



July 2005

Dear Friend of RENEW,

“Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness”—these are described in our constitution as inalienable rights with which we are “endowed by our Creator.” This month reminds us of how thankful we should be to live in a nation that values freedom, and has been, and continues to be, willing to make tremendous sacrifices to ensure life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness for its own citizens, for legal non-citizens within our borders, and for people around the world.

An issue that has been of concern to RENEW for many years is the anti-American rhetoric we have heard at Women’s Division events, or read in some resources produced by the Division. This coupled with a politically partisan, left-leaning perspective reflected in Women’ Division material comprises a topic we hope to raise in our conversation with the Women’s Division this fall. Several recent press releases document this ongoing concern.

“Women’s Division letter takes up rights for detainees” reads the headline for a June 21 press release from the Women’s Division. This release claims violation of the “basic human rights” of South Asians, Muslims and Arabs who are being detained or deported. Schools of Christian Mission will be places where this issue will be raised, states the article. Despite the fact that many of the cited countries harbor terrorists, and the vast majority of deportation cases have been with just cause, the article claims that “fear of terrorist attacks has been used to “justify a series of laws and regulations that have restricted immigrant rights....”

“Taking Action for Justice: Supporting the Civil Rights of South Asians, Muslims and Arabs in the US” headlines a second article released on June 21 by the Women’s Division. This article further elaborates on Women’s Division concerns about laws and regulations passed since September 11, 2001 to restrict immigration rights and to allow for search, detention and profiling.

There has been no further attack here in the United States since September 11, 2001, despite the uncovering of numerous plots for such an attack—it would seem the wartime measures implemented have worked.

The Women’s Division, along with the Board of Church and Society, has expressed concerns about the treatment of detainees at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Recently a military chaplain and Ordained Elder in The United Methodist Church wrote a letter to the Women’s Division regarding this issue. The Reverend Kent L. Svendsen served as the chaplain to the

Joint Detention Operation Group in Guantanamo Bay from May 2004 until March 2005. He expressed concern about the misinformation that is being circulated and often picked up by groups (such as the Women's Division) that are trusted by church membership. Rev. Svendsen points out that this does great harm. He attempts to provide first-hand clarification of the actual conditions at Guantanamo Bay. A copy of the e-mail Rev. Svendsen sent to the Women's Division is enclosed for your information.

Independence Day Statement from the National Council of Churches—On July 4, 2005, the National Council of Churches issued a declaration condemning the “dishonorable” war in Iraq and demanding immediate U.S. withdrawal. Dr. Jan Love, Chief Executive of the Women's Division was one of the initial signatories to this document, and the Women's Division website carries a corresponding article (www.gb-gm-umc.org/womens-division). In its statement, the NCC condemns U.S. abuse of prisoners, alleges the U.S. military effort in Iraq has “rendered our federal budget incapable of caring for the poorest of our own citizens,” and implies that the U.S. has “demonized” other nations and religions while claiming “righteousness for ourselves as if we share no complicity in human evil.”

This diatribe against American policy at a time of potential peril to our nation is a sad way to celebrate two centuries of American democracy. The recent attack in London underscores the necessity of vigilance against terrorism. Many United Methodists do not concur with the conclusions of the Women's Division and the Board of Church and Society regarding U.S. policy at home and abroad. Isn't it time for a change in the hardline political liberalism of our boards and agencies? This political bias continues to alienate thousands of United Methodist women.

Let me return to my opening statement regarding “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” As Christians we know that the true source of all of these things the human heart strives for is found in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Sadly, some of our boards and agencies leave out this most important equation as they follow a political/social justice agenda. While we do not neglect the necessity of a faithful political and social witness within our culture, we are thankful we live in a nation where we can proclaim the gospel and offer its life-giving message to our neighbors and friends—and to the world.

Thank you for taking the time in the midst of your active summer schedule to read this letter and to continue your prayers and financial support for the RENEW Network. We are busy preparing for several major fall ministry events, including our conversation with the Women's Division. Summer receipts are often light, slowing our ability to continue forward with important ministry opportunities. Your support is needed and appreciated!

Sincerely in Christ,

L. Faye Short
President