

A week of peace protests starts

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(C17A)

By Kathy Parrish
staff writer

For most Christians, Sunday starts the countdown to Christmas. Ahead is a month of hectic, but happy activity. But Advent will have a different meaning this year for peace advocates who expect to spend the holiday season in Oakland County Jail for blockading a defense supplier's driveway.

"People who wage war are called to make sacrifices like being away at Christmas," said Ken Berger, speaking for Covenant for Peace, which is organizing Monday's blockade.

"Why not those who wage peace?"

AN INTERFAITH prayer service at 2 p.m. Sunday on the public easement outside Williams International will kick off a weeklong protest at the 60-acre research, development and manufacturing facility, 2280 W. Maple, Commerce Township.

Founded in 1955 in Birmingham, the maker of small gas turbine engines is a target of peace groups because its product powers cruise missiles.

Williams' 1,450 employees also manufacture turbine engines for cars and trucks, industrial gas turbines and low pollution turbines for generating electricity power from natural gas and coal. A version of the cruise missile engine is used in WASP II, a small one-person flying device.

From Nov. 28 to Dec. 3 peace groups intend to block the firm's entrance each morning as employees arrive for work. One of several American and

Firm builds missile engines

Canadian anti-nuclear protests planned for next week, the action is expected to result in confrontation between Oakland County Sheriff's deputies and the protesters — who intend to be jailed.

"We are taking any and all necessary steps in the interest of all concerned — including the general public," said Sheriff Johannes Spreen, whose staff members met earlier this month with the organizers.

WHILE ANTI-WAR protesters have prayed outside Williams each Monday since Jan. 17, members were jailed only once for trespassing. On Aug. 9 they jumped the defense supplier's fence, threw red dye and floated candles in a pond to commemorate atomic bomb destruction at Nagasaki.

But next week, they will flaunt daily a court injunction by Oakland Circuit Judge James Thorburn forbidding trespassing, blocking egress or ingress or inviting anyone else to do so. Each morning, protesters will block the Williams driveway when employees arrive for work.

"We're not asking the workers to leave their jobs, that would be unacceptable on our part to do that," said Berger, a member of Lansing-based Covenant for Peace.

"What we're about is changing hearts and minds."

Covenant for Peace, a nine-member Christian faith group, requested a

meeting with Williams International executives a year ago. The purpose was to get the firm to cease making cruise missile engines and switch to "other products beneficial to the human family."

"Williams has incredible technology. We're just saying use that great technological ability you have — but on behalf of the human family," said Berger.

When no reply came, group member Sister Elizabeth Walters visited Williams and her request also was turned down. So the organization decided to hold weekly prayer vigils at the site and talk with employees.

"We're trying to build relationships, and it is happening," said Berger, who said Covenant has received calls and letters from employees.

BUT, STILL HOPING to talk with company management, Covenant for Peace decided to go for broke with the blockade. Helping it with the weeklong protest are members of "affinity groups like the Detroit Peace Community, Groundwork for a Just World and the Detroit Nuclear Freeze. One group will form the blockade each morning.

"We want to heighten the tension and crisis in such a way that the issue can't be run away from," said Berger, admitting the blockade is a very "confrontational method."

"But we're putting our bodies on the line and saying 'You can't do this anymore.'"

To assure authorities that their protest is peaceful, organizers met with sheriff's staff and a Walled Lake ministerial group and sent an open letter door to door in the blockade area. Employees were also advised of the blockade.

"There are no villains in this. We feel a responsibility to everyone involved," said Berger.

MEANWHILE, Williams International won't comment on plans to safeguard its premises. But a spokesperson said the firm will take "whatever steps necessary to assure the safety of people and property."

David Jolivet, vice president of public relations, said Williams management doesn't intend to meet with the protesters because "we don't see anything beneficial coming out of it."

He added the firm respects their right to protest but stressed they were jailed not for praying, but for trespassing.

"We understand the group is for peace and reduction of arms. We share their desire for peace and support a mutual reduction of arms. And we respect their right of peaceful demonstration," said Jolivet.

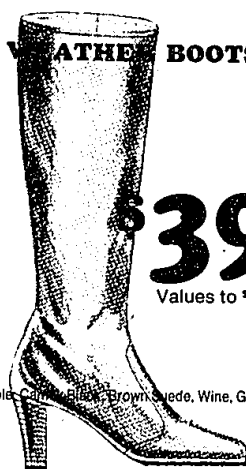
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The three components of the Blues program is part of a nationwide effort by Blue Cross and Blue Shield to control health-care costs. The steps will be:

- Prior authorization of nonemergency hospital admissions.
- Prior authorization of an appropriate length of stay in hospitals for all admissions.
- Medical necessity to determine the kind of treatment most appropriate for some selected medical conditions.

GROUP CUSTOMERS can choose any combination of the three components.

"Several of our customer groups have already signed for the first two elements of the prior authorization program," said Robert H. Reveley, Blues vice president for health-care affairs.

"There are a number of ways this program can cut costs," Reveley said. "In some cases, services that would have otherwise been performed in a hospital will be switched to a less-costly outpatient setting."

"If hospitalization is approved, authorization will be given for an appropriate length of stay based on the nature of the care. This is expected to eliminate any unnecessary hospital days."

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