



Annual Report to the Shelburne-Primrose Pastoral Charge: 2018

Partera International has been working with organisations and communities around the world for many years, accompanying people in their search for nonviolent solutions to conflict. We have done training in conflict transformation, nonviolent direct action, economic literacy – getting at the economic roots of violence, gender and violence, religion and violence. We have worked in places as diverse as Congo and Colombia, Philippines and Uganda, Sudan and South Sudan, North East India and the Netherlands, Iraq and Mexico, Jordan and El Salvador. And we have seen so many amazing things coming out of these trainings – changed lives and communities, new peace-devoted organisations and creative nonviolent direct action. It is a gift and a privilege to be a part of this midwifing!

But something new is happening—what we are calling Partera LOCAL. It is all about creating a local footprint and echo of what we are doing in zones of conflict. And it starts right here in the Shelburne-Primrose Pastoral Charge. There was already a modest beginning prior to the signing of a MOU between Partera Peacebuilders International that included preaching in churches, trainings with the staff of the Anglican's relief and development organisation, with the staff of the General Council's Church in Mission and the Office of the Moderator and General Secretary, and the National Youth Forum participants in this past year's General Council meeting. In 2017, partnership with local churches, the national office and indigenous leadership from Six Nations of the Grand River, we led a two-day training called 'Colour-coded: Decolonising Hearts, Minds and Spirits'. Most recently, I was part of the leadership for a conference in Toronto called Reaching and Preaching for Peace that included the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams.

In 2018, our work included visits to Mindanao, South Philippines and North East India. The former brought together Christian settlers in the south with indigenous Muslim and Lumad peoples. And my work was to do a training in how to read the Bible non-violently! Somehow my hosts made it work and, remarkably, the Muslim and Lumad joined in the games and role-plays enthusiastically, bringing alongside our discussion wisdom from their own traditions. Barriers of tradition and faith were wonderfully challenged and dismantled amongst this group of mostly students. The weeks there also included time in a Lumad village. Mindanao has been under martial law for more than a year and half as the central government in Manila and the Moro National Liberation Front work towards a peace agreement. I was assigned two 'minders' and my movement was severely restricted in an area where Abu Sayef (an organisation said to have links with Daesh) is active.

In North East India, we are continuing our work focussed on the lives of women. In an area of India that is majority Christian, ethnically 'Mongolian' and tribal, more than 600,000 people have been killed. Women are marginalised, their interests unrecognised and their voices silenced. As we know, the best route out of violence, warfare and underdevelopment is a focus on women and girls. With this project, we are doing training in women's human rights and conflict transformation with the ultimate goal the creation of three women-led, community-based peace commissions—with hopes to reach there by the end of 2022.

Partera Local recognises that while Canadians are not enmeshed in civil war, we, as with all humans, get stuck in patterns of conflict and aggression when faced with fear, anxiety, change, difference. In 2019, we will be offering four workshops over four months on conflict transformation as life skills: how to have difficult conversations, unconscious bias, peacemaking in a changing neighbourhood, and educating for peace.

Another piece to our work is fundraising. The work of peacemaking has benefitted from the support of the Pastoral Charge and its generous people! This past year, we had a summer Barn Dance and Silent Auction and an Advent-time Dickens of an Evening. We are grateful for the support of the Pastoral Charge and look forward to building this partnership; we want to recognise in particular those who are regular sustainers of this work!

In 2019 we will be returning to both NE India and the Philippines (where we will be training professors and seminarians in 'Biblical Peacemaking'), as well as Colombia and Palestine. Please remember this work in your prayers. Blessed are the peacemakers (Matthew 6.9), wherever they make peace.

Please NOTE: Partera is requesting one or two (even better) persons from the Pastoral Charge to join our Board.

Respectfully submitted by LeeAnn McKenna, 05 February 2019