



Servas Monthly News 47

June/July 2009



Penultimate issue.

Penultimate is the one before the last. (paena = almost, ultimus = last) This issue is the penultimate issue of Servas Monthly News for myself.

The penultimate gives one time to reflect, to look back at what has been done and still have a chance to rectify and improve. So I decided to have a play with some colours. I am not sure if they are an improvement! However colours often help to liven something up or at least attract people's attention.

In Servas we need to be attracting people's attention to make people aware of us, what we do, and what we could do with more involvement. The GA 2009 is one way of getting involved as shown in the next column and in various other parts of this issue.

Time is another point which comes up in my reflections. This issue covers 2 months due to a time factor in that other parts of my life had priority. This is why we need more than one person running SI News. It has been suggested for many years that a team is needed. Then if one person is stuck for time there will be others to step in. I tried to get people to join and help, they always had something better to do.

Standard format is a point that comes under review when I look back over this and the previous 46 issues. The advantage of a standard format is that everyone knows where everything is. The disadvantage is that one is then bound by that format and cannot introduce new ideas. This issue I have removed pages for which I had no articles, such as Travellers' Tales and have added others such as the page on Internet. Similarly for Servas as a whole there is a need to be flexible and ready to change format when needed.

Reminder that the position of Editor is open to all, but experience in editing is important and high level fluency in one of English, French or Spanish is essential. Contact newsletter@servas.org for details.

Contact

We welcome articles coming to SI Monthly News. We do not guarantee the article, or any part of it will be published. This depends on the theme for the month along with the number of other articles also available for publication.

Preferred method of contact is email at: newsletter@servas.org

Please make sure that **Servas: Monthly News** is part of the subject heading. If the email address is not recognised it may get deleted before being read.

Note: as from 01 September 2009 there will be a new editor as elected at GA2009. The email address will remain as newsletter@servas.org

How should Servas be run?

How should the newsletter be published?

Should we pay host fees as well as traveller fees?

Should we pay any fees?

How should the money be spent?

Do we need to spend any money?

What about doing everything on-line?

Why bother with officers?

Why bother with the GA?

Where are the peace issues?

People are often ready to complain about the running of an organisation. They have to know better how it should be run. However if actually asked to stand for a post in the management of the organisation or even volunteer for smaller jobs they become strangely silent. The GA (General Assembly) is coming up at the start of September. Here is the chance for people who would like to run the international arena to take part. It has been publicised for over a year with the option for people to get nominated (no self-nomination) and stand for posts. The number who have been nominated is minimal - see the website:

http://www.servas.org/siexco/index.php/General_Assembly_2009#Servas_Seeks_Leaders

Elections

Elections will take place during the GA. Each nominee has presented a paper to promote themselves. These can be read at the above website. It must then be decided who is the most suitable for each position. It is possible to consider that none of the nominees is suitable and so the position could remain vacant for a later co-option. It is very important that any person taking up a position is capable of doing the job. Otherwise Servas is left carrying that person for the next 3 years whilst other people have extra work doing that person's job. Everybody should read the nomination papers and give their opinions on suitability to their National Secretary who will be voting.

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10. Youth and Gandhi (Gandhi 10 - 14)

News - Venezuela, Turkey

Over 30 Syle in Venezuela

We are happy to announce the beginning of an intercultural program for older than 30 with Denise and George McDowell from France for one month (att. a photo). They already stayed at Caraballeda Beach, Caracas, Margarita Island, Puerto la Cruz and they will go to Amazonas, Apure (flat land), Barquisimeto (central city) and Merida (mountains). This program is developing by Victor Gutierrez our NS with the help of Magiari Diaz as a contribution to Servas and in reciprocity with France for hosting Magiari in the SYLE program.



*In Peace,
Florencio Gomez, Servas Venezuela*

The World March for Peace and nonviolence.

I would like to propose this very interesting and beautiful project to you:

The World March will begin in New Zealand on October 2, 2009, the anniversary of Gandhi's birth, that was declared the "International Day of Non-Violence" by the United Nations. It will conclude in the Andes Mountains (Punta de Vacas, Aconcagua, Argentina) on January 2, 2010. The March will last 90 days, three long months of travel. It will pass through all climates and seasons, from the hot summer of the tropics and the deserts, to the winter of Siberia. The stages will be the longest American and Asian, both almost a month. A permanent base of a hundred people of different nationalities will complete the journey.

Further news are in web-site
www.marchmundial.org/en .

As Servas Italy, we support the initiative, giving hospitality to the participants in our members' houses.

What about this? Is it possible to extend this idea to other countries?

As Servas International, it should be a good way to celebrate his own 60th birthday...

In Peace, Vito Fortezza, N.S. of Servas-Italy.

Project: Live With Us Share With Us

What? We invite Servas volunteers to come and live with us.

Aim?: To raise awareness about different cultures among local children, exchange knowledge and experiences and plant the 'Seeds of Servas' in the early age of children.

Where? : In a town of Antakya (Antioch) called Ekinci (Aydiy) in the very south of Turkey.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antioch>,
<http://www.pbase.com/dosseman/antakya/>,
www.toprakev.com

When? : July-August, 2009

Guests are expected to:

Teach children (ages 08 -14) any of the following topics or others.

- English, French, Spanish, etc.
- Drama
- Music & Instruments
- Children games
- Chess
- Handcrafts
- Hand made toys (environment friendly) etc.

We provide in return

- *Food & accommodation,
- *Daily excursions
- *Experiencing local culture
- *Learning how to cook middle eastern dishes, Arabic and Turkish languages.
- *Being hosted by different families

What happens at the end?

Mini Children Festival will be held to present and share the products of the kids with the local people.
Note that parent(s) with kid(s) are also welcome.

Ultimate aim:

Doing the same activity in different countries.

*Mehmet Ateş
Servas Peace Secretary of Turkey*

A Peace DVD for GA 2009

Just today I have arranged to have the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict to send free of charge:

A FORCE MORE POWERFUL

to the GA participants and guests. On this DVD, the power that Gandhi pioneered is documented in India, South Africa, Denmark during the German invasion, Poland through the Solidarity movement, Chile against Pinochet and shows how nonviolence power overcame oppression and authoritarian rule.

Please Google **A Force More Powerful** to see what a gift it is.

negotiated by Mary Jane Mikuriya, USA

Meetings, Get together, Seeing each other

Regular meetings

Around the world there are regular, often monthly meetings of Servas people. Here are some of them. If you want your meeting on the list then please send it to newsletter@servas.org

Country	Place	Day/time	Contact
Australia	Mawson Club, Canberra	Third Thursday, alternate months	australia@servas.org
Australia	The Carringbush, Melbourne	First Weds, alternate months	australia@servas.org
Belgium	Piazza Italia, Brussels	Last Tues of month, 18:00	belgium@servas.org
Britain	Pontefract Castle, London	First Monday of Month, 18.30	info@servasbritain.org
Costa Rica	Gran Via Café, San Jose	Alternate months	costarica@servas.org
France	Grand Café de la Soierie, Lyon	First Thurs of month, 20.00	france@servas.org
France	Le Vieux Chatelet, Paris	Second Tues of month, 19:00	france@servas.org
Germany	variable Hamburg	Third Tuesday of month, quarterly	treffen-hamburg@servas.de
Germany	variable Mainz	First Monday of month, variable	treffen-mainz@servas.de
India	Delhi	Quarterly	gurdev28@gmail.com
Ireland	Hughes Pub, 20 Chancery Street, Dublin 7	First Friday of month, 21.00 onwards	dottyochbill@yahoo.com
Mexico	Sahuaro's Coffee Mexico City	First Monday of month, 19:00	mexico@servas.org
Portugal	Café d'Alma Lounge, Lisbon	Last Weds of month, 18:00	portugal@servas.org
Scotland	Elephant House, Edinburgh	Last Thurs of month, 18:00	britain@servas.org
Spain	A la Gorra, Madrid	First Friday of month, 20:00	bbc17926@gmail.com
Spain	Barcelona	Last Friday of month, 20:000	cpisabel@gmail.com
USA	variable San Francisco	variable	sfservas@yahoo.com

To find more meetings both regular and occasional go to www.servas.org and follow the events links.

60th Anniversary events 2009

More and more events are appearing for the 60th Anniversary celebrations. Some are here. As for the regular meetings, look on the website to see what is happening and for fuller details.

Country	Place and detail	Day/time	Contact
France	all host homes to be visited	all year	france@servas.org
Korea	see page 2, Dec 08 for details	See p2, Dec 08 for details	korea@servas.org
Switzerland	Wintertur, Biel-Bienne	4 July, 12 September	switzerland@servas.org
Denmark	Helsingør (see p 4 for detail)	4 - 8 August	info@servas.dk
Argentina	Mare del Plata, for GA	5 - 12 September	siexco@googlegroups.com
Belgium & Lux	Ardennes, weekend	October	jstiens@etro.vub.ad.be
India	Goa	10 - 16 October	india@servas.org

If your country has a meeting that you would like to add to the list then send the details to newsletter@servas.org

Servas and the Internet

Servas Communication via the internet

Servas and use of the internet has been under discussion for the last 15 or more years. Obviously if you are reading this, then you are using the internet or someone else has downloaded and printed off a hard copy for you. The only way this Servas Monthly News can be accessed is via the internet. It is written directly onto the computer and then sent via email to the website organiser to put on the website.

The editor does print off a hard copy as a record but that is only for her convenience.

For many years people have been finding out about Servas from the internet and then contacting their country organisers for more information about joining. This has become more official now but in Britain this has been running for some years - being the one who answered all the overseas emails I am aware of it! The Google message below shows one of the ways that people get information.

Some hosts are worried about their details going on the internet. They need assurance of a safe site. However there can be problems as seen with David Espinoza's email below.

Google News Alert for: Servas

[Travel \[Almost\] Free, Rucksack or Louis Vuitton](#)

Examiner.com - USA

SERVAS is the Crown Jewel of low-expense travel. **SERVAS** is a global organization of people who promote peace by inviting foreigners to stay in their homes ...

... and a problem.

Dear Servas Members of Servas International

I am David Espinoza, National Secretary of Servas Honduras.

3 days ago some person took my password of my official email address of Servas Honduras and are sending emails in my name from England asking for money.

I am OK in Honduras and need you and other contacts Servas in all the world let they know that I need to change the email address of Servas Honduras. Please explain my situation to other contacts (EXCO), because in my personal email address I have not address of Servas people.

David Espinoza, Servas Honduras NS

Excerpts from a discussion between Gary in Canada and Terry in Greece

This discussion is relevant to us all and so some important points have been extracted to share with everybody.

From Terry in Greece:

I think **SERVAS** needs to seriously rethink it's mandate. We have such an incredible asset: 13,000 dedicated, active peace lovers/promoters. 13,000! Many groups would die to have such a group. I know that all of us could be called upon to do much more in promoting peace than just hosting visitors. I know I would. Servas needs a serious make-over. It's structure was great in the past, but times, issues, possibilities, technologies, are moving on (Hello, CouchSurfing). It's time for a new vision of how to accomplish peace in our time. And new voices are needed more than ever.

I just went to yahoo and set up a new group: Servas-International, for just National Secretaries. all of those who are working so hard in Servas need to know what is going on. Another reason I set up this Yahoo Group, is because I know of no other means of communicating with all Nat Secs.

From Gary in Canada:

I joined the Yahoo Group you set up, thank you -- I mean == <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Servas-International/>

Forgot to mention when we talked recently --- "Servas" is also in the name of several Facebook sites, some quite active.

Some of them have hundreds of members. Sheldon of Africa was keen on Facebook as a way of getting more grassroots participation there, and between Africans and others. I tried, but I just can't keep up to the FaceBook inbox; I get hundreds of invitations as the FB network grows. I am interested, but find I run out of time.

Some Servas people are also linked on MySpace, Orkut, LinkedIn. There's also a Servas Group on Couchsurfing and another one on BeWelcome. Some Servas are also active on Second Life -- which, however fascinating, is just too complex for me. and a few on Twitter (I just got a new phone, maybe I will get Twit a bit more).

There seems to be a very marked trend to telephone-based "Social Networking" in Asia and the Americas.

Maybe the tools and ease of "Social Networking" sites would assist the work of Servas committees and working groups....?? I don't know.....?.... let's see....! "Technology" is also one of the subject groupings of the Servas General Assembly....

Peace issues and training

Servas and Peace Education

Remembered the lessons Servas gave me in India, on meditation, and on inner Peace. I also looked for some Western, similar examples.

This Chapter, from "A Way of Being" by Carl Rogers, prompted more thought about Servas:
[http://books.google.ca/books?id=ymS0e1jZmtMC&pg=PA316&lpg=PA316&dq=A+way+of+being+\(in+large+groups\)&source=bl&ots=5MoBi-T_PN&sig=Wnwle6LuJPSm1U_X2buoK9CYNII&hl=en&ei=ig2StKbCaGGNYzcsfYJ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1#PPA316,M1](http://books.google.ca/books?id=ymS0e1jZmtMC&pg=PA316&lpg=PA316&dq=A+way+of+being+(in+large+groups)&source=bl&ots=5MoBi-T_PN&sig=Wnwle6LuJPSm1U_X2buoK9CYNII&hl=en&ei=ig2StKbCaGGNYzcsfYJ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1#PPA316,M1)

It reminded me that Servas "lives" on several levels.

1. Servas Host/Traveler
2. Local Servas Groups ranging from groups of a few friends, to large registered societies
3. General Assembly
4. People who are not hosts or travelers yet -- but may *want to become* Servas
5. People *who need others to Serve*

Hope **Servas Peace course** and **Servas Train the Trainers** would serve several of these Servas levels:

- 1) **Servas/Host** -- learning to prepare for and enjoy voyages of exploration, discovery, inter-personal, inter-cultural learning among Human Beings, as a basis of global Peace.
- 2) **Local Groups** -- learning to help each other access resources, drawing from and giving strength to Belonging to Servas.
- 3) **General Assembly** -- hearing, being heard; maintaining constructive conversation, even during long periods between General Assemblies
- 4) **Pre-Servas** -- learning to present and listen to the needs and interests of people not yet part of the Servas system; creating opportunities for enjoyable learning, reflection, and fun.
- 5) **Servas in the world** -- recognizing the sources of cultural blockage and roots of conflict, oppression (Bob's voyage); developing and maintaining real dialogue and help.

Much formal education experience is about "Oppression". Being forced to fit in. The necessity of conforming to power systems. Insistence on accepting the way the world is, at least during classroom lessons. Many writers have noted this harmful, entrenched teaching and education system -- eg "Growing Up Absurd".

Genuine improvements to the Servas experience, would acknowledge and centre on needs and issues such as:

- 1) **Servas hosts** are sometimes exploited, ignored. Some Servas hosts regularly refuse Travelers, especially (I am told) if they come from far away, different cultures. Many Travelers do not have an authentic relationship with hosts, are simply using Servas beds. The Place of Servas, where we are in the world, is often left to routine travel tips, not real learning opportunities.
- 2) Many **Servas Group leaders** often left alone; they do not find Volunteers coming forward, and are left by themselves for years.
- 3) **General Assembly** is often nervous, outraged. Many do not feel appreciated, or feel "allowed inside". Hurt by being ignored or condemned for high handedness, often GA delegates and convenors frequently operate warily or in outright suspicion, conflict, dysfunctional name-calling. Or, as Rogers might say -- often, a real lack of "empathy".
- 4) **Servas outreach** is becoming more obvious on the Internet where many people are applying through "Servas on-line"; but Servas is mostly invisible yet, in communities at large, and most of Servas is inexpressive publicly: no "Servas Welcome".
- 5) Servas has a privileged place in the **NGO community**; it is one of about 3000 groups trusted for its powers of Observation; but it spends very little time in study, sharing, and telling its story.

A Servas Peace Education course has real purpose, not general theory. It can really make a difference to Servas. Make Servas more accessible, much more valuable.

Servas General Assembly and setting among 150 Servas hosts in Buenos Aires provides real opportunities to help on at least some of these 5 levels.

Here is some more airplane reading -- two items:
[http://books.google.ca/books?id=ymS0e1jZmtMC&pg=PA316&lpg=PA316&dq=A+way+of+being+\(in+large+groups\)&source=bl&ots=5MoBi-T_PN&sig=Wnwle6LuJPSm1U_X2buoK9CYNII&hl=en&ei=ig2StKbCaGGNYzcsfYJ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1#PPR6,M1](http://books.google.ca/books?id=ymS0e1jZmtMC&pg=PA316&lpg=PA316&dq=A+way+of+being+(in+large+groups)&source=bl&ots=5MoBi-T_PN&sig=Wnwle6LuJPSm1U_X2buoK9CYNII&hl=en&ei=ig2StKbCaGGNYzcsfYJ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1#PPR6,M1)

Ideas from Gary Sealey, President, Canada

60th Anniversary - Switzerland, Congo Brazzaville

60th ANNIVERSARY of SERVAS: CANONS INSTEAD OF CANNONS 4th July 2009 in Winterthur, Switzerland

It all started with a mispronunciation in German. "I'll teach you a canon" I offered, as we sat around a late night table at the Pfingsten Treff last year. "Don't do that: we're a Peace Organization, no shooting" came the reply. The problem was, of course, a homophone, two words in English that sound alike, but mean entirely different things. But my mistake gave Bea an idea: "How about, she ventured, 'KANONS STATT KANONEN' as a motto to celebrate Servas' 60th anniversary coming up next year?"

And so it came to be ... under the spirited and enthusiastic leadership of KarinJana Beck and Matthias Gerber, fifteen (circa) of us gathered in Winterthur on 4th of July to sing a



medley of international canons, or rounds. We amazed ourselves, I think, at how good we sounded, if not professional, at least as though we were having fun – which we certainly were, playing with harmony, with movement, feeling sparks from our own energy igniting the interest of enough passers-by to make us feel appreciated. An equally vital part was played by Verena (Luzern) and Birgit, and others



who dashed out to the side-lines and spoke to onlookers, informing, passing out flyers, and giving that personal Servas touch. Lots of photographs were taken, and a local radio program recorded one of our songs.

Karin played accordion, Matthias drums and percussion instruments, and we all sang out, la la la-ing where we didn't know the words, and realizing again and again, how music speaks a language beyond words, a language that opens doors to our own understanding, as well as to that of our listeners.

Altogether, a great time, and even the weather played along, staying bright and shiny with none of the rain that had been forecast ... hot, to be sure, but with a bit of a breeze, a real summer day.

At the end of the day, a bunch of us gathered for a drink. I had fruit juice in one hand and Hahnenwasser, (which I call Rooster Water ...) in the other. "Chin chin" toasted Agnes, who, with her family, had come up from the Tessine. "Double chin chin" I said, holding up my two glasses ... and then, was bowled over by another homophone ... Uh, you know what a "double chin" is in English?????!!

PS: on 12th of September, we sing again – in Biel/Bienne, Switzerland.

Dorrie Iten-Gilden, Switzerland

Servas Congo Brazzaville



A Series of information conferences on Servas's 60 years in Brazzaville

As part of the celebration of 60 years of Servas International, 1947 - 2009, Servas Congo Brazzaville will be organising a series of humanitarian and peace related events and actions in the different departments of the Congo which need to have your attention.

The launch activities were a series on information conferences on Servas 60 years held from 13 to 14 May 2009 in four high schools in Brazzaville.

- o Lycée Pierre Savorgnan de Brazza
- o Lycée Thomas Sankara
- o Lycée Chaminade
- o Lycée de la Révolution

Taken from the Bulletin D'Information biennuel, Congo Brazzaville.

Servas Delhi sent a video which unfortunately cannot be included here. See the Servas website for video and pictures - www.servas.org

Servas at the UN, Comments, Dreams

Servas participation at the UN - New York Office

Here are the events where I participated. I am working to prepare a Power Point presentation about UN activities. I have many photos (besides 500 photos which have disappeared from my camera).

More specifically about our activity:

2009:

[Conference at the Highest Level on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and Its Impact on Development](#); June 24-26,

[Interactive Thematic Dialogue: "Taking Collective Action to End Human Trafficking"](#) May 13

[Interactive Thematic Dialogue on the Global Food Crisis and the Right to Food](#) April 6

[Interactive thematic dialogue on access to education in emergency, post-crisis and transition situations caused by man-made conflicts or natural disasters](#) March 18

2008:

[Commemorative plenary meeting devoted to the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) December 10 (My article about Human Rights have been published on our website);

[High level meeting on the culture of peace](#) November 18

[High-level meeting on the Millennium Development Goals](#) September 25

We provide a positive changes to create a healthy environment. Millenium Development Goals:

1. Eradicate poverty
2. Education
3. Gender equality. Eliminate Violence against women. Empower women: access for finance, land, decent job etc.
8. International partnership for development

We are in partnership with ECOSOC, UNESCO, Office of Secretary General (Campaign "End Violence against Women", HUMAN RIGHTS), President of GA, UN HABITAT.

In Peace

*Noema Chaplin
United States Servas
UN Observer for Servas International
Board Member CCC/UN
Member of Committee on Mental Health
Political and Economic Scientist
212-561-1840*

Zero Carbon Call Out

This continues articles that have been in Servas Monthly News on and off which might interest Servas members.

Climate change threatens to spiral out of control and become unstoppable. There may already be too much carbon in the atmosphere, and runaway climate change could kill billions of people, to say nothing of making most other species extinct. The only rational response is a target of 'a zero carbon world, as fast as we can'. This would be the ideal outcome of the UN climate summit in Copenhagen this December.

But the negotiations look unlikely to deliver this at present, so we need a massive show of public opinion to get the negotiators to change course and come up with a treaty which does justice to the urgency of the situation.

The Zero Carbon Caravan www.zerocarboncaravan.net aims to galvanise the public to pressure the negotiators, by showing that it is perfectly possible to have a zero carbon lifestyle, and that it's fun, by getting to the talks without fossil fuels, visiting inspiring places like the Centre for Alternative Technology www.cat.org.uk, and holding zero carbon conferences, festivals and concerts on the way. And it's a relay, so you don't have to go all the way to Copenhagen – just cycle with us into the next town on our journey if you like. You can find the routes on the map on our website, link on the right hand side of the home page

If you would like to join in, or can offer accommodation, or would like to help in any other way, please email chris.keene@zerocarboncaravan.net

A Dream House for Humanity has started...

Dear All..

We mostly meet with you personally and sometimes I sent you some news or sharing and sometimes wishes and dreams..

Today a dream of a group of Dreamers has come to a point which I wish to share with you all.

I wish you will feel some from you in it.

Here it is:

[First Dream, then Let's just start from a point...
www.goforadream.org](http://www.goforadream.org)

With health and love.--

Sercan Duygan, Turkey

Exco Info - GA 2009, Agenda Working Group (AWG)

Agenda Working Group meeting

The Agenda Working Group - AWG meets with conference calls to discuss the Agenda for GA 2009.

AWG is made up of the following people:

Canada - Penny Pattison, Convenor
Israel - Rami Rafaeli
Austria - Eva Meggeneder
India - Pramod Kumar
New Zealand - Chris Patterson
EXCO - Gary Sealey

Following is their meeting on 16 July 2009 to show the sort of work the group is doing.

- Attendees: Eva, Rami, Gary, Penny
Absent: Pramod, Chris Patterson
- 1. Gary sent more information about **Day 0**. Penny will incorporate that into a new draft timetable, which she will send first to Gary and then the AWG for comments and discussion.
 2. **SWG General Comments:**
 - Gary has contacted all those pre-registered for the conference. His calling process has awakened people to get involved, and resulted in quite a bit of interest. The next step is to get to meaningful, serious discussion.
 - Rami, Eva and Penny all found that quite a few people expressed interest in their SWG, but some have not actively joined the discussion groups they set up (google or yahoo)
 - general agreement that participants are coming from different perspectives (e.g. seasoned, fresh) and international experience levels. Gary suggested a format to encourage the process:
 1. Convenor ask each person introduce themselves
 2. Convenor ask a general question, to get some initial discussion underway
 3. Convenor draft one or more papers, to get comments
 4. Convenor revise the paper(s) as discussion progresses
 5. Convenor initiate the link to the SWG motions
- Eva and Rami will not be at the conference, and it was suggested that they find an attending member of their SWG who can continue on and lead the conference SWG discussions.

- Penny will send out a template to be used for the motions, which includes:

- Name of Motion
- Principle to which it is directed
- Resources required
- Responsible people
- Time table for moving forward

Outcome

3. SWG (Subject Working Groups) updates:

- a. **Technology**
 - about 20 members, 7 active
 - need to integrate with the Turin group
 - b. **Vision**
 - about 20 members, 15 have sent a note at least once
 - some interesting, though-provoking ideas - e.g. talk about "non-violence" rather than "peace".
 - not started on motions yet
 - c. **Hosts and Travellers**
 - about 20 members in group or invited because of agenda items, quite a few have not commented
 - got delayed by trying to translate things, will send out first discussion paper soon
 - d. **SI Processes** (from Pramod's email update)
 - 8 members so far
 - have not yet started working on the agenda items, but intend to start in a day or two
- ### 4. Other things:
- a. Aim for RESULTS not TALK at GA (deeds not just words) - encourage GA to look at ideas, propose changes, but not to stop them; to be open to and facilitate changes.

b. Journalism at the GA - Rami suggested having real time reporting of the activities during the conference. The objective would be to have non-attendees feel part of the process, and understand what is happening, as well as a record for those at the conference. Gary will talk to Pablo Chufeni about enlisting young people to participate. (The ultimate goal would be to have an on-line video feed...)

Next Meeting - not decided.

*In peace,
Penny*

Exco - SI Updates

GA Preparation

It is too late to take on new things, now. That time started in April 2006, at the last General Assembly. Many of us have already done our best, within the energy and wisdom available to us. That term is nearly completed.

Now with barely 1 month to prepare for the new General Assembly at Argentina it is time for new teams and for new decisions.

1) You can help set out those decisions whether you go to the General Assembly or not. Join a subject working group as dozens of Servas people have done already, from all over the world.

- You do not have to be a national secretary to fashion good decisions. You can take part in setting new directions on procedures, Hosts and Travelers, Technology, Vision for Servas.
- Each national secretary is welcome to get your whole group involved in the discussion on the next 60 years of Servas.
- If you are a Board Member, host or helper, you can give your advice to your national secretary or directly to the Agenda Working Group for the General Assembly. You cannot change the Agenda; that is stuffed full of topics and already set according to a long-fixed process and timetable. But you certainly can influence the decisions for the votes in Argentina.

2) As well, please note: Servas people are leaving for new places. Many positions -- all elected SI positions are vacant, according to Servas Statutes. More than ever, the 60th anniversary marks a new era. Many committee convenors and officers are retiring. They can take pleasure in their work. Around the world, our website reports dozens of anniversary celebrations. They highlight the past 60 years of Servas and the legacy of those years.

If you do want change, now is your time. If you want to help lead Servas, to work together in a team or teams, please take up the many opportunities. They range from editing (SI News) to accounting (Treasurer, Book Keeper, Auditor), to computer programming (ICT), developing Servas (Development Committee) to general administration (executive committee).

Remember: all the International positions are open for election, starting with the position of President.

Speaking of the position of President, my time in that position is also coming to an end now, or soon. If I am elected to continue, this would be my last term, not to be repeated. But if you choose to nominate and elect some new President, I will happily serve Servas, like many of you, as an experienced helper.

Do you know someone who would make a good candidate for Servas?

Look in the mirror! Come forward! Serve as yourself or as a team. Don't miss the chance -- nominations@servas.org

Servas needs you! Help yourself grow. Develop your own skills, knowledge and friendships as you advance a unique, important, 60 year-old society. Make a contribution to global friendships, understanding and world Peace. Serve Servas.

Archives and Website

1) See and get inspired by the historic words and work of Servas pioneers and founders at many General Assemblies since 1960 now in an online Archives on the volunteer and administration website. Click on:

http://www.servas.org/siexco/index.php/Archives#Servas_International_General_Assembly_Minutes

Thanks to Grant Barnes Archivist, who took over from dedicated past Archivist, Antonie Fried!

2) Each month now, over a hundred people are applying online to become Servas hosts and travelers. Since January 8, 2009 a total of 803 people have applied to Servas on-line. If all were interviewed and chose to become hosts, they would represent an annual increase of about 10 % to the world Servas host population. Many more people would likely be attracted each month, if the website were translated and upgraded.

- Please -- check to make sure your interviewers are following up, welcoming the applications.

3) In the last 8 months, Servas has received 275,000 hits on the www.servas.org website. This is a new public face of Servas. Thanks to webmistress Renee Gendron and to help given by Claudio and Uwe.

- Your news, photos and calendar items are always welcome: send to
- reneegendron@hotmail.com

To serve you and public better, help needed now, from online editors who know Wikimedia -- please let us know.

Gary Sealey, SI President



Nothing has been sent to me to include here.

Check on the Youth Section of the website for info.

However:

at GA 2009

the Youth section is going to work to produce some definite **Youth Policies**. A number of people are already working on ideas for these and discussing them.

And some thoughts on Gandhi, sent in by Pethu Raja, India

The Experiments of Gandhi: Nonviolence in the Nuclear Age

John Dear



Gandhi needs no further introduction. John Dear may. As the first Roman Catholic priest to head the FOR, John brings a cornucopia of gifts that can only energize and extend FOR's mission. A Jesuit, he has lived and worked in El Salvador, Guatemala and Northern Ireland, and has traveled widely in the Middle East, Central America and the Philippines. He has frequently been arrested, and served nine months in prison for civil disobedience at a US Air Force base in North Carolina. He is a prolific writer whose works include *Disarming the Heart*, *Our God is Nonviolent*, *Seeds of Nonviolence*, *Christ is with the Poor*, *Oscar Romero and the Nonviolent Struggle for Justice*, and a substantial work of theology, *The God of Peace: Toward a Theology of Nonviolence*, winner of the Pax Christi Book of the Year Award for 1997. He has also edited books on Dan Berrigan, Henry Nouwen (for which he received the Pax Christi Book Award for 1999), and Mairead Maguire. The following article succinctly summarizes the ongoing relevance of Gandhi for our time. (*Fellowship* 54 (January/February 1988), 19-21).

January 30, 1988 marks the fortieth anniversary of the assassination of Mohandas Gandhi. He died shortly after World War II, after the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, after India's independence and civil war. He was killed at a prayer service. Forty years later, the nuclear arms race has soared to astronomical numbers; while millions of dollars are spent daily on weapons, over 45,000 people die of starvation every day.

What has become of Gandhi's experiments in truth, his rediscovery of nonviolence as the personal and public method for positive social change? What does Gandhi's nonviolent resistance and truth force mean for North Americans, forty years after his death? Gandhi never achieved political office. He sought solidarity with the poorest of the poor, and in this powerlessness he found the power of love and truth. "My message is my life," he wrote, and his life was a never-ending series of experiments in truth and nonviolence. "My greatest weapon is prayer," he maintained, and through his steadfast faith and study of the Bhagavad Gita and the Sermon on the

Mount, he was able to move mountains. "Truth is God," he realized, and in truth, he found a way to liberation and resistance, the way of nonviolence.

But nonviolence was never simply a tactic. For Gandhi, "nonviolence is a matter of the heart." From his inner unity, through years of discipline and renunciation, Gandhi found the ability to suffer for justice's sake, to refuse to harm others, to go to prison for peace.

For his friends in the independence movement, he wrote an essay, "How to Enjoy Jail." Such an essay came as a fruit of inner freedom already realized. Gandhi's nonviolence starts from within and moves outward.

His nonviolence and truth-seeking gave him the strength to claim in all humility, "I have ceased for over forty years to hate anybody. I hold myself to be incapable of hating any being on earth." His willingness to lay down his life for suffering humanity gave birth to tremendous new life in himself and for those around him. With great care and discipline, he discovered new truths, and his discoveries were open to all. "I have not the shadow of a doubt that any man or woman can achieve what I have, if he or she would make the same effort and cultivate the same hope and faith."

Gandhi's sense of experimentation in truth continued through to the last day of his life. He was constantly growing, seeking new ways to pursue the truth of nonviolence in his own heart and therefore in his world. The world of North America has much to learn from Gandhi's experiments. As we race ahead in the mad rush of violence, his message of nonviolence waits calmly to be heard and undertaken anew. Several points may apply to our own North American context as we remember and ponder his life.

Faith was the center of life for Gandhi. Gandhi believed in God, in truth. "What I want to achieve, what I have been striving and pining to achieve these thirty years," he wrote in his autobiography, "is self-realization, to see God face to face. I live and move and have my being in pursuit of this goal. All that I do by way of speaking and writing, and all my ventures in the political field, are directed to this same end.." Gandhi saw the face of God in the poorest peasant and in the struggle of nonviolent resistance and love in the public realm. He sought to uncover truth at every turn and found that justice and nonviolence spring from the journey in truth. "You may be sent to the gallows, or put to torture, but if you have truth in you, you will experience an inner joy. Truth, for Gandhi, is the essence of life.

Nonviolence is the essence of truth; one cannot seek truth, Gandhi discovered, and still continue to participate in violence and injustice, within one's heart and in the world. Nonviolence is the power of the powerless, the power of God, the only power that overcomes evil, including the evil of the bomb. "Nonviolence is the greatest and most active force in the world.... One person who can express nonviolence in life exercises a force superior to all the forces of brutality.... Nonviolence cannot be preached. It has to be practiced," he insisted. "If we remain nonviolent, hatred will die as everything does, from disuse."

Gandhi's nonviolence began with prayer, solitude and fasting. By avoiding power in all its forms of violence and control, and by renouncing his desire for immediate results, Gandhi discovered that one could be reduced to zero. From this ground zero of emptiness, the compassionate love of God; nonviolence can grow. At this point, Gandhi wrote, the individual becomes "irresistible" and one's nonviolence becomes "all-pervasive."

Gandhi's experiments in truth revealed that the mandate of the Sermon on the Mount; to love one's enemies; is of critical importance. In all of Gandhi's public uses of nonviolence, he always manifested a desire for reconciliation, friendship, with his opponent. In South Africa, he showed deep respect for General Smuts and the two adversaries became fast friends. In India, Gandhi struggled to win over Jinnah, his Muslim opponent, through nonviolent love. His satyagraha campaigns began in a community of love and resistance and endeavored to extend that beloved community as far and wide as possible. When in prison, Gandhi befriended his jailers.

Gandhi always taught that "noncooperation with evil is as much a duty as cooperation with good." In order to seek God's kingdom first, Gandhi believed one must dissociate one's self from every form of evil, within and without. His noncooperation campaigns put into public practice the teachings of Jesus: "When someone strikes you on one cheek, turn and offer the other. " His willingness to suffer for justice's sake (his apparent cooperation with violence) actually was a total noncooperation with violence. The violence ended there, in Gandhi's own person, as Jesus showed, and Gandhi's noncooperation with evil, his nonviolent resistance, led to the presence of new life and love.

Gandhi learned nonviolence, he confessed, from his wife, Kasturbai. "I learnt the lesson of nonviolence from my wife, when I tried to bend her to my will." Gandhi wrote. "Her determined resistance to my will, on the one hand, and her quiet submission to the suffering my stupidity involved, on the other, ultimately made me ashamed of myself and cured me of my stupidity." Kasturbai taught Mohandas that nonviolence includes feminism, the practice of the equality of the sexes. Gandhi became an advocate of women's rights and maintained that if the world was to make any progress, sexism must be banned and forgotten.

Gandhi always tried to stand with the outcasts of society and to speak up for the rights of the marginalized. In India, such solidarity primarily meant taking the radical, scandalizing public stand on behalf of the so-called "untouchables." Gandhi called them harijans, or "children of God" and begged his fellow Indians to banish untouchability from their hearts and lives. His message needs to be proclaimed in every part of the world today, including North America. Such solidarity might mean touching the lives of the marginalized in our own society: gays and lesbians, people of color, illegal aliens, the elderly, the mentally handicapped and AIDS victims.

Gandhi also developed a practical, constructive program to rid India and the world of poverty and injustice. He lived with the poor and taught ways to improve their lives, while always advocating voluntary poverty and simplicity of life. He tried to improve the environment and public sanitation, and to encourage the personal responsibility of daily work through the spinning wheel. Gandhi's motto was: "Recall the face of the poorest and the most helpless person whom you have seen and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to that person. Will he or she be able to gain anything by it?"

In our own day and age, Gandhi's lessons of nonviolent resistance are more essential than ever. Perhaps, the primary lesson we need to relearn from Gandhi is to choose every day for the rest of our lives, with the gift of our lives, the truth of nonviolence over the lie of nuclear violence. Gandhi's path to nonviolence the way of the cross is an invitation to resist the nuclear arms race at its roots, within each of us. The spiritual power of nonviolent love when sought through prayer, fasting and discipline, will mean the reversal of the arms race. Such nonviolent love will lead to noncooperation and loving disobedience, and possibly imprisonment and death for some.

But Gandhi believed that there is no such thing as defeat for the person seeking the truth of nonviolence. When one accepts love and nonviolence in one's empty heart, then the doors of life are opened.. Everyone is seen as a sister or a brother, an image of God, a child of God. The poor are embraced and welcomed with special warmth and given everything. The truth can be told; forgiveness can be given and accepted; disarmament can begin. Suffering can be accepted willingly and transformed into a gift of love that will bear fruit in humanity. Arrest and imprisonment for nonviolent resistance become doorways to freedom. Death becomes the door to resurrection. Gandhi's nonviolent resistance is based in hope, in a vision like the dream of Martin Luther King, Jr. of a new life, a new age, a new world without weapons or fear, in which all will be treated as one, as brothers and sisters, everyone a child of God.

In his autobiographical essay, "Pilgrimage to Nonviolence," Martin Luther King, Jr. tells how he "came upon the life and teachings of Mahatma Gandhi" and "became deeply fascinated." He wrote: Gandhi was probably the first person in history to lift the love ethic of Jesus above mere interaction between individuals to a powerful and effective social force on a large scale. For Gandhi love was a potent instrument for social and collective transformation. It was in this Gandhian emphasis on love and nonviolence that I discovered the method [for social reform that I had been seeking [or so many months.... I came to feel that this was the only morally and practically sound method open to oppressed people in their struggle for freedom.

At the beginning of the nuclear age on August 6, 1945, Gandhi wrote, "Unless now the world adopts nonviolence, it will spell certain suicide for humanity. Nonviolence is the only thing the atom bomb cannot destroy." Shortly after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, he reflected that the bomb made clear for all the world what war is all about: the mass pursuit of death.

Hours before he was assassinated, Gandhi was asked by a North American journalist how he would meet the atomic bomb with nonviolence. Gandhi replied: "I will not go underground. I will not go into shelter. I will come out in the open and let the pilot see I have not a trace of ill- will against him. The pilot will not see our faces from his great height, I know. But the longing in our hearts; that he will not come to harm; would reach up to him and his eyes would be opened."

Ultimately, Gandhi's message of nonviolence for North Americans today is a call to resist the nuclear arms race. As the struggle for peace continues, we need to return to Gandhi's satyagraha campaigns, to study his discoveries and to seek ways to apply them with the same effort in our own work to rid the land of weapons and ourselves from the arms race within. "We have to make truth and nonviolence not matters for mere individual practice but for practice by groups and communities and nations," Gandhi wrote. "That, at any rate, is my dream. I shall live and die in trying to realize it."

Nonviolence, the power of the powerless, Gandhi believed, is the power of God, the power of truth and love that goes beyond the physical world into the realm of the spiritual. This power can overcome death, as God revealed through the nonviolence of Jesus, his crucifixion and subsequent resurrection in the resisting community. In the twentieth century, Gandhi sought this power on a public level as no one else in modern times has done.

What Gandhi sought was the spiritual liberation of humanity. He wanted the kingdom of God within each person to be realized, and that kingdom to extend throughout humanity so that oppression, injustice, and violence would

cease and love and truth would reign. "When the practice of the law (truth and love) becomes universal, God will reign on earth as God does in heaven. Earth and heaven are in us. We know the earth, and we are strangers to the heaven within us."

Gandhi's life pursuit of the reign of truth and love led him to nonviolent resistance in a variety of campaigns. He and his colleagues resisted the violence and death in untouchability, sexism, racism, war, colonization, religious division and the nuclear arms race. His participation in the struggle resulted in imprisonment, beatings, and eventually, assassination. But Gandhi had pledged his life to seek justice and peace without the use of violence; he willingly accepted the punishment meted out to him. He had long ago offered to sacrifice his life for peace and justice. He went to jail smiling. He was killed while offering a sign of peace. These acts of resistance done in this spirit of nonviolence epitomized the message of Gandhi: A satyagrahi must always be ready to die with a smile on his face, without retaliation and without rancor in his heart. Some people have come to have a wrong notion that satyagraha means only jail-going, perhaps facing blows, and nothing more. Such satyagraha cannot bring independence. To win independence you have to learn the art of dying without killing.

Gandhi's twentieth-century experiments in truth point to the Way of the cross, the way of nonviolent love and resistance. His gift is a life committed to nonviolent resistance and seeking first God's justice. He was a faithful Hindu who invites us to explore the depths of Love and Truth in our own faiths, and to become renewed in the Spirit of Love and Truth. He was quite clear about the depths of nonviolence that need to be pursued in the nuclear age, if humanity is to live. "Several lives like mine will have to be given if the terrible violence that has spread all over is to stop and nonviolence reign supreme in its place." The life of Mohandas K. Gandhi needs to be explored today with renewed vigor if humanity is to have a future. We need to study his message, his life, and the scriptures that gave him strength. Then, we need to get together with others in our own North American ashrams, base communities of nonviolent resistance, to begin the work of nonviolent love with a deeper commitment. We need to cultivate the spirit of love and truth in our own lives, through our own modern day experiments in love and truth, that may lead us to public, loving disobedience to government authority.

One of Gandhi's associates, Asha Devi, was asked by a BBC interviewer: "Don't you think that Gandhi was a bit unrealistic, that he failed to reckon with the limits of our capacities?" With joy, Asha Devi responded, "There are no limits to our capacities." Gandhi discovered that indeed there are no limits to our capacities. May God give us the strength to undertake new lives of nonviolent love with the same conviction he had.
