History of the Mankato Peace Vigil
Submitted by Sr. Gladys Schmitz, SSND

After the U.S. began bombing Afghanistan in response to the tragic event of 9/11, my friend Cheryl Lee, a Quaker, and I, Gladys Schmitz, SSND, returned home from an anti-war rally in St. Peter, Minnesota. To make sure our voices were heard, we decided we would meet every Wednesday in front of the Post Office in Mankato, Minnesota, from 12 to 1 p.m. to say NO to an unjust war! We said to each other, "somebody in Mankato has to say PUBLICLY that our war against Afghanistan is NOT a good war!"

As a result, we began our protest/vigil on November 7, 2001, exactly one month after the U.S. began bombing Afghanistan on October 7, 2001. By the second week, Richard Reisdorf, a Veteran for Peace, joined our Peace Community's vigil. Our group quickly expanded with Jim Brown, another Veteran for Peace, Georganne Kramer, Tom Orne and Jeremy Jaspers, all of whom have been with us for many years. Alice Zachmann, SSND, joined us after returning from many years of peace work in Washington, D.C.   And many other community members have joined us as they were able for weeks, months or years, since 2001. All are welcome!

While the war in Afghanistan continues, [and let it be known that U.S. military operations are happening in many countries across the continents] we have been at the Post Office each week, without exception, ever since 2001.

We pray and advocate with Congress for an end to war! We believe in nonviolence as the only way to solve world problems. For Christian members, nonviolence is the only way consistent with the teachings of Jesus. Who would Jesus bomb, or kill? No One! As School Sisters of Notre Dame committed to a more just and peaceful world, we are called to take a clear stand for creative and active nonviolence. "May peace prevail on the earth" as peace poles around the world (and on our campus) proclaim with us. We hope you'll do the same. Please join us on Wednesdays from 12noon – 1pm across from the 2nd St. Post Office in downtown Mankato!