We are called to be peace-makers. To follow Jesus Christ must renounce violence and live a life that embodies peace and reconciliation. I knew this before I went to the Middle East, and it is still the only way for Christians to be followers of Christ amidst conflict - this is how I learned through being amongst the oppressed, and those who oppressed - the suffer- ers from both sides.

It is easy when entering such a polarized situation, as the one in Israel/Palestine, to blindly enter into that polarisation. Because EMU does such a good job of informing us about the plight of the poor at the hands of the rich, it is easy to lose sight of the plight shared with the oppressed that one sets oneself against the oppressor. But this is a bit more than just trying to imitate Jesus, or be a peacemaker. This is not to say that there is no such thing as oppression or injustice in Israel/Palestine! For sure the Palestinians and Israelis are each other of the two parties; they are the ones suffering the most from the violence of their history. But the states and the rich own major responsibility when it comes to the suffering of the Palestinians.

Some call it the cost of keeping America safe, but it's not that safe that we’ve gained. We've only convinced ourselves that we made a large problem go away by making it harder for some people to become educated in our country. It won't be long before this "solution" fails, and the next group of leaders takes on the mob.

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By Chris Fretz
Staff Writer

Over Christmas vacation I went to Nicaragua to work with the PA for a possible war on Iraq. There were speakers that talked about the ramifications of a possible war, and sign-holders that proudly showed drivers passing by that "Bush brings bombs to boys and girls" for Christmas and there were even some EMU students in the crowd. Sounds great, eh?

Well, I went home pretty much unfulfilled. Don’t get me wrong – rallies have their place. I’m sure that some interesting discussions took place at the rally and were generated afterward. I’m sure that some opposition to violence became more visible to the cou- ple hundred people who passed by Lancaster Square that day. But other than raising public aware- ness of the matter, the issue of waging war on Iraq was not immediately affected.

This is an all too common problem. Public demonstrations have simply lost their reality to the majority of the public. When mass rallies against war on Iraq were held on Oct. 26, 2001, approximately five hundred people rallied in Washington, D.C. with thousands of others in San Francisco, Germany, Sweden and Spain. The news media gave it coverage for about a day and a half afterwards, and then...noth- ing. President Bush virtually ignored these mass demonstra- tions, gave no significant response and life seemingly went on as normal.

Those genuinely working for justice should always have a visi- ble presence and voice, but maybe the routine of annual protests against the IMF, World Bank and School of the Americas has drastically lessened the effect of mass demonstrations. So how should we go about change?

I love the biblical concept of being in the world but not "of the world." The idea of being set apart from your peers seems pretty cool to me. But I wouldn’t say that working with politicians to change the situation is killing out my faith. In fact, my faith requires me to take action! I do need to follow Christ’s call to care for "the least of these." It’s a weak start, but I e-mailed President Bush and told him I think that killing people is unjust and wrong. I am going to write and call my senators. I haven’t met with any of them or talked to them in person yet, but I plan to. I’m faithful that they will listen. These are politicians that were elected to represent me in con- gress, and my vote can affect their futures higher is one way. I can walk boldly in the way of nonviolence and peace. I refuse to NOT make a difference.