

Preface

SOON AFTER I BEGAN writing this history in 2003, I realized that I was operating under certain limitations. Each Christian Peacemaker Team (CPT) project has generated enough material to merit its own book; I had to leave out so many valuable, wise and funny insights that CPTers and their coworkers have shared in writing and in person. Additionally, as someone who has worked with Christian Peacemaker Teams since 1993, I know that my analysis of and reaction to its work are subjective. I have tried to represent the views of other CPTers, but know I have not always succeeded, so I encourage the reader to view me more as an organizer of information rather than “the authority” on CPT.

When I describe incidents in which I played a part, I refer to myself as “Kathleen Kern.” When I am describing the process of writing or researching this book, I refer to myself as “the author.” If no footnote appears for an incident in which I took part, the reader may assume I am writing from my memory of the event.

Most CPTers are not professional writers, and spelling and grammar errors have cropped up in CPTnet releases over the years. I have chosen to correct these errors without using *sic*, unless I think preserving the original is important. This face-saving measure benefits me as well as my colleagues, since I have edited most of the releases coming out over CPTnet since 1998.

Between 1992 and 1993, I had written two books in the space of about a year. I blithely assumed I could write this history in about the same amount of time. Instead, the writing has taken four years. During those four years, I worked in the field very little and had to put other writing projects on hold. I did not anticipate how the history would change my identity both as a CPTer and a writer.

I also did not anticipate how much the writing would engage my emotions. I cringed all over again at the mistakes I made in Haiti as a dillattente peace activist. I grieved as I relived the downward spiral in Hebron

that wiped out almost all the progress that our team there been a part of before the al-Aqsa Intifada. I was charmed and inspired once more by the Abejas' living out of the Gospel in Chiapas. I felt a growing dread as I read through the Iraq team's 2005 releases, knowing that they were leading to a crisis that resulted in the kidnappings of two CPT delegation members and two of my colleagues, one of whom, Tom Fox, was murdered.

I suspect that once I let go of this history, once I've sent the boxes of files to the CPT archives and cleared up space on my hard drive, I will be left with an underlying sense of wonder (perhaps over-reiterated in the pages that follow) at how Christian Peacemaker Teams has succeeded when other peace and justice groups have failed or lapsed into a state of institutional self-preservation. The history has made me aware of the stumbles that CPT made as it was finding its feet, of less-than-successful initiatives, like CPT Europe, which Dutch Mennonite Marten VanderWerf tried to organize around the issue of NATO's low level flights over Innu lands (see chapter 8) or the "Pledge by Christians to our Jewish Neighbors" (see chapter 6). But usually, the right people with the right talents came along at the right time and put in grueling hours of work to give the organization what it needed to grow and confront violence on its various project locations. I feel a sense of wonder at my continuing participation in CPT, because I had not anticipated making it my career at the age of twenty-nine when I filled out the application for training.

I thank God for that wonder. It helps me see—at times when I lapse into a glum ennui over the state of the world, mistakes I have made, or mistakes that CPT as an organization has made—that God works through sinful, stumbling people. I thank God for sending us Jesus, who has armed ordinary people with the weapons of nonviolence to battle Systems of Domination that kill and exploit our brothers and sisters.

I am forty-five as I write this Preface, and I still have not found anything better to do with my life.

—Kathleen Kern
October 2007