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## *History Belongs to the Intercessors*

**An article from the *Cathedral Times*  
by the Rev. Dr. Thee Smith**

This summer I'm part of a new venture in Atlanta called Standing Silence. We're a network of peace and justice advocates who also practice meditation and prayer. Both interfaith and humanist, we're brought together by common interest in the power of silence—silence as complement to the flood of words we all experience, particularly on social justice issues. Our [inaugural event](#) occurs at 3:30 p.m. on Sunday, June 25, at the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site on Auburn Avenue. Join us!

Standing Silence excites me as a public experiment in the power of intercessory prayer. Last summer I shared in the Cathedral Times related research into the ancient Hawaiian tradition and New Age practice of "Ho'oponopono." Practitioners claim that persistent and varied applications of its four phrases—"I'm sorry, please forgive me, I love you, thank you"—provide a powerful resource for conflict transformation and spiritual "cleansing" of one's life circumstances, relationships, larger environment and indeed the world.

Similar claims emerged in the early 1990s among New Age advocates intent on empirical verification of a so-called Maharishi Effect. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (d. 2008) was the Hindu guru who founded the Transcendental Meditation movement. In 1993 more than 4,000 such TM practitioners converged on Washington, D.C. for a 6-week mission to reduce crime in local neighborhoods. Among venues like the Washington Hilton and college campuses, they engaged in daily meditation sessions lasting two to four hours. Silently focusing on a mantra, meditators claimed, the mind disengages from ordinary thinking processes and achieves states of consciousness that can impact the world in extrasensory ways. In that state they aimed their energy at crime reduction and claimed they succeeded by as much as 20 percent. ("Meditating to Try to Lower Crime Rate," NY Times, NY /Region, States News Service; 9/1/1993). Researching such claims continue on the internet.

Of course as a Christian believer and pastor I'm most concerned with our own biblical and sacred resources for such outcomes. So last month I offered to explore these matters with our Cathedral Book Store reading group, the Hart Readers, as found in the New Testament theologian Walter Wink's *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination* (1992). Among Wink's most powerful aids is the chapter on prayer called, "History Belongs to the Intercessors."

When we pray we are ... [engaged] in an act of co-creation, in which one little sector of the universe rises up and becomes translucent, incandescent, a vibratory centre of power that radiates the power of the universe.

[Thus] if we are to take the biblical understanding seriously, intercession is more than [changing ourselves in order to change the world]. It changes ... what is possible to God ... An aperture opens in the praying person, permitting God to act without violating human freedom ... [thus changing] what God can thereby do in that world.

Then intercession, far from being an escape from action, is a means of focusing for action and of creating action. By means of our intercessions we veritably cast fire upon the earth and trumpet the future into being. (*Engaging the Powers*, pp. 298-304)

Since the Church's founding at Pentecost, of course, and expressly at countless prayer sites including convents and monasteries, we Christians have directed our prayer energies at the world's most compelling needs. So let's continue to covenant together to advance the next great breakthroughs that will vindicate the faith claim, "history belongs to the intercessors!"

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