

## In the Vineyard

August 24, 2006

“The Church is not the petrification of what once was, but its living presence in every age. The Church’s dimension is therefore the present and the future no less than the past.”

*Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI*

### IN THIS ISSUE:

VOTF Accountability Campaign Updates and Resources are drawing more participants. All are welcome to join local VOTF affiliates on the two-part Campaign for Accountability. Interested in the Protect Our Children effort? Click here to [Connect with your VOTF state level](#) contact. For the Financial Accountability effort, click here to [Connect with VOTF members](#) in your state to join with others in your area.

- Speaking of *financial accountability*, here are links to the state of affairs in **Ohio**: [www.cleveland.com/abuse](http://www.cleveland.com/abuse); [www.toledoblade.com](http://www.toledoblade.com) and go to '-religion'; and [www.cincypost.com](http://www.cincypost.com) (go to the archive section on coverage). Also, in **Cincinnati**, [www.wcpo.com](http://www.wcpo.com) CH9 TV has an extensive series of both video and text articles. For ongoing coverage of bankruptcy proceedings in **Spokane, WA**, go to the *Spokesman-Review* at <http://www.spokesmanreview.com/sections/diocese/>.
- Financial vulnerabilities on the parish level are well considered by Michael Ryan at [www.ChurchSecurity.info](http://www.ChurchSecurity.info)
- The cost of care for retired sisters and others in religious orders threatens to dwarf the cost of the abuse crisis. See Associated Press coverage at <http://www.indeonline.com/index.php?ID=9211&Category=10>.

**National Representative Council** Update: In Region 2 (NY), Ed Wilson has been elected to replace Mary Pat Fox following her election as VOTF president; Region 14 (FL, GA, NC, SC) said farewell to Dee Esteva and Marge Lynch and elected Doug Roach and Rosa Montenegro; and in Region 6 (MI, OH) former VOTF vice-president Kris Ward was elected to replace Mary Collingwood who is returning to doctoral studies. There are pending elections in Regions 4 (DC, DE, MD, VA) and 7 (IL, IN, WI). [Click here](#) if you don't know who your Council representative is..

The nominating committee appointed by the VOTF Board of Trustees has selected John Hushon (DC), Bill Casey (VA), David O'Brien (MA), and Elia Marnik (MA) to serve three-year terms on the Board of Trustees, beginning September 2006. The National Representative Council approved the selection by the nominating committee.

**Diocese/State Watch:** A federal **Violence Against Children Act** is gaining momentum; VOTF Boston has met with Cardinal O'Malley and VOTF Northern California has met with Abp. Niederauer (**San Francisco**); in **Ohio**, a kickback scheme unfolds with alarming layers; in **Springfield, IL**, “An internal investigation of the Catholic diocese that includes Madison County acknowledges that “a culture of secrecy has protected diocese priests who engaged in sexual and financial misconduct”; Bishop Walsh (**Santa Rosa, CA**) whose delayed response to an admitted abuser priest gave the priest time to

flee the state, issued an apology; reactions have been mixed. See Commentary “From Apology to Justice”.

**Parish life update:** Catholic News Service reports: “When a bishop suppresses a parish, its assets and liabilities must go to the parish or parishes that receive the parishioners, not to the diocese, a top Vatican official said in a letter to U.S. bishops.” Go to [http://www.catholic.org/national/national\\_story.php?id=20738](http://www.catholic.org/national/national_story.php?id=20738).

- See Boston, MA in Diocese/State Watch for “lay involvement in the selection of a new pastor.”

**Protecting Our Children:** An increasing threat from the internet industry of child abuse was noted in a *New York Times* front-page story on August 21: “What started online almost two decades ago as a means of swapping child pornography has transformed in recent years into a more complex and diversified community that uses the virtual world to advance its interests in the real one.” Subscribers can access the whole story at [http://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/21/technology/21pedo.html?\\_r=1&adxnml=1&oref=log\\_in&adxnmlx=1156179860-ZxCmFLAYPeY5mH+wDoc3CQ](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/21/technology/21pedo.html?_r=1&adxnml=1&oref=log_in&adxnmlx=1156179860-ZxCmFLAYPeY5mH+wDoc3CQ).

**Survivor Community News:** In a rare move by the print media, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* has posted on their web site a video produced by SNAP that features survivors reflecting on their abuse. The paper also printed a critical letter written by two attorneys who were assistant DAs involved in preparing the Philadelphia District Attorney's Grand Jury Report on the actions of the Philadelphia Archdiocese and its history of sexual abuse; VOTF National issued a press release in support of the O'Connell family's efforts in seeking to force the U.S. Council of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) to disclose the names of all proven, admitted and credibly accused abusive priests; and more.

**SAVE the dates:** VOTF 2007 National Convention will be held at the Rhode Island Convention Center in Providence, Rhode Island, October 19-21, 2007

**Something to think about:** Professor Daniel C. Maguire at Marquette University has written a thought-provoking essay, “The Church IS a Democracy”. In his comments Maguire quotes theologian Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza: “While the post-Pauline and post-Petrine writers seek to limit women's leadership roles in the Christian community to roles which are culturally and religiously acceptable, the evangelists called Mark and John highlight the alternative character of the Christian community, and therefore accord women apostolic and ministerial leadership.” For the entire essay, which argues against two truisms that threaten to thwart real reform in areas of clergy sexual abuse, go to [www.religiousconsultation.org](http://www.religiousconsultation.org).

**BOOK Notes:** Bill Casey shares some thoughts on Parker Palmer's latest book *A Hidden Wholeness, the Journey Toward an Undivided Life*. Parker Palmer is well known for his work in education, spirituality and social change in institutions;

- The newest *Complete Idiot's Guide to Understanding Catholicism* notes VOTF, listed after Opus Dei in a chapter titled “It's a Big Tent”, says: “Apparently VOTF seems to know its stuff and more than a little about Church stuff, too.” A

concluding statement reads, “The spirituality of VOTF follows the prophetic tradition of calling leaders to accountability by speaking out. It also puts universal values to work by protecting the most vulnerable in the flock. Members of VOTF know that whether or not they will succeed in their goals of establishing dialogue with bishops and creating accountability by speaking out they are expressing their faith.”

- **Charles Curran’s new book** *Loyal Dissent – Memoir of a Catholic Theologian* is available in paperback. In 1986 Curran was fired from his teaching position at the Catholic University of America after a finding by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith that he was “neither suitable nor eligible” to be a professor of theology. Curran continues to defend the possibility of legitimate dissent from Church teachings that fall outside the infallible. A review of Curran’s book will be in an upcoming *Vineyard*. If you get to it first, please let us know at [pthorp.ed@votf.org](mailto:pthorp.ed@votf.org).

## **SITE-Seeing, Etc.**

The **Catholic Common Ground Initiative’s** 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary lecture was delivered on August 11 by the bishop of Las Cruces, NM Ricardo Ramirez C.S.B. “Building a Church of Communion” is available at <http://www.nplc.org/commonground/lecture.htm#2006>. A Catholic News Service recap is at <http://www.catholicnews.com/data/stories/cns/0604674.htm>.

The “**Report Card on Women in the Church**” is under way and inviting your participation; Gaile Pohlhaus found a useful internet link for **comprehensive Catholic news** and issues coverage at <http://www.catholicplanet.com/links.htm>; **Boston College** has posted its C21 Fall program. Go to <http://www.bc.edu/church21/programs/>.

**An interesting proposal** has produced some sparks among Catholics worldwide. The conversation is in the works at <http://www.chiesa.espressonline.it/dettaglio.jsp?id=73422&eng=y>. In the latest issue of *Teologia*, the **Journal of the Theological Faculty of Milan and Northern Italy**, Alberto Bonandi proposes a new “path” for admitting to communion, under particular conditions, divorced and remarried Catholics. Bonandi, a priest of the diocese of Mantua, teaches fundamental moral theology and is one of the most authoritative theologians in his field.

Mike Nicholas at **VOTF New Zealand** ([www.votfnz@yahoo.com.au](http://www.votfnz@yahoo.com.au)) notes an excellent monthly publication *Tui Motu*, which means “stitching the islands together” and invites readers to join discussion of spiritual and social issues in the light of gospel values. The current issue is on the *Tui Motu* web site at <http://www.tuimotu.org/index.html>.

- Of particular interest is a thoughtful commentary on the lost history of women in the Church. Go to <http://www.tuimotu.org/archives/july06.htm#marybetz>.

The Aug. 14-21 issue of *America* magazine includes a commentary “**The Way Things Are Going – Should I leave the Church?**” written by a mother whose daughter is a

lesbian. While her pastor has asked her to stay in her role as a CCD instructor, parishioners have complained that she isn't qualified. There are many parallels to be drawn from this mother's experience. Subscribers may access *America* online at <http://www.americamagazine.org/gettext.cfm?articleTypeID=9&textID=4914&issueID=580>.

## COMMENTARY

“From Apology to Justice – Watching Santa Rosa, CA”

“Report Card on Women in the Church” – Rea Howarth, Women's Justice Coalition

Next issue of *In the Vineyard*: September 7, 2006.

## SURVIVOR Community News

In a rare move by the print media, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* has posted on their web site a video produced by SNAP that features survivors reflecting on their abuse. Their measured tones in brief statements and their various backgrounds make them as familiar as a sibling, neighbor, colleague or friend. View the video at <http://www.philly.com/mld/inquirer/15219506.htm>. [Requires Windows Media Player]

- The paper also printed a letter written by two attorneys who were assistant DAs involved in preparing the Philadelphia District Attorney's Grand Jury Report on the actions of the Philadelphia Archdiocese and its history of sexual abuse. The report was scathing. Read the letter at [http://inquirer.philly.com/pdfs/2006/rigaliletter\\_m\\_m.pdf](http://inquirer.philly.com/pdfs/2006/rigaliletter_m_m.pdf). For the Grand Jury report, go to [http://www.bishop-accountability.org/pa\\_philadelphia/Philly\\_GJ\\_report.htm](http://www.bishop-accountability.org/pa_philadelphia/Philly_GJ_report.htm).
- VOTF National issued a press release in support of a family's efforts in seeking to force the U.S. Council of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) to disclose the names of all proven, admitted and credibly accused abusive priests ([http://www.bishop-accountability.org/complaints/2006\\_08\\_08\\_OConnell\\_v\\_USCCB.htm](http://www.bishop-accountability.org/complaints/2006_08_08_OConnell_v_USCCB.htm)). Read the VOTF statement [here](#). The family's five-point plan is available at <http://www.crusadeagainstclergyabuse.com/>. The family's effort is expected to be uphill all the way. See <http://www.twincities.com/mld/pioneerpress/15321950.htm>.
- People who were sexually abused when they were children by Catholic clergy in Eastern Washington [state of WA] are considering suing parishes and might even explore the legal liability of individual churchgoers. Go to SpokesmanReview.com at <http://www.spokesmanreview.com/local/story.asp?ID=142188>.
- “More than 700 cases filed against the dioceses in San Diego (160) and Los Angeles (560) have languished since 2003. This is by far the largest collection of priest-abuse cases anywhere. Attorneys representing adults who say they were molested decades ago as children argue there is a simple reason that none of the cases has gone to trial: Church officials here and in Los Angeles have been

masters at stalling.” Go to the *Union Tribune* at <http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/state/20060731-9999-1m31delay.html>

## DIOCESE/State Watch

**The Violence Against Children Act** is gaining interest and support. The act would create a national data base of known sexual abusers of children. For details, go to OpEd News at

[http://www.opednews.com/articles/opedne\\_debby\\_bo\\_060707\\_clergy\\_sexual\\_abuse\\_3b.htm](http://www.opednews.com/articles/opedne_debby_bo_060707_clergy_sexual_abuse_3b.htm);

**Ohio:** The *Columbus Dispatch* reports: “The finance director for the Columbus Roman Catholic Diocese was indicted by a federal grand jury yesterday on 23 counts of taking nearly \$800,000 in kickbacks while working in Cleveland.” Go to <http://www.dispatch.com/emailme/emailme.php?story=dispatch/2006/08/17/20060817-A1-04.html> and the *Plain Dealer* reports: “A high-ranking priest in the Cleveland diocese approved creating a secret investment account and \$270,000 in payments to Joseph Smith, the former financial officer charged in an elaborate kickback scheme, according to court documents.” Go to

<http://www.cleveland.com/printer/printer.ssf?/base/cuyahoga/1155976388263150.xml&coll=2&thispage=2>. VOTF NRC representative (Region 6) Kris Ward notes, “Joseph Smith, the former Chief Financial Officer of the Diocese of Cleveland who was charged by the FBI is the current Chief Financial Officer for the Diocese of Columbus, OH.”

### **California:**

**Santa Rosa:** Bishop Walsh’s delayed reaction to an admitted abuser priest provided the priest enough time to leave the state, much to the concerned outrage of all who are depending on the USCCB Charter to end clergy sexual abuse of children. The bishop issued an apology (excerpted below). Reactions both welcomed and questioned the bishop’s apology. See Commentary – “From Apology to Justice: Watching Santa Rosa”. Also note recent coverage:

- The *Press Democrat* reports the District Attorney defended his decision to probe the Santa Rosa diocese with regard to the fugitive priest Xavier Ochoa. Go to <http://www1.pressdemocrat.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060729/NEWS/607290303/1033/NEWS01>.

**Santa Barbara:** Victims of abuse by Franciscan friars have settled their suits with the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. For the full story, go to

[http://www.independent.com/news/2006/08/franciscans\\_settle.html](http://www.independent.com/news/2006/08/franciscans_settle.html) and <http://www.ksby.com/home/headlines/3535371.html>.

**San Francisco:** Sally Vance-Trembath reports on the July 7<sup>th</sup> VOTF meeting with Archbishop Niederauer: “The conversation was cordial but frank and direct.” For details, go to the VOTF Northern California web site at <http://www.votf-sf.org/>.

**Boston, MA:** After their first meeting with Cardinal O'Malley, VOTF Boston's Dorothy Kennedy said the meeting could prove to be "the beginning of a collaboration around solutions to bring all Catholics together; hierarchy, clergy, and laity, in the pursuit of the mission of the church. We had an honest exchange of views about issues that concern us." For details, go to

[http://www.boston.com/news/local/massachusetts/articles/2006/08/04/after\\_nearly\\_3\\_years\\_omalley\\_meets\\_with\\_lay\\_church\\_group/](http://www.boston.com/news/local/massachusetts/articles/2006/08/04/after_nearly_3_years_omalley_meets_with_lay_church_group/).

- A message from VOTF Boston Area Council on lay involvement in pastoral selection: "In your experience, has the laity been consulted in the selection of your pastor? Have pastors simply been assigned to your parish without community involvement? Have you noticed a change in practice over the years? Does the process for pastoral selection seem to be uniform across parishes? In your view, is the process transparent and predictable or does it seem arbitrary and capricious?"

In this time of the decline in the number of priests and particularly the aging of the priest population, it is even more important that a positive and fruitful match be made between the priest and the community he serves. Though an interview protocol is no guarantee that a fruitful priest/community match would result, at least community involvement in the process might increase the probability of a successful match. A pre-appointment engagement with the community would basically be a humane attempt to reduce friction between a receiving community and a new priest.

Lay involvement in a pre-appointment process would favorably reflect the early church when the community would call forth their priest from their own number. In addition, a laity/hierarchy collaborative process would also be in concert with Vatican II and recent papal statements as well.

Please share your experiences, thoughts and feelings about lay involvement in pastoral selection. Contact Boston Area Council of VOTF Structural Change Working Group, [ddraheim@rcn.com](mailto:ddraheim@rcn.com) or [benhar@earthlink.net](mailto:benhar@earthlink.net)."

**Springfield, IL:** The *Post Dispatch* Springfield Bureau reported in St. LouisToday.com: "An internal investigation of the Catholic diocese that includes Madison County acknowledges that 'a culture of secrecy' has protected diocese priests who engaged in sexual and financial misconduct." For full story, go to <http://www.stltoday.com/stltoday/emaf.nsf/Popup?ReadForm&db=stltoday%5Cnews%5Cstories.nsf&docid=F709F460D4264BF2862571BF001D5854>.

**Philadelphia, PA:** The *Philadelphia Inquirer* reports, "The Catholic Church said its passive approach on Pennsylvania sex-abuse bills did not indicate opposition." For an excellent overview of what this is all about, go to <http://www.philly.com>. See Survivor Community News for more on Philadelphia.

**Bridgeport, CT** – A Darien parish’s gross financial mismanagement by the pastor may be worse than it once seemed. According to a July 29 *New York Times* article, “ A Roman Catholic priest in Darien with a taste for the high life helped himself to \$1.4 million in church funds in the roughly six years before his ouster, according to a report prepared by auditors for the Bridgeport Diocese.” Go to <http://select.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=F10A13FE385B0C7A8EDDAE0894DE404482>.

## COMMENTARY

### **From Apology to Justice – Watching Santa Rosa, CA**

[Bishop Daniel Walsh of Santa Rosa, CA issued an apology to his diocese after he failed to respond according to the law, as well as the USCCB Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, in the case of admitted child sexual abuser Fr. Xavier Ochoa. In the interim, the priest fled the state. Reactions to the bishop’s apology were mixed. We offer three texts for consideration: excerpts from Bishop Walsh’s apology, VOTF Cindy Vrooman’s perspective, and David Clohessy of SNAP’s reaction.]

#### *Bishop Walsh:*

I made an error in judgment by waiting to report Rev. Ochoa's admission. I should have acted immediately, and not delayed. For this I am deeply sorry. I did not wait in order to allow Rev. Ochoa time to escape, as some critics have claimed. I did not wait, as others have claimed, because of some desire to keep the abuse silent. I waited from an excess of caution. In attempting to consult first with our diocesan attorney, I made a mistake. I failed to be guided by my own precepts for decisive action and for doing the right thing. I am deeply sorry for this, and for the tarnish it has placed on the reputation of the Church and the clergy, as well as for the questions it has raised regarding our credibility and the Church's policy of zero tolerance of sexual abuse.

As the District Attorney reviews the actions of all involved in this horrible situation, my admission of failing to report the case immediately could cause me to be charged with a misdemeanor having a potential penalty of 6 months in jail and/or a \$1000 fine. If I am found guilty for not taking immediate action, I will accept whatever punishment is imposed.

#### *Cindy Vrooman, VOTF North Bay, CA:*

I see this apology as only a first step. It is like any apology. If it is offered, the least I can do is accept it in good faith; however, the proof of the apology is still to come. Will Bishop Walsh make some changes in the diocese? Will the Diocese of Santa Rosa reach out to survivors and cooperate with the prosecution? Since he admitted guilt, he has opened himself to prosecution. I cannot believe our diocesan lawyer told him to do that; in the past the stance has been one of SILENCE. Having worked with Bishop Walsh on a couple of projects, and having sat with him on the Diocesan Pastoral Council for a year, he doesn't seem the type of person who would write this apology without conviction.

I may not agree with him on numerous issues but I found him to be honest. Was I fooled? I do not know. I just know this: The people of the Diocese of Santa Rosa needed this apology and now they need to see some action. In the past a number of people too readily accepted Bishop Walsh's assessment of the sexual abuse crisis as it pertained to our diocese but that is not the sense anymore. I think that is growth. I stood outside three Masses at our church collecting responses from the parishioners to the bishop's letter. Most people were relieved and thought this was a necessary step but saw a long road ahead for recovery. Now Bishop Walsh will be more greatly scrutinized since the diocese has been shaken to its core.

When interviewed, I spoke as a member of the Diocese of Santa Rosa and expressed relief that the bishop admitted his mistake and said that I expected the DA to treat the bishop the way he would treat me. I, as a teacher, am a mandated reporter. Would I get a slap on the wrist or would I face a fine or time in jail?

I see the job of SNAP to continue to challenge the veracity of statements that come out of diocesan offices. I may be wrong, but I see my role as coordinator for North Bay VOTF to keep making suggestions, to keep the light lit from inside the operation; to keep the curtains open and to prod the powers to be to live up to this apology.

*David Clohessy, national director of SNAP:* (see more at [www.snapnetwork.org](http://www.snapnetwork.org)):

I hate to be so cynical, but here's the rest of the story, or at least part of it. Bishop Walsh has hired a big, new PR firm. The DA has finished the investigation. The bishop is afraid he'll be indicted; he's trying to appear contrite so the DA will go easy on him. This is speculation but it's what's what we're hearing from sources in the Bay Area.

Almost every strategy has been tried: horrible media exposes, civil lawsuits, criminal charges against predators, and the *threat* of criminal charges against bishops. Still, bishops continue to terribly mishandle abuse cases.

The one yet-untried strategy: locking up a complicit bishop. What's wrong with treating a complicit bishop just like everyone else? Why “horse trade” or negotiate with a criminal? If a jury finds him guilty, he's punished, period. I'm not a huge advocate of jail, but think of the deterrent effect this would have on other Church officials.

And consider the reverse: If highly educated, high ranking Santa Rosa Church officials can so blatantly violate state law with such awful consequences (an admitted serial child molester flees to a poor country where he has even more access to kids), think of THAT message. Why on earth would any Church official do better in the future, when there are no real consequences for law-breaking?

[Another opinion, noted by SNAP, can be found at [http://www.times-standard.com/opinion/ci\\_4189218](http://www.times-standard.com/opinion/ci_4189218)]

## **Women's Place in the Church: A Report Card on the Status of Women**

The Women's Justice Coalition, a network of organizations committed to conducting a joint action each year to promote the full equality of women in the Roman Catholic Church, has formed. Their 2006 action, "Rating the US Dioceses: A Report Card on the Status of Women" as church employees and church members should help point the way forward.

The idea grew out of a 1996 "benchmarks" study by the Leadership Conference of Women Religious. Although John Paul II and then Cardinal Ratzinger decreed the church does not possess "the authority to ordain women to the priesthood," they affirmed the dignity of women, condemned every form of discrimination, and called for women's full inclusion in the life of the church. Recently, Pope Benedict XVI said, "It is right to ask...if it's not possible to offer more space, more positions of responsibility to women."

To participate in the study, please visit <http://womensjusticecoalition.org>. The report card work sheets can be downloaded from the web site. Questions? Call 301-699-0042 and ask for Rea Howarth. The group expects to publish the results in early November.

### **BOOK Notes**

*From Bill Casey, VOTF Virginia:*

In reading Parker Palmer's latest book, *A Hidden Wholeness, the Journey Toward an Undivided Life* (Jossey-Bass, 2004 and available at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)) I came across a section that makes a lot of sense to me regarding our attempts to change the governance ills in our Church. It doesn't offer any easy or concrete "solutions", but I offer it for your consideration.

In a chapter called "The Third Way, Nonviolence in Everyday Life" Palmer cites as examples of nonphysical violence "colleges that treat win-lose competition as the best way to make students learn, medical schools that turn suffering patients into abstract 'objects' of study, religious institutions built on the idea that they alone know the mind of God", etc. Palmer finds evidence of this nonphysical violence at every level of our lives, and his examples are full of everyday conflicts that we experience in work and other forums. However, he suggests that this violence can be countered by learning, and responding to conflict in, a nonviolent way. Specifically, he defines this way as "learning to hold the tension of opposites, trusting that the tension itself will pull our hearts and minds open to a third way of thinking and acting". He labels this experience as "standing in the gap." His text follows:

"In particular, we must learn to hold the tension between the 'reality' of the

moment and the 'possibility' that something better might emerge. In a business meeting, for example, I mean the tension between the fact that we are deadlocked about what to do and the possibility that we might find a solution superior to any of those on the table.

Of course, finding a third way beyond our current dilemma may be possible in theory, but it often seems unlikely in life. In a contentious business meeting, a better solution might well exist, but the pressures of ego, time, and the bottom line make it unlikely that we will find it.

The insight at the heart of nonviolence is that we live in a tragic gap--a gap between the way things are and the way we know they might be. If we want to live nonviolent lives, we must learn to stand in the tragic gap, faithfully holding the tension between reality and possibility in hopes of being opened to a third way.

I harbor no illusions about how hard it is to live in that gap. Though we may try to keep our grip on both reality and hope, we often find the tension too hard to hold--so we let go of one pole and collapse into the other. Sometimes we resign ourselves to things as they are and sink into cynical disengagement. Sometimes we cling to escapist fantasies and float above the fray. Having been drawn to both extremes, I have tried to understand why.

Deep within me there is an instinct even more primitive than 'fight or flight', and I do not think it is mine alone. As a species, we are profoundly impatient with tensions of any sort, and we want to resolve every one of them as quickly as we can.

For example, we are in a meeting where a decision must be made. As we talk, it becomes clear that people disagree on the matter, and our frustration grows as we listen to various options. Uncomfortable with holding the tension of conflicting viewpoints and wanting to 'get on with it', we call the question, take a vote, and let the majority decide what course we should take.

The tension has been resolved, or so it appears. But by cutting the exploration short, we have deprived ourselves of a chance to find a better way by allowing opposing ideas to enrich and enlarge each other until a new vision emerges. And by letting the majority decide which way to go, we often drive the tension underground, creating an embittered minority who devote themselves to undermining the decision we thought we had made."

It will be no surprise that Palmer's thoughts arise out of a strong Quaker tradition.

I believe that Palmer's thoughts offer a lot for our consideration in trying to advance the vision of VOTF. Perhaps they will offer you something as well. *Bill Casey, VOTF Virginia*

