

*from Amy, for her Church Newsletter
July 26, 2023.*

From Awe to Awful

As the movie Oppenheimer grabs attention, campaigners promoting the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons want your attention, too. Please consider attending the very peaceful local ceremonies commemorating the 1945 bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki with their “never again” emphasis.

The Lyndale Peace Garden near Lake Harriet is the site for a Tea Ceremony at 7 p.m. Saturday, August 5, and a “prior to church” 7:30 am Ceremony of the Cranes, Sunday, August 6. The latter features speaker John LaForge, a Wisconsinite international activist/leader of NukeWatch.

As St. Paul is a Sister City with Nagasaki, that bombing is commemorated at the Global Harmony Labyrinth in Como Park (across the foot bridge from the Lake Como pavilion) at 7 pm, Tuesday, August 8. Bring your own chair to all of the events. (More info <https://glockenspiel-sepia-yxn7.squarespace.com>)

This piece related to nuclear weapons and the Oppenheimer movie was prompted by an early review I read. The review focused on seeing the movie with a screen that best emphasized the explosion shown. Apparently it’s quite a blast.

From early childhood, we know the appeal of things that go Vroom and Boom. Understanding the consequences of our behavior is quite a learning curve and we are all saints and sinners as we go. As church kin, however, we share the goal of cultivating our societal evolution to one that promotes care-giving rather than death dealing – quite a work in progress!

Among what’s not shown in the movie are the ongoing lethal legacies of the bomb’s creation, nuclear waste/radiation still killing people decades later. And the abuse of the land/people near the testing sites. The first victims of the Oppenheimer bomb were the miscarriages and babies downwind of the Trinity test. The religious name of that bomb, in particular, identifies the hubris of those creating it --- taking over from God the dealing of death and vast destruction.

Among the appalling factors is that those scientists knew that such a blast carried the theoretical possibility of inflaming the atmosphere of the globe, yet they felt entitled to risk the test. The bombs available now are much more destructive. Some of us know that even a limited exchange of nuclear explosions would cause lasting global devastation; but clearly some of us are acting under different assumptions.

Any moral qualms individuals might have related to the horrendous impact of their actions can be papered over by lies. For instance, the scientists working on the bomb were told that the Nazis were on the cusp of “doing it to us.” Then they were told that the bomb would be used only in demonstration or only on military targets. The lies have continued in the history taught in our schools.

As we educate ourselves, I recommend <https://worldbeyondwar.org/facing-factsenheimer> for learning more about the circumstances of the 1945 bombings. Historian Greg Mitchell’s interviews on Oppenheimer give additional background as well.

https://www.democracynow.org/2023/7/24/oppenheimer_greg_mitchell

https://www.democracynow.org/2023/7/24/could_oppenheimer_help_inspire_a_new

For action, see <https://preventnuclearwar.org/oppenheimer/>

In conclusion, I quote the recent Star Tribune LTE of local Veteran for Peace chapter president, Dave Logsdon: "I was born in 1945 and have lived my entire life under the dark cloud of 'the bomb.' As the Hiroshima survivor Kenji Kitagawa beautifully stated about being a seed that someday can be the crop, so must we all be seeds of peace before it is too late for our planet. We owe it to our children and grandchildren."