed to find ways to be relevant in proclamation of our faith, and assisting with maintaining a spiritual core in very fluid times. I participated in several training programs and engaged in the work of Evangelism Consultations for several years. One of the exercises I well remember was taking people on walks around the neighborhoods their churches were located in, and seeing what barriers and invitations

existed. We were also to note the number of cars parked in driveways on Sunday mornings indicating the potentially unchurched. We were starting to grow a Spanish language ministry at my parish among the migrant and settling farmworkers in the area. There were many barriers – the church was in a very wealthy neighborhood, with mansions, well-trimmed lawns and gardens, and no sidewalks. People who did not look like they belonged in the neighborhood were viewed with suspicion.

I had several co-worker/friends who lived in this neighborhood, and was invited to parties with the governor and other state people – my political party central committee met in this neighborhood. What my acquaintances/co-workers did not know was that I was poor – living below the poverty line. I had grown up in relative affluence and knew all of the correct behaviors to pass as upper-middle class at the least. My friends did not know that I had to dig change out from behind the sofa or anywhere else to purchase the coveted Cabbage Patch Doll for my daughter. For years I thought I was alone and felt inadequate, I did not know that my hidden story was the hidden story of others who were assumed to be financially successful based in White privilege.

GETTING OUT AND ABOUT THE CHURCH

Fast forward a number of years to the spring of 2014. I attempted to register for a conference on line, the only publicized option for registration. My registration fees were to be waived as I was a presenter at the conference, however, I could not complete my registration without entering a bank card number. It took me several attempts at contacting

conference organizers to find a way around the on line registration. A more recent conference online registration inadvertently charged my card the whole amount of the conference instead of just the deposit, which created havoc in my bank account.

The obvious question I began to ask was 'How do people without bank accounts register?' The answer I got from one was 'The assumption is people attending this conference would have bank accounts'. The majority of attendees at this particular conference were ordained.

Other instances of assumption of affluence is mileage paid to church volunteers compared to church professionals of up to 75% difference (the volunteers receiving the low end of course) on the assumption that volunteer work comes out of leisure that is produced by affluence.

The question of cost for seminary trained clergy is deserving of an article/books of its own on this topic, so for here leave it to say we are in a real trap of a church model that is becoming less equipped to support the costs to maintain professional clergy, so injustice and inequality in broad based representation of church membership are a result of a system which functioned in a church of 50 years ago.

THE LAUNDRY LIST

I would suspect that a large number of readers of this article have participated in Diocesan Conventions, General Conventions, Conferences and Retreats. There are also, I imagine, untold struggles to be able to participate.

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Church, Poverty and Privilege

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Here are some of these challenges:

- *Out of pocket, non-reimbursable expenses*
- *Time loss from work*
- *Extremely high ground transportation costs for wheel chair bound people (literally hundreds of dollars)*
- *Online/Credit Card registration without a visibly publicized alternative*
- *Child Care issues*
- *Reimbursement after the event financially straps individuals and families for up to a month*
- *Adequate translation is not always readily available*

I am sure there are many other examples/barriers and we invite you to add to the list. We also would like to hear stories of creative ways these challenges have been met.

There appears to be under representation from low wage workers and immigrants at a number of church conferences. There are a number of challenges for these communities, including those listed above. There also has been little opportunity for these communities to be equipped to understand church polity. Congregations made up of brothers and sisters in this category do exist, and some are several years old but in the minds of those in church governance and those planning events, these growing “marginalized” communities are viewed essentially as outreach.

SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION AND OUR CULTURAL CONTEXT

We cannot ignore the communal caring model laid out for us in scripture, The Feeding of the 5000 (Matt: 14: 13-21) and Jesus’ advice to the man who wanted to follow him to sell all his possessions and

give the money to the poor (Luke 19:22) and the beautiful words of The Magnificat (Luke 1: 46-55). Religious communities, such as the Franciscans were founded on principals of living in poverty (poverty as a spiritual gift and choice), and caring for basic needs in a community model, thus being equipped to serve other poor and marginalized communities. These examples are in contrast to cultural messages of hoarding possessions and gaining wealth, encouraged by intense competition.

The Church sits in the middle of these two systems, we have our traditions which we attempt to interpret from our experiences and, we are products of our economic system fueled by commercialism, which has the power to impact our self-image.

ENEJ has been involved for several years advocating for worker rights, introducing resolutions (which were successful) concerning support of workers and using Union hotels for church event venues, and yet we continue to see church wide meetings in non-union venues and a majority of service workers are sub-contracted, receiving lower wages than they would if they were employed by the hotels directly.

This is, of course, the challenge of keeping costs down while ensuring fair conditions for workers.

ACTIONS

I wish I had a magic wand to fix all of this. I do not, none of us do. I think however it is time for honest conversations of how we will deal with all of this. The discussions shall not be focused on how do we save money/cut costs but, how do we empower the church to be the healing church in a hurting world. How do we bring our communities

together, the struggling “people of privilege” who are trying to function in a system they understand, but cannot afford? Working poor and immigrant communities who know how to survive through their community systems, but are pages away from functioning in existing church systems.

Let us at least begin with Scriptural models for Christian living and create opportunities for dialogue and move on down the road together.

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Around the Nation: Economic Justice News Roundup

CINCINNATI, OHIO

Economics of Compassion Initiative of Greater Cincinnati

Under the leadership of consultant Peter Block and theologian Walter Brueggemann and with the support of Christ Church Cathedral, the Economics of Compassion Initiative of Greater Cincinnati (ECI) was established this fall. Its purpose is to identify and support a more compassionate economy for the city. It promises a vision of a local economy that works for all. A local economy that serves, and is measured by the well-being of all of its citizens. One part of this effort is about the Old Testament idea of a Jubilee Year. Every seven years, the debts of the poor are forgiven. ECI is raising consciousness about the implications of debt, labor as a commodity and other justice issues. It is identifying local cooperatives, and urging members to join or create initiatives such as Time Banking, Slow Money, Rental Partnerships, Mini Grants and Land Banks. It is setting up work circles and study groups. To learn more see their web site www.econofcompassion.org or write Peter Block, at pbi@att.net.

See also Wikipedia report of Kairos Document.

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Interfaith Worker Justice on Cutting Edge of Support for Worker Justice

Interfaith Worker Justice now has interfaith groups in 22 states and Washington, D.C. It has worker centers in 27 cities. IWJ is involved in many campaigns including a recent effort to support WalMart workers in their efforts to get a living wage and consistent full-time hours. Kim Bobo, charismatic IWJ director, is winding up her work at IWF after 18 years. IWJ staff, and former ENEJ board member, Aina Gutierrez, has a new book, *Walking the Walk: A Value-Centered Approach to Building a Strong Nonprofit*. Order at <http://bit.ly/lwtwbookorder>. To learn more about IWJ and leader transition, see www.iwj.org.

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

Jobs With Justice San Francisco Promotes Retail workers Bill of Rights.

Jobs with Justice is promoting passage of a bill in the county board of supervisors that would

promise reliable and sufficient schedules for more than 40,000 people working in San Francisco chain stores and restaurants. For more information go to solidarity@jwjsf.org.

IMMOKALEE, FLORIDA

Coalition of Immokalee Workers Promotes Fair Food Program Label

The Campaign for Fair Food is part of the CIW's effort to modernize Florida's tomato industry after generations of poverty and abuse. A new documentary film, "Food Chains," gives detail about the plight of farm workers. For more see workers@ciw-online.org.

CLAREMONT, CALIFORNIA

Whitehead Group to Hold a Conference on Work

Save the date June 4-7. For more information, see <http://www.ctr4process.org/whitehead2015/> or call the Rev. Henry Atkins at 909-267-9555.

COLUMBUS, GEORGIA

Vicky Partin Retires from CVEM

Vicky Partin, ENEJ Vice President, retired as executive director of Chattahoochee Valley Episcopal Ministries (CVEM) effective at the end of December 2014. Vicky will continue to work with ENEJ and with Jubilee Ministries. She is Diocesan Jubilee Officer for the Diocese of Atlanta and has been active in the national Jubilee Ministries Movement. CVEM has served as a national model for ENEJ and the Episcopal Church in how to combine charity and justice ministries.

Upcoming Events

Human Trafficking Webinar, Monday, February 2, 7:00 pm EST. Hosted by the Episcopal Networks Collaborative. Laura A. Russell, Esq., presenter. Register at: <http://www.anymeeting.com/PIID=EB53D680814C39>

Worker Justice Webinar, Saturday, February 7, 3:00 pm EST. Hosted by the Episcopal Networks Collaborative. The Rev. Tim Yeager, presenter. Register at: <http://www.anymeeting.com/PIID=EB54DC88864B3F>

Episcopal Urban Caucus, February 25-28, Meriden, CT. Registration information at www.episcopalurbancaucus.org

ENEJ Annual Meeting, April, TBA. Watch for updates at www.enej.org. For information, contact Dianne Aid at wolfofgubbio1@gmail.com.

Conference on Work, June 4-7, Claremont, CA. For information, contact The Rev. Cn. Henry Atkins at 909.267.9555.

ENEJ Elects Six New Board of Directors Members

By Michael Maloney

At its annual meeting in November, ENEJ elected the following new board members:

The Rev. Richard Burnett is rector of Trinity Episcopal Church in Columbus, Ohio and Chair of Social Justice and Public Policy Commission of the Diocese of Southern Ohio. A longtime activist and skilled in advocacy, Burnett is part of ENEJ's General Convention team.

Pedro Cuevas, a priest in the Diocese of Western Mexico, is a former human rights attorney and journalist who worked with Haitian sugar cane workers in the Dominican Republic. He is involved in border ministry in Tijuana serving in a children's shelter run by the Church of Christo Rey.

The Rev. Geoffrey Curtiss is a priest in the Diocese of Newark. One of the founders of ENEJ and former president, Curtiss founded the Jubilee Center at All Saints, Hoboken. He has served on several boards and commissions and has been active with The Consultation, the Episcopal Urban Caucus, and the Church and City Conference.

Richard Hogue, Jr. grew up in Northern Wisconsin. He is a seminarian at CDSP and has served as a lay minister for All Saints, Hoboken and as an intern with Newark ACTS. Before that, he served with the Young Adult Service Corps in Mthatha, South

Africa, at a medical clinic in a garbage dump giving help to HIV and TB patients.

The Rev. Christopher Johnson, Rector of St. Raphael's Episcopal Church in Colorado Springs and member of the board of Interfaith Worker Justice. Christopher is winner of the 2014 Hugh White Award for Worker Justice

Advocacy.

Laura Russell is Director of the Bronx Office of the New York Legal Aid Society. Laura lives in New Jersey, is a member of the Standing Commission on Social Justice and Public Policy and a member of ENEJ's Advocacy Committee.

Dear Friend of ENEJ,

Let me share with you some of what ENEJ has been up to. **We have developed resources on Community Investing**, providing information on how dioceses, parishes and individuals can put some of their investible funds into community-based projects benefiting low-income people. One of these resources is a DVD and community investing. See Resources on page 3.

We have produced a "How To" Manual, to help congregations start community development corporations and credit unions, support affordable housing and strengthen local community economies. Advocacy has been an important part of the work of ENEJ. We continue to address **immigration issues**, for example the poor treatment of many families and children in the large for-profit immigration detention centers, and to advocate for **low-wage workers** and the **rights of workers to organize. Also we work to support justice for Church lay workers.** Are living wages being paid such workers, for example?

Collaboration is essential to the work of the Church's networks. So over the years we have collaborated with the Episcopal Urban Caucus and Jubilee Ministries. **ENEJ has begun work with the Episcopal Ecological Network and the Union of Black Episcopalians.** These three networks are working together to establish a joint management services organization. Through this collaboration we help link those concerned with racial equality, the environment and economic justice. We continue to support the work of allies such as Interfaith Worker Justice and the Episcopal Urban Caucus and our allies in The Consultation.

In recent years, ENEJ has focused its network building at the Provincial level. We have begun to develop networks in several provinces. We are currently building new strategies for outreach.

The environment, immigration, sex trafficking and the rights of workers are issues relevant to people within our own parishes and communities – people who are being squeezed by the economic crisis and an economic system which favors large corporations over small businesses, the wealthy and powerful over the poor and middle-class.

We invite you to join us in this work, to become a member of ENEJ, and to support our work as generously as you are able. We also invite you to join us in our work of advocacy, communications and education. Please visit us at www.enej.org or send your donation to ENEJ at 5829 Wyatt Ave., Cincinnati, OH 45213.

Faithfully, Dianne Aid, TSSF, ENEJ President

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Episcopal Network for Economic Justice Newsletter

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ENEJ Newsletter

Episcopal Networks Collaborative to Launch Joint Education Program

by Mike Maloney

Since its public launching last February with a joint statement on the living wage issue, the Episcopal Networks Collaborative has begun planning a series of webinars and issues papers on social justice

issues. The network is comprised of ENEJ, the Union of Black Episcopalians (UBE) and the Episcopal Ecological Network (EpEN). The list of proposed webinars includes worker justice, environmental racism, sex trafficking, indigenous Latin

American immigration, homelessness, and community investing. The first two will be launched this winter. A new set of issue papers will be prepared in time for General Convention. In order to promulgate joint education, the Collaborative is setting up a shared internet platform. UBE President, Annette

Buchanan, says "This is part of a continuing effort to improve the effectiveness of our networks by getting out of our silos and working together to empower Episcopalians to promote social justice."



Leaders of Episcopal Networks Collaborative Organizations: Frank Edmonds, EpEN (above), Dianne Aid, ENEJ (right); Annette Buchanan UBE (far right)