

Discussion of War and the Draft

following the presentation of Glenn Pontier

Herman Harmelink asked Glenn Pontier if he was the only one of the four imprisoned for turning in his draft card. Glenn replied that he was not arrested for turning over the card; rather, "I declined to cooperate in applying for conscientious objection, I was drafted to do alternative service, but I wasn't going to cooperate at all." Asked by Mary Kansfield who were the members of the committee that received the cards, Glenn replied that by his recollection "there were about thirty" people on the committee, among them Paul van Elk and John Beardslee. Joanna Tipple asked Glenn "what would it look like for you to be convicted of being a Christian, since you have said you're not a Christian?" He replied that what he meant in denying that he was a Christian was that he could not accept the position of the church, which in his view does not "believe in its own Christianity. I do think that the example that this man Jesus gives us is so very powerful," but that the church's way of being Christian is "not the way Jesus would have done it."

Lynn Japinga asked those present how they remembered the debate at the synod on the issues around the draft. Glenn Pontier noted, "in fairness to those who opposed," that the law at the time required people to hold their own cards, so in fact the synod was being asked to aid and abet people in a crime. Rett Zabriskie remembers money as being an important issue: if the church as an institution accepted the cards, then the church would place itself, and therefore all the assets of the church, in jeopardy.