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March 2015: Racial Reconciliation and Community

Progress towards the Promised Land

by Zoe M., Church of the Sojourners

“When we talk about race relations in America or racial progress, it’s all nonsense. There are no race relations. White people were crazy. Now they’re not as crazy. To say that black people have made progress would be to say they deserve what happened to them before... To say Obama is progress for black people is like saying he’s the first black person that is qualified to be president. Obama’s not black progress. That’s white progress. There’s been black people qualified to be president for hundreds of years.

“...The question is, you know, my kids are smart, educated, beautiful, polite children. There have been smart, educated, beautiful, polite black children for hundreds of years. The advantage that my children have is that my children are encountering the nicest white people that America has ever produced. Let’s hope America keeps producing nicer white people.” —Chris Rock

I like this quote from Chris Rock because when we talk about racism in America, it seems important to me to start that conversation with the understanding that *racism* is the word which refers to the particular sin that white people have committed against people of color, a very particular sin of white culture. Of course people of color have significant issues, sins and problems particular to the communities or situations of which they are a part, but *racism* (“a system of advantage based on race”) refers specifically, in this country anyway, to a particular wickedness perpetrated by white people. Therefore, the annihilation of racism is something that must happen especially in and through white people, and is not primarily a black issue. However, there is a paradox here, captured by Martin Luther King, Jr.: “We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny.”

King, in his “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” expressed so eloquently his great sense of disappointment in the white church’s



failure to support an overtly Christian, nonviolent movement to right a great injustice. He had assumed that the white ministers and churches would be among his strongest allies. Why weren’t they? What forces and fears caused the majority of white churches to withhold their support—even to ferociously oppose—in such a straightforward case of right and wrong? Not many years before, a similar moral deficiency had been seen in most of the churches in Nazi Germany when similarly unambiguous evils were being committed. In hindsight, it’s easy to look back and say, They should have stood up to Hitler, or They should have marched with Martin. I had a conversation with a white woman in her 60s just

Continued next page...

after she'd seen the movie *Selma*, and she was overcome with shame at her past obliviousness to the suffering of her fellow Christians during that time. "Where was I?" she said. "I remember thinking, 'That's not right,' when I saw all that on tv. But it didn't even occur to me to get involved. I didn't think of it as having anything to do with me."

I think that this historical moment in America, this time of Ferguson, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, John Crawford, Alex Nieto, Oscar Grant, mass incarceration, stop and frisk, and so many other examples, is a fresh opportunity to bring a powerful Christian witness in a time of great turmoil and injustice. We don't have a Martin Luther King calling so clearly from a Christian conviction and giving specific actions: "Come stand with us in Selma." But we have his example. We need to seek today's forms of creative solidarity that speak of our discipleship and convictions. Those of us who are white have a special responsibility to this. I don't know exactly what form it should take, but I believe we need to be energetic in rousing ourselves to entreat God for a way, and not drowsing through this ripe moment. I don't want us to let fear, busyness, uncertainty, or addiction to comfort prevent us from seeking real engagement.

As I write this, I find myself thinking about the phrase "white church." Though the majority of my church is white, I would never call it a "white church" because to do so would be to disrespect or deny the presence of the people of color who are in our midst. I am trying to think through both the particular work of white Christians as well as the call that is on all of us to be a part of Christ's witness for justice and forgiveness, and I want to both separate those and combine them.

This complexity of being separate and combined is very personal, as my Ethiopian-born daughter and niece—literally African Americans—are part of my closest family relationships. While I check the box "Caucasian," I would also check the box "African American family," as in our family, the issues affecting African Americans affect me to my core. America's toxic, complicated, destructive racial history and practice have become as personal as my own heartbeat.

My white suburban upbringing did not obviously lead me toward an engagement with race issues; I, like most white Americans (and unlike most non-white Americans) had the luxury of engaging the issues only when I felt like it. I vividly remember the shock I felt in fifth grade when I did a report about slavery. The facts I gathered stunned me. The image of the bodies arranged in the slave ship and the description of the treatment of those human beings was literally unbelievable to me. I was only able to take it in by communicating to myself how long ago it was. Then that shock sank back beneath the surface and my warm, safe life flowed forward.

But I couldn't escape being confronted again with more contemporary forms of the same sin. When I began teaching creative writing in prison, almost 20 years ago, the racial

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disparity in the prison population was impossible not to notice. Slowly, through the stories my students were writing, different realities of life in America seeped into my consciousness and conscience in evocative examples and emotional vibrancy. I began seeking out fiction, nonfiction, theology, poetry, memoirs, movies and news programs by black, Asian, Latino, and Native American writers and journalists, with a growing hunger to understand my nation's relationship with race more deeply. During this time I also traveled to El Salvador, to Guatemala, and South Sudan. I didn't even know then how necessary my growing understanding would be as the future mother of an African American daughter.

In 2002 a man I'll call W joined my creative writing class and began writing his memoir. His story was incredible. A member of a Black Power group called US, he was at a tense meeting at UCLA in 1969 when conflict arose and two Black Panthers were killed by a member of US. W was not involved in the conflict, but he and his brother received sentences of 7 years to life for "conspiracy to commit murder." W escaped from San Quentin five years later and lived for 20 years in South America, raising a family and eventually negotiating his surrender in exchange for safe passage for his children to the U.S. (an agreement which was immediately reneged on once he was back in prison). Little did he know when he turned himself in that he would spend another 20 years in San Quentin and not even be able to see his children again for over a decade, let alone raise them.

How do I describe the things I learned by walking with him word by word, page by page, through his life story, through the rage and weariness at the conditions of blatant racism and injustice with which he was surrounded... the love and agony for his family... the playful and committed companionship of his brother... the passionate revolutionary spirit that longed to be a part of real change... the growth of his own consciousness from militant to nonviolent... his soul-searching about the nature of forgiveness... his reconnection to the God he had known as a child. All the Googling I did to try and understand historical context, intersecting stories,

GENTEfication

a poem by Jesús Iñiguez

Oftentimes, I feel like these words I speak no longer belong to me.
These exclamations, estos dichos, lagrimas and smiles, are all a part of this delusion
of what used to be.
The polka dot sidewalks where my sisters once played “el anvioncito” [sic]
in lopsided chalk-boxed outlines
have been overrun by caffeinated vintage cowboy boys, [sic]
expensive high heels, and Italian wingtips.
The stoop where mother used to call me in
when the sun would go down and the streetlights not turn on
is now inhabited by faces I never saw strolling through my neighborhood
when I was exploring the blank starless skies of my small young city experience.
Police presence looms larger around every corner,
yet somehow, I feel more vulnerable and unsafe.
The renovated spic-and-span lofts are now spic-and-Spanish less.
Los santos that guarded every street corner have migrated,
las velas that burned in windows beneath La Virgen are now extinguished in light of
flat screen TVs,
las tiendas where my mother would go and purchase herbal remedies
are now bars and coffee shops and yoga studios
where whitey goes to self-medicate and meditate.
My gente is gone, and I’m here... trying to make sense of where our American
dreams went.
Sometimes, I feel like these words I speak never belonged to me.
Like I learned them in some sort of effort to adapt,
but then I was confronted with this ironic twist
that these words were to serve as a bulletin to inform me of where my place in this
city no longer was.
EVICTION.
They don’t want to call it gentrification because they don’t want to feel responsible.
But that’s what it is and that’s exactly what they are.
Gentrification is the modern manifest destiny,
a carbon copy of micro Christopher Columbus type discovery,
the new redlining,
the updated form of segregation,
a story of pillage and destruction as old as Western culture itself.
But me? I’m a proponent of GENTEfication.
People before property,
People before profit,
People before visions of perfection by opportunistic and parasitic developers.
GENTEfication.
So communities like mine could continue to grow instead of wither, dismantle, and
disappear.
So self-determination isn’t dictated by rat and roach infestations and Mount Everest
rising rent prices.
Where God isn’t dead, and the art and culture of my people sprawled onto the walls
isn’t whitewashed.

GENTEfication.

You can find a copy of the written poem with video credits here:
<http://dreamersadrift.com/newest-vid/gentefication>

After the Film

*Fifty years we have remembered
Fifty years from Selma and
the blood on the nightsticks
and on the faces of warriors
who did not fight
And many years now I have wondered
if I could have seen the storm coming
seen it for what it was
and marched with the others
out into its rain*

*maybe
this is not a question that
needs its answer now
But I hope I will know
when it is time to
face the weather*

a gavitt / 1-20-2015

Letter from the editor:

As many of us know, fifty years ago this month, Martin Luther King Jr. lead some 50,000 protestors on a march to Montgomery, Alabama to ensure black voters had fair and equal opportunities to vote. 2,000 of those marchers had begun the walk days before in Selma, sleeping in fields and walking 12 hours a day to reach their destination. Their courage in the face of enormous opposition is remembered in the recently released *Selma*, a movie that several of the writers in this newsletter mention. Heather Ashcroft-Clark recounts Jeanne Howe’s involvement in the march to Selma all those years ago. Anne Gavitt writes the poem above in response to seeing the movie.

From the injustices of the prison system to the recent killings of unarmed men, women, and children by members of the police force, the sad fact remains that even in those fifty years since Selma, not enough change has occurred. One of our writers named W. (on page 7) writes eloquently about his personal experience of this inequality and what he learned from MLK’s insistence that violence wasn’t the answer. Dawn Noelle Smith Buetler recounts her involvement in a gathering to support the family members of folks in their community who were killed by the police. Buetler was able to get permission to share the poem GENTEfication by Jesus Iñiguez, an artist from her local community. If you’d like to hear it spoken, check out the link to the video. Stephen Lawson of Lotus House in St Louis writes about God’s reconciliation in light of the events in Ferguson. Even though inequality still exists we have hope that reconciliation is possible because of Jesus.

And so we say as one, Come, Lord Jesus, come!
—Christiana Peterson

Brown Lives Matter: Sojourners in solidarity *by Dawn Noelle Smith Buetler*

On December 21, 2014 we were honored by the invitation to participate as a congregation with the families of Alex Nieto, O'shaine Evans, Antonio Lopez, Yanira Serrano, and Errol Chang at a protest march and Christmas "posada. These Bay Area families were gathered in solidarity and support of one another around the common experience of seeking justice and accountability for their loved ones, all of whom were killed in 2014 by law enforcement officers. This particular event marked 9 months since the killing of Alex Nieto, right here in our own "back yard" on March 21 of last year. The details and events of his death and what followed can be found by anyone willing to do the research. In summary: In response to reports of a man with a gun (he was carrying a taser licensed to him as a security guard) who was eating a burrito and sunflower seeds on Bernal Hill, police opened fire (a total of 59 shots) within 6 seconds of arriving on the scene, leaving Alex dead with 14-15 bullet wounds. The autopsy report was not released until 6 months later. The names of the 4 shooting officers had not yet been released at the time of this gathering, 9 months later. The names were finally made public in January, and in early February of this year (2015) the District Attorney released his report deciding not to file criminal charges against the shooting officers.

Even before the deaths of Michael Brown and Eric Garner sparked national media attention, posters of Alex Nieto with the tagline "Brown Lives Matter" could be found around the mission. This photo was taken in May of 2014 at the corner of Florida and 23rd street (just a few houses down from our gathered worship space). It wasn't until September, however, that some of us Sojourners began to be present at monthly gatherings on Bernal Hill in memory of Alex and in solidarity with his family. We aren't able to make it every month, but our presence eventually led to an invitation to share some words as people of faith. These are those words:

We are here because our faith requires us to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God. We are humbled by the privilege to walk with you in this struggle, and overwhelmed by the message of AMOR that has characterized the struggle for truth about the murder of Alex Nieto. We are aware that racial bias deeply affects our country, and we acknowledge the ways that we ourselves are affected by this bias. We want to embody the true reality that all of us, regardless of skin color or nationality, are beloved members of God's family.

We are here, also, on this last Sunday of Advent, honoring the mother who waited, presumably for nine months, for her son to come out of the darkness of the womb into the light of day. We wait with you, Elvira and Refugio, for nine months now, for the truth and the names of those involved in the death of Alex Nieto to come out of the darkness of the tomb and into the light of day. We pray with you that tonight, the longest night of the year, the truth be



born out of this struggle. We remember, with you, tonight, the words of Mary, who lived to see her own son killed by the cops of their day, guilty only of speaking out against the oppression of his people. She rejoiced that God might bring down rulers from their thrones and lift up the humble, filling the hungry with good things and sending the rich away empty.

In November, Refugio shared his memories of times with Alex as a child right here on this hill. I stand here, not only as a member of this community and my congregation, but also as a mother who contemplates why the words womb and tomb rhyme - both are places of darkness. As a mother and a poet, I am reminded that I have a prophetic voice and a responsibility to teach my children, my Central American-born, white sons, who have played on this hill with their friends just as Alex played with his father, to do their part in bringing forth new life, a new way, to examine their own hearts for the infection of racial bias, to seek a cure, and to speak out.

YO QUIERO SER SOLIDARIA. I don't even know exactly how to translate that into English in a way that makes sense. The idea of solidarity loses something when it is translated into the language of the dominant culture. But what it means to me is that I desire to live in recognition of and solidarity with the pain, suffering, and scarcity that we, as human beings, cause one another. As a resident of the mission, a mother, a christian, and representative of Church of the Sojourners I would call all who find themselves in resonance with any of these "categories" of being - to examine your own hearts for the infection of racial bias, to seek a cure, and to SPEAK OUT . . . words of AMOR, ACCOUNTABILITY, and JUSTICE.

Hope Fellowship News

by Michelle Porter



Laura, Alan, and Sammy Caruthers

Our annual theme at Hope Fellowship for 2015 is A Year of Worship: *The hour is coming, and is now here, when true worshippers will worship God in spirit and truth, for God seeks such as these.... John 4:23*

Our pastoral team, Joe and Nancy Gatlin and Fernando Arroyo gave us these words about the theme for the year: “Our agenda spills over with issues, our days are filled with labor, our every turn presents new legitimate needs of family members, brothers and sisters, and neighbors. Especially at such times we need to find a deep place of intimacy and familiarity with God. The Psalmist tells us, ‘Know that the Lord is God. It is he that made us, and we are his, we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.’ (Ps 100:3)

The knowledge of God leads to grateful hearts filled with thanksgiving. With the security of this loving relationship, we can present ourselves as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God. This is our spiritual worship. (Romans 12:1) Throughout 2015, we will have various teaching series that will help us grow in our personal and gathered worship so that our lives may be more deeply grounded in peace, justice and reconciliation.”

We also continue discussing and discerning if we will write a covenant for Hope Fellowship and are spending one Saturday a month for members to meet and work through the discernment process as outlined in the book, *Discerning God’s Will Together*, by Danny E. Morris and Charles M. Olsen.

Besides these covenant meetings, we have our regular monthly Sunday members’ meeting to discuss other issues facing our body. The transition of Joe and Nancy Gatlin out of the pastoral role in the next few years and the issue of sexuality, sexual ethics and LGBTQ issues are other topics that we have addressed and will continue to talk about in 2015.

Hope Fellowship celebrated with Reeve and Jessie Hunter as they welcomed their first child, Everette Arnold, on December 9, 2014.

It is with great sadness that I share that Alan Caruthers passed away on Monday, January 19th after many years suffering with various forms of cancer. His wife Laura and son Sammy are grateful that Laura’s mom, Sandy, will continue living with them and helping during this difficult time. Friends, family, colleagues, and Hope Fellowshippers attended the remembrance service in Waco where we celebrated Alan’s life well-lived as a disciple of Christ.

Medardo and Cristina Coronado have been worshipping and participating in the life of Hope Fellowship for about three years and were confirmed as members at a February members’ meeting and presented to the body at our February All-Church worship. We are grateful for their addition to our body.

As we enter the season of Lent, our teaching times focus on Praising God in Our Relationships and we look forward to being led by God’s spirit in this time before Easter.



Jessie and Reeve Hunter, baby Everette Arnold Hunter

Sojourners News

by Dawn Noelle Smith Buetler



Inspired by C. Christopher Smith's book *The Virtue of Dialogue* and his words to us at our retreat back in August of 2014, we have continued in slow conversation and will soon be wrapping up the topic of the role of scripture in our lives and continuing on to explore our diverse views on sexuality in light of faithfulness to God's plan. As we come closer to the end of our year without apprentices, we are pleased to announce that applications are due in by April 26 for those interested in apprenticeship with Sojourners (starting in August 2015).

In keeping with our name, there have been multiple sojourns (both far and near) as of late. Nate Pequette is now back with us after his sojourn to Guatemala. Katie Rivers traveled with family to Europe. Lee Kuiper and Jody Beavers have recently embarked on a sojourn to India and Asia (visiting former apprentice Greg Shafer along the way). Tim Otto traveled to Portland to participate in the Gay Christian Network Conference, and even as far as Winnipeg where he has engaged in good conversations about his new book *Oriented to Faith*. Edith Bernard was accompanied by Dawn Noelle on a half-day sojourn across the Golden Gate bridge for minor surgery, leaving her Squamous Cell Carcinoma successfully behind, and has returned with her eyebrows slightly rearranged (a detail which seems to provoke great delight in her). In February, the Toney family sojourned across the city for Caedmon's regular visit to the cardiologist and everything looks A-OK! This is just a sampling of the many sojourns taking place as of late. We hope to sojourn together with the family of Alex Nieto this lenten season as they mark the first anniversary of his death on March 21.



Pictures of Sojourners and others at a gathering to support the family of Alex Nieto; Epiphany art.

Soul Force: The Moral Struggle for Justice by W.

“We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again, we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force.”
—Martin Luther King, Jr.

As I look upon my past as it once was my present, I find that it is this soul force for justice that proves to be the most effective and sustainable in the fight against racism.

I was an active participant in the Black Power movement of the 1960s. Similar to today, it was a period when America was confronted with the issue of police brutality and the devaluing of Black lives. It was a time when young people across this country were breaking through racist barriers, opening up closed doors of opportunity, and raising critical questions about the war in Vietnam and the unequal distribution of wealth and power. It was a time when Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. raised the banner of non-violence. King is remembered for his nonviolence (sometimes scornfully by those who take the view that violence is necessary for social change) and for his Dream, but is he remembered enough for his uncompromising moral struggle for social justice?

For me and many of my peers at the time, the struggle against injustice was much more a physical struggle than it was a moral one. To us, *soul force* was elusive, intangible, and therefore no match for the violent impact of physical force.

Over the past few months, there has been a national outcry over deadly instances of police misconduct in this country, and a social momentum seems to be building around this very real and relevant issue of racism and police brutality. Our African American president publicly acknowledged the deep-seated racism in this country, and the widespread police killings of young Black and Brown men across this country, including Michael Brown, Eric Garner, and so many others, serve to illustrate his claim. There have also been daily episodes of senseless intercommunity violence of epidemic proportions, young Black men senselessly killing other young Black men. We must not make comparative excuses for the loss of Black lives. Black lives matter, regardless of who pulls the trigger.

There were essentially two tendencies in the protest movement against racial injustice and for social change: (1) Civil Rights; and (2) Black Power. The civil rights movement spoke to the conscience of this nation, compelling America to do a thorough self-examination over the mistreatment of its Black citizens. The Black Power tendency was to demand that America not only forsake its evil ways, but that it do so immediately or there would be consequences.

Examining my own life experience, I've come to realize that those consequences inevitably lead to more violence and only promote a perpetual cycle of unintended consequences. Being involved in the Black Power movement was crucial for me. It allowed me to reclaim and reconnect with my history, provided me with cultural self-

(continued from Zoe's article on page 2)

America's history. It was an education for me, an in-depth immersion in a story both personal and political, individual and spiritual. It was as if I actually got to walk in his shoes. Not like he did, of course, but there was a way in which he let me try on his life, let me probe and ask questions about what things felt like and why and how his thinking got from point A to point B. I asked naïve and sometimes ignorant questions, and he graciously and introspectively responded. In the course of that, a camaraderie grew between us, a partnership in understanding, a mutual respect.

It's been pointed out to me that Jesus didn't go after the corrupt and oppressive Roman system by trying to attack the power structure politically or militarily, but by speaking forth a kingdom consisting of relationships of love and respect, relationships that break down barriers and make family out of strangers, relationships rooted in forgiveness and self-giving love. I don't want to write about W just because he is black and I am white and this is an article about race and look, we have a beautiful friendship! It's more like, In the course of this beautiful friendship that we have, I have grown towards the kingdom. I can feel that freedom breeze blowing through us as we face the promised land. And it is in the kingdom that the dividing wall is broken down, oppression is dismantled; where Christ is our peace, making one new humanity; where love and life are synonyms, and beloved community blossoms. That's the kind of place I think MLK saw from his mountaintop. As we commit our hearts and actions to move forward, let's keep our compasses pointed in that direction.

respect, and made me feel that I could make a worthy contribution to humanity because I was not the lies that had been taught to me by White society. I was Black and I was human! But I have come to see that the fatal flaw of our vision was that the means were not as pure as the ends. This is where MLK had a wisdom I have now come to treasure, a wisdom drawn from his desire to imitate Jesus. “Means and ends must cohere because the end is preexistent in the means, and ultimately destructive means cannot bring about constructive ends.” I've seen the consequences of violence perpetrated by men of good intentions, for good causes!

King's way provided an example of *soul force*. He gave inspiration to hope in a vision of human society in which equality and human dignity prevail. His soul force comes from a deep conviction, the same passionate conviction that says all lives matter, and that a free, egalitarian and just society is possible. The hope of that vision reverberates today, and continues to have the capacity to make justice a reality for all of God's children.

—W. was recently released from prison after serving 26 years at San Quentin and 20 years in exile for a crime he did not commit. He's completing his memoir and is enjoying his freedom immensely--particularly the freedom he has to communicate with, spend time with, and enjoy his children.

The News from Lotus House

by Stephen Lawson

St. Louis is quiet now. The polar vortex presently rests over the city and people sprint from their cars into houses and shops to avoid the biting wind. The protests that have so dominated local news and events have stopped for the winter. It has been weeks since I've seen a National Guard Humvee driving through our neighborhood.

At the Lotus House, our rhythm of life changes with the demands of the season. The remnants of our garden have been uprooted and the backyard is still, save for the quiet sounds of chickens subdued by the chill. The children and adults bound to the school calendar of syllabi and semesters are well into the new one, and eagerly anticipating spring break, if only for the promise in the word "spring."

The events stemming from Ferguson these past few months have deeply affected life in our house. We have all participated in different gatherings, protests, and conversations on the issues related to racial injustice in our city. Alden has taken up an important leadership role in a group of pastors and leaders seeking to guide their congregations toward justice. Alden and myself were recently asked to be part of a planning committee for the Faith for Justice group in St. Louis that is looking to plan a big event on Holy Saturday. St. Louis is kind of a Holy Saturday city, situated between the tragedy of Good Friday and the joyous victory of Easter Sunday. As a city, we are still and mournful, unaware of how to redeem the time, of how to bring life from death. I pray that our work, joined with the work of so many others, will help to break the



barren soil of our injustice, allowing a new life to take root—a tree whose leaves are for the healing of the nations.

One of the major struggles at the Lotus House this past year has been with our jobs. Work is where most of us spend most of our waking hours, but it isn't often reflected upon in the church. As we are seeking to follow Jesus together in our every day lives, it is not surprising that we end up sharing our struggles with how we spend our days. Some of us are locked into jobs that are dissatisfying, which overwork and exhaust us. Others of us are in times of transition and are unsure of what our vocations will be or are just having difficulty finding work that is fulfilling and which provides enough income. We have been praying and discerning with one another, and are hopeful for new opportunities in the coming months.

In January we had our annual winter retreat. All of the adult members of the house went to the Benedictine monastery outside of the city and were hosted overnight. The retreat is always a great time of sharing. We affirm the work that the Spirit is doing in each other's lives, we reflect on our last year together, and we look forward toward our next year together. The most exciting news coming out of our retreat was that we unanimously decided to go ahead with the purchase of the house across the street from our present house. Everything with that has proceeded well since then, and we plan to have an official contract on the house within the next week. We hope that this house will allow us to add a few new members this year. We ask the SMC communities to be in prayer with us about who God will call to join our life together.



Imagining Reconciliation in Ferguson by Stephen Lawson of *The Lotus*

House

There has been a lot of talk about reconciliation around here lately. The violent and tragic death of Michael Brown just a few miles from our home ignited protests around our region. These protests have highlighted how divided our city is. The St. Louis region is one of the most racially and economically segregated metropolitan areas in America. When the 2010 census data was released, Franz Strasser, a reporter and video journalist with the BBC, was struck by the segregation so clearly present in an ostensibly “post-racial” America. He learned about the “Delmar Divide,” the single street that divides St. Louis City into black and white, rich and poor, over-educated and under-educated. He crossed an ocean to come and film a documentary short highlighting this uncomfortable reality.

As the Ferguson protests have shown us, it is not only St. Louis City that is divided. The protests have pointed out deep problems with St. Louis County. Following the protests, Radley Balko, a reporter from the *Washington Post*, published a substantial article describing how St. Louis County profits off of the poverty of its residents in poor black communities. There have also been dozens of stories posted in news outlets around the world recounting how the largely white police forces in St. Louis County (as well as in municipalities like Ferguson) have extremely disproportionate statistics of the races of people who are stopped, searched, and arrested.

In May 2014 a major multi-year study on the health of African-Americans in our region was released by a group of scholars from Washington University and Saint Louis University. They approached the study with the idea that the health of a community cannot be looked at in isolation, but must be examined along with economics, education, crime, employment, and many other factors. All of these things can contribute to a community’s flourishing, or to its decline. The picture they gave us of our region was stark. One cannot look at the report honestly and still claim that we live in a post-racial society. The extent of our segregation is revealed to us in maps and charts, as well as narratives and personal histories.

It is easy if you live in the wealthy and white parts of our region to be oblivious to this separation. You live your life, attend school, work and go to church all without crossing imaginary lines. You might hear stories about “those people” up there or the “shady neighborhoods” in north St. Louis, but you probably never go there and meet

the people for yourself. When you hear tragic stories of teenagers who are shot, it is easier to react in disgust and horror than it is to ask difficult questions about the region that you live in and sustain with your daily life.

Thankfully, in the midst of the tragedy of Michael Brown’s death, communities and churches are having some of these difficult conversations. While some people want to continue to keep their eyes closed to the divisions and disparities so blatantly apparent, others are humbly listening and learning about the extent of our divisions for the first time. I have been especially proud to see the churches in the St. Louis region on the forefront of calling for a change. Many churches have been awakened to their own segregation and have started meeting together to talk about how to heal the racial divisions that plague our society. There have been continual calls for racial reconciliation among the churches, and I hope that these calls will result in more than sentimental moments where we all hold hands and sing of unity. I desperately hope that the reconciliation that is called for will take root and bring about real, visible changes to the way we live and worship in this city.

But I confess that when I think about the task of reconciliation in light of the reality of our segregation, I am overwhelmed. When looking at the charts and maps that show how far-reaching our divisions go, I don’t know where to start. It seems impossible to create reconciliation in a region so locked into a history of separation and oppression. Non-profit organizations and communities of faith are no match for the destructive powers of sin that ravage communities from within and without.

This is where the Gospel must interrupt us. For the Christian Gospel shows us that it is impossible for us to bring about real reconciliation, for real reconciliation *has already* been brought about by God’s action in Jesus Christ. “Reconciliation is not an ethical demand in the understanding of the Christian faith,” writes theologian James Alison, “it is first of all something which has triumphantly happened in a sphere more real than ours, and which is tilting our universe on a new axis, whether or not we understand it. This means that what we think of as real, as stable and as ordered is not so, and what is real and true and ordered and stable is not what is behind us, but what we can become as we learn to undergo being set free from our imprisonment.”

Reconciliation is not something we do, but something that God *has already* accomplished. God *has already* disarmed the rulers and authorities, making a public spectacle of them by triumphing over them through the cross. God *has already* taken us

who were dead in our sins and strangers to the covenant and adopted us as children. In his own flesh Jesus has made peace between those of us who were far off and those of us who were near. He *has already* demolished the dividing wall of hostilities that we built between us, even if we continue to lie and say that it is still there.

We call the Jesus we worship the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Whatever else this might mean, it must mean that Jesus reigns. But the Scriptures tell us that Jesus doesn’t reign like the kings and emperors that we see. In his cross and resurrection, he tilted the universe in a new direction; he showed a reigning that is always about self-giving love. Jesus made peace and his peace is more real than the violence of the world. His reconciliation is more real than our division.

Our task then, is not to create reconciliation where there is only division. No, we are called to destroy the lie that is our division and reveal the true reality already established by God in Jesus—we are reconciled.

Now, action is no less essential on our part, but we are not tasked with creating reconciliation by force of will or ingenuity of programing. Rather, we repent of the daily lies we tell ourselves and which we so easily adopt as true. The church’s life together and its worship help to rid us of these lies by telling us once again the truth of the gospel. Theologian Karl Barth had this in mind when he wrote that if the church “has a right understanding of itself in its common breaking and eating of the one bread and therefore in its concrete life as a community, then as the body of Christ it has to understand itself as a promise of the emergence of the unity in which not only Christians but all men are already comprehended in Jesus Christ.”

The practice of reconciliation is not all that different from the practice of repentance. It is the recognition of the falsehood of the things we tell ourselves about our who we and our neighbors are. It is a turning from those lies to the truth of the Gospel. It is a looking to Christ, not as a far-away savior, but as a mirror who reveals to us just what it means to be a child of God. In looking at ourselves in that mirror, we can see clearly the dirt that is our lies and division and so can be empowered to wipe them away and reveal the God-given beauty marred by our muck. Repentance, James Alison writes, “is not the need to bow the will before some authority, much less a religious authority. Rather it is the gift of the ordinary access to being created which is proper to us good creatures whose goodness has inexplicably got involved in being something less than we are, a gift whose shape is a certain breaking of heart.”

Plow Creek News

by Angela Adams

Hello friends! While I could write volumes about each of our news updates, I have promised our fine editor a short contribution. So I will share the newsy bits by bullet point. Perhaps they will be concise enough to cut out and keep handy for prayer!

- **We are excited** about a new website at www.plowcreek.org!
- **We are uplifted** by our quarterly Mend worship services.
- **We are looking forward** to spring and our farm team is preparing for the growing season.
- **We are deeply thankful** for Sally Youngquist and Allan Howe for joining our Interim Leadership Team and we are grateful to the ILT for leading us through difficult decisions and transitions.
- **We are honored** to have been able to provide a peaceful resting place for Josephine, from Living Water, here in our cemetery.
- **We were encouraged and upheld** by hosting the SMC gathering in January. What a wonderful time spent with friends and companions on this journey!
- **We are concerned** for the health of Rich Foss, Jim Harnish, and David Gale, who has been diagnosed with congestive heart failure. **We are grateful** for the care they have received from family, friends, rehab center staff, and medical providers. **We pray** for God's good medicine for each of them – especially that God will fill David and Rich's lungs with divine breath. Jim's 93rd birthday was last week!
- **We are thankful** for friends who contributed to the purchase of a wheelchair lift and for all of the hard work preparing for and installing the lift so David and Margaret Gale could "return home" to the Corner House. Margaret spent her first night there last night! Hallelujah!
- **We are challenged** by the ILT's recommendation of a six-month sabbatical from shared funds to focus on reconciling relationships. We have been asked to focus on reconciling with one another during Lent. Please join us in prayer that conversations will be respectful and fruitful, forgiveness will be deep and true,

relationships will be healed, and time spent in conflict, redeemed.

- **We wait** for an important court hearing March 13th for O and J regarding their foster care case

- **We trust God** that during this time of sabbatical when much is unknown that financial needs will still be met and foundational principles for shared funds and mutual aid in the future can be discerned.

- **We take courage** knowing you hold us in your hearts and will pray for us. Thank you!

Last Tuesday, Matt and I went to see *Selma* at our local theater. Among a number of meaningful scenes, the one that still stays with me is a simple scene: one which shows Martin Luther King Jr. checking on his children while they are sleeping. I returned home from *Selma* that night just in time for bed for O and J, children who share King's skin tone but not our own.

We love O and J like our own, even if they will never be. Part of the way we show our love is by promising to never lie to them. This sounds great in theory, but it leads to incredibly difficult conversations! While some might tell you the world is colorblind and racism doesn't exist, O and J, at 7 and 4 years old, know that is just not true.

We tell them we love them just the way they are. We tell them they are beautiful. We tell them they might not have the same skin color as we do, but that some families are formed by love, not flesh. We tell them that no matter what happens, their eyes and hair and skin will always connect them to their birth family – a gift of resemblance from people who loved them deeply, though imperfectly. Just like we love them. And yet. . .

And yet, as long as I live, I will never forget the day O came home and told me that kids at school said she could not play because she did not have "peach skin." I will never forget J asking me if "black people" could go to his preschool. I'll never forget that we, not their birth family, taught them about racism and slavery, Martin Luther King Jr., and Rosa Parks. I'll never forget that in the courtroom where decisions are made about where these beautiful children should live, their mother is the only person of color.

Some might look at our multi-racial foster family and see intentional racial reconciliation. When I'm feeling particularly self-congratulatory, I say I can see it, too. But if I'm honest, our intention wasn't to be a multi-racial family in order to bring about racial reconciliation. We just made a simple choice: to say "yes" instead of "no." We just made room in our hearts and home in hopes of making a family. And perhaps these hopes for a family are the first steps toward reconciliation.



SMC coordinators and Plow Creekers enjoy an evening of Barn dancing and fellowship.

The News from Third Way

by Jen McCoy

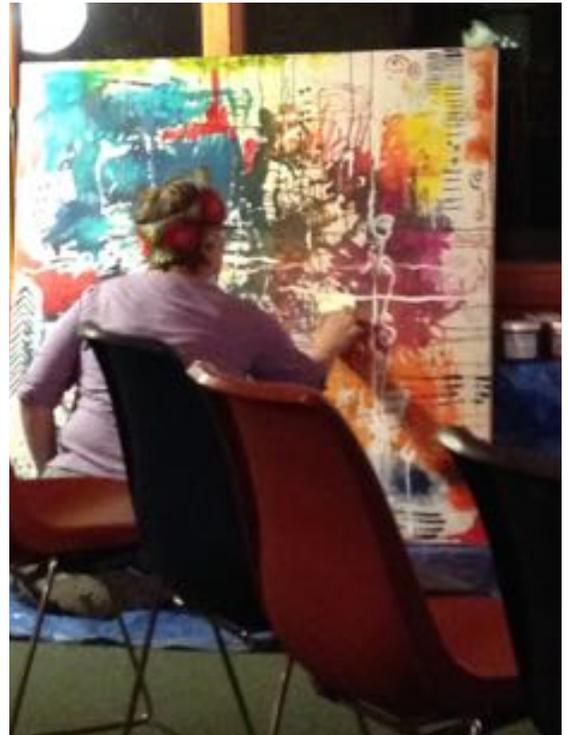
I am happy to say that this Winter has been so mild for us Minnesotans. We have had snow, that has come and gone (This is something that never happens). Usually we get snow, more snow, and then more on top of that. We have had a decent amount of below zero days, but nothing like “usual.” At this point in the season, we are all ready for the thaw and to open the windows. We know the thaw will come but it feels like it never will!

In October, we took around 40 people to our annual fall retreat to Camp Icahohwan in Amery, Wisconsin. This is a highlight of each fall season for our community. It is a great time to come together and just be with each other away from distractions. We have worship and devotional times, times for art and of course the very prestigious ping pong tournament (Yes, there is a trophy).

This season we have welcomed two new community members onto the TW staff. Julie Thoreen has is our new Children’s Director. She has brought a lot of new energy and much needed organization to this area of ministry. Also joining our staff is Danny Churchill. He is leading our creative and visual arts. During this time of welcoming these two we have had to say goodbye to Jessica Smith. She is still very much part of our community but no longer on staff. She is such a blessing to TW and we were thankful for the time she gave and continues to give in her volunteering role.

Our house churches have studied the book of Acts, and most recently went through a 6-week series called “Animate” written by

one of community members Terri Churchill. Terri originally wrote this for Woodland Hills Church to go through. This series was designed to



help people discover the beautiful transforming power of a Spirit-inspired imagination. At our Sunday meeting we watched a video from the Sunday service at Woodland Hills and then at our house churches we went through a booklet that was written for the series. It was a really powerful time to integrate our imaginations with our spiritual lives.

Finally, in January our Leadership Team took a weekend retreat to think through and celebrate our success over this past year and to look into 2015. Our community is very thankful for these 5 people and their leadership. I know I speak for many when I saw that we are excited for what is to come this year and trust that we will have many more blessings to count.



Reba Place Fellowship News

by Susan Kauffman

(Or, "Greetings from the Polar Vortex.") Life is without boredom here as usual, but there generally aren't as many good-byes as there have been lately. December was filled with packing and new house remodeling for Josh and Candace McCallister who, along with Jedidiah, Lilia and Simeon, have moved to Little Rock, AR to plant a new community. We loaded the moving truck on a comparatively mild day, and they left just in time to miss a major snowstorm. It was fortunate that Barb Grimsley and Gus Roddy were along, given that Jedidiah spent the trip throwing up due to flu and Josh started in upon their arrival. In addition, some of the promised local move-in help didn't show, so extra hands were appreciated until the family got back on its feet. Your prayers for a good job for Josh and connections with new neighbors are appreciated—and

for Reba kids in both cities who'll miss their long-time playmates.

Jesse Miller is stepping out of RPF membership in order to marry Andrea Buchanan in April. He was sent off at our monthly potluck with stories and well-wishes. Alan Gallivan is stepping away from membership as well; both will remain in contact and in the neighborhood.

Susan Kauffman has decided to become a Covenant Member, ending a four-year-plus decision process. Having participated in fellowship life for as long as she has, she doesn't expect life to change much as a result except that novice retreats will be replaced by yet more meetings.

We've taken a break from our same sex attraction/marriage discussions in order to resume normal small group meeting schedules. We did spend one evening, though, to give each member (as well as novices and practicing members) two minutes to



Reba folk send boxes out the window to the moving truck to help McCallisters pack their truck Jan. 24 to drive to Little Rock.

share where they were on the topic. After each person spoke, the group thanked them aloud. Those who were absent from that meeting shared their positions in subsequent meetings. While there isn't total unity of opinion, there is mutual respect and a commitment to unity in the body, with a general feeling (though no formal statement yet) that we can find a "third way" that is neither "affirming" nor "traditional" but leaves room for differences while practicing genuine welcome.

Winter is an amazing time to visit Lake Michigan. The Rogers Park group has been awed by the huge ice caves that have formed at "our" Pratt pier, and some have enjoyed cross-country skiing on a nearby golf course. Come see us!



Folks who live at the Clearing recently had an in-house weekend retreat together

The Changing of the Guard: SMC coordinators, old and new

Goodbye SMC job, Hello Arkansas

by Josh McCallister

David Janzen invited me to visit Church of the Sojourners as a member of the Reba delegation for an SMC coordinators meeting in January 2010. That was my introduction to Shalom Mission Communities.

Hearing all about David's traveling and giving wisdom to intentional communities near and far, I felt that that work was and is the living breathing church interpreted in our day and in this national context. That's probably why he invited me to join the coordinators.

I kept on attending the annual coordinators meetings and getting on the quarterly conference calls. I became the SMC Coordinator with an official changing of the guard two years ago, freeing Katie Rivers to pursue her interests in San Francisco. Mostly that meant writing checks and making deposits for our association; pulling together a conference call each quarter and then organizing the big biennial reunion, which I have only needed to plan once.

As coordinator I have visited each of our now six communities and met some extraordinary people in the extended family. All of these communities give me hope that God still does reconciling work and brings unity when sometimes all we see are ashes. Your community does that, even if it feels like things are fragile and all you can do is get by. As Tim Otto says, this life in community is possible, and often good. Ultimately we want our joined-together lives to give glory to God. I have hope that God is being glorified.

A fond memory from being coordinator involves bringing Fernando Llorca to the U.S. to join our Reunion. Some of us had special opportunities to fellowship with the Llorcas and have candid conversations. One night while traveling in Chicago, I asked Fernando about his relationship with Salvadoran Archbishop Romero, and to my surprise he had a lot to tell. Because of my friendship with Fernando, there is only one degree of separation whenever we read Romero's writing.

Today my family lives in Little Rock, Arkansas. We're sent here by Reba Place to plant a seed of Intentional Christian Community in the Evangelical south. Thus, we aren't living in a SMC community exactly (though I hope we can continue to be connected through the newsletter, gatherings, and visits.) And so, I have stepped down as coordinator to give my time and attention to this new project. Michelle Porter of Hope Fellowship is a most capable and organized woman. I'm sure SMC activities will continue without so much as a blip. See you all in October at the Reunion hosted by Hope Fellowship!

To hear more about our life in Little Rock, please visit ColemanCreekFolks.wordpress.com where we will share updates and photos.

What you're doing as communities gives glory to God. And it makes me very happy!

Hello SMC!

by Michelle Porter

I am excited to introduce myself to you as the new SMC Coordinator, and I am grateful for the work that Josh McCallister has done in this role.

My name is Michelle Porter, and I am part of Hope Fellowship in Waco, Texas. My husband, Matt, and I moved to Waco in 2006 for graduate school at Baylor University and started attending Hope Fellowship shortly after we moved. The Mennonite affiliation, bilingual nature, and intentional Christian community and living experience were church aspects we were seeking but not expecting to find in one body of believers.

We joined HF in 2009. As we continued building relationships and learning more about deep discipleship, we discerned that we would not pursue moving based solely on job opportunities. We decided to buy a house and establish roots in Waco with Hope Fellowship.

In 2010, we began fostering our son Jeremiah, and then in 2011, we got our daughter Evelyn. The shared life and intergenerational relationships were one of the aspects of HF that captured my attention from the start. It brings me joy to have other people know and love my children who desire to see them learn about and follow Jesus.

I have appreciated the relationships that HF has with the SMC communities and affirm the value in seeing faithful Christian lives lived out in different ways. I attended my first SMC Coordinators' meeting at Sojourners last January and was thankful to be part of the one this year at Plow Creek.

I look forward to building deeper relationships with the SMC churches and hope to make visits to see all of you soon!

God's peace and blessings,
Michelle Porter

On the road to Selma

by Heather Ashcroft-Clark

March 1965. One of the coldest and snowiest on record for Chicago. A church van departing for the march for voting rights in Selma, Alabama. In the front, four pastors, two of them black. In the back, two white women, one of them Jeanne Casner (later Howe), a twenty-something English teacher in a Chicago high school. In her overnight bag, a set of hair curlers nestled in their little zippered pouch, awaiting the nightly ritual which kept Jeanne looking her professional best. Such a benign little traveling companion, a humble collection of plastic and foam.

It would testify, though. It would testify.

It would testify from the bottom of a trashcan at a roadside rest stop along the route Jeanne and her comrades took that day. It would testify to the emancipation of a former sorority girl from a predictable scramble toward middle-class comfort to a risky climb “upward to Zion.” It would testify to the truth that all marches toward freedom go forward mostly one small step at a time, with the occasional leap of faith thrown in.

Small steps. Occasional leaps. Both testify.

The previous step was talking to the principal of Crane High School about letting her take a week off from classes to answer Dr. King's call for marchers. Miss Casner hoped to inspire her students with an eyewitness account from the front lines of the Civil Rights movement. Yet it was possible she wouldn't come back. The events of Bloody Sunday and its aftermath had made that clear, and she'd reckoned with it.

It wasn't the first time Jeanne had put herself in harm's way. That had come months ago, when she'd moved into arguably the worst neighborhood in Chicago. An abundance of rats. Broken glass. The smell of piss in trash-strewn alleys. People with no other place to go, no step up and out.

Jeanne chose to step into this mess, joining other young people living among the poor, stepping away from privilege into the freedom to serve. Some volunteers were conscientious objectors (e.g., Allan Howe) fulfilling their alternative to military service. Some came from Europe. They shared daily life and lively camaraderie at Project House of the West Side Christian Parish.

The parish was comprised of four churches spread out over a square mile that included the historic Maxwell Street market. One of the congregations, Church of Hope, was led for nine years by Julius Belser, who'd attended a Church of the Brethren seminary on the west side of the city. Two African-American ministers were part of this small inter-denominational group of radical pastors who'd risked moving their families to the inner city. They met frequently to share, pray, and encourage each other to proclaim in word and action the good news of God's kingdom coming to the neighborhood.

A year after her arrival at Project House, Jeanne joined the small interracial congregation of the Church of Hope. A spiritual search fueled by personal desperation, as well as her study of 12th century hermit Richard Rolle, led her to step into this unlikely circle. Finding a place where people were honest about their suffering helped. God seemed real for the first time in a long time. The Word took on flesh in each face.

Yes, everyone in that circle could testify to suffering. Everyone could testify, which drew them together as kin, no matter the color of their skin or the texture of their hair. To testify, you needed to remember, even when it hurt. Gazing



into the dusky faces around her, Jeanne couldn't help but remember Fanny, the “household help” of her childhood, the first person of color she'd come to know and love.

Their hair was so different, hers and Fanny's. Jeanne wouldn't have dreamed of touching it, but she could imagine how it would feel beneath her fingers. No matter how busily Fanny scrubbed or mopped, it stayed in place. Jeanne's hair escaped from her schoolgirl pigtails in curly red-brown wisps as she ironed, the smell of starched cotton in the air.

Working alongside this earnest Christian lady, Jeanne noticed the scars on Fanny's strong brown arms and wondered about the story behind them. Fanny had come to Chicago from Mississippi in dangerous times. Some things you didn't ask about. Fanny may have taught Jeanne how to clean, but Jeanne's mother had taught her daughter manners, and she minded them.

You could see plenty without asking or being told. Taking the train into the Loop from Brainerd station, Jeanne passed Fanny's neighborhood, a sorry collection of dilapidated wooden frame buildings connected by dirt streets. An absence of street lights. Someone as clean and kind and hardworking as Fanny shouldn't have to live there. But three or four dollars for a day's work minus train fare meant she wasn't going anywhere, just keeping body and soul together.

So different from Jeanne's family, which was moving up. Their far south side neighborhood, Auburn Gresham, housed second and third generation families who'd worked their way into the middle class. Her parents, first generation off the farm, each managed two years of college. They hoped for more for their daughter.

As a little girl, Jeanne loved the hours her father spent reading to her from the Harvard Classics. When he took a second job to boost the family income, he all but disappeared from family life, and Jeanne ached for his presence. When the family moved from their third floor apartment into a tidy brick house in a more upscale locale, Jeanne missed her friends. If moving up meant you didn't get to be with people you cared about, was it worth it?

Jeanne's mother cared about belonging to the right social circles and kept in touch with sorority sisters from college days. Such a frenzy of preparation when the Kappa Kappa Gammas came to call! Jeanne's depression-prone mother sparkled and shone, as did the house. Young Jeanne dreamed of joining someday.

And join she did, once she landed at Illinois Wesleyan on a drama scholarship. Constant stage performance proved laborious, so Jeanne switched majors her junior year. Blessed with a faculty mentor, she cultivated a passion for literature, graduating with a teaching certificate in English. Though she was happy to be part of the sisterhood, serving as a sorority officer her senior year dispelled any lingering illusions that a key-shaped pin protected one from heartache. The strain of keeping up appearances added to the weight.

Jeanne began her teaching career in Bloomington, IL, enjoying one summer of carefree overseas travel with a girlfriend, sleeping in hostels and seeing the sights of Europe. Hoping for higher wages, she began a master's degree program at the University of Chicago, living at home for part of that time. She started dating another grad student, a philosopher. Things looked good on the surface. He was from an apparently wealthy and respectable family. He and Jeanne had known each other in high school. Yet he proved brooding, depressed, and mysterious. Jeanne followed in his footsteps toward agnosticism, leaving her childhood faith behind. Eventually, they decided to part ways. In her mid-twenties in an era when most women married young, Jeanne began to wonder if she would ever find a life partner.

On top of this disappointment, things were disintegrating in Jeanne's family. There were things they couldn't seem to talk about. Jeanne's father continued to be absent, and her mother was more and more angry. Jeanne had no money to move elsewhere, but the situation felt intolerable. She certainly couldn't study there. And she couldn't fix what was broken, much as she wished otherwise.

Feeling stuck, desperate for a way out, Jeanne got into her old grey Plymouth and drove across 95th Street to the lakefront. Standing and looking out over the water, she imagined returning after dark and wading into the black surf

until her hair floated around her head, then going further, and further still, until it was too late to turn around.

On the drive homeward, she struggled with her impulse to end things, thinking of the pain it would bring to people who cared about her. Her family. Her friends. Those who'd encouraged and supported her as she sought her work in the world. Submerged in urgent prayer, an idea surfaced. She would call a former sorority sister who'd worked in the inner city. Maybe there would be something there for her, and if the worst happened in a dangerous location, at least she wouldn't have ended things of her own direct choice. She would have given her life for a noble cause.

Jeanne made the phone call, and two months later showed up at Project House, a ramshackle place on 15th Street. She intended to stay just long enough to regain her footing, but soon she was hooked, not on the thrill of doing something exotic and dangerous, but on the everyday joys of the journey—like seeing kids who'd never been out of the city playing under century-old oaks in a forest preserve or swimming in a pool for the first time. While helping little girls towel off their hair, Jeanne thought of Fanny.

From this place where Jeanne was growing by leaps and bounds, the step of sliding onto a chilly back seat in that Selma-bound van wasn't all that big. It was the next thing to do, the place where the rubber met the road.

Two young white women. Four men, two of them black. All four answered to "Reverend," but it was risky nonetheless. Bypassing "redneck routes" through parts of Indiana, they made stops where they would be less likely to be harassed (or worse) by whites. Once in Alabama, the danger

might accelerate.*Yet the tires sang against the pavement, testifying. Testifying. There were things worth living for. There were things worth risking for, suffering for, dying for. Dr. King invited them to affirm what the Lover of all souls proved "in his own body, on the tree."

And the little bag of hair curlers tagging along for the ride? No longer needed. When the way grows rough and steep, one sticks to essentials. Hence, the next step: with a quick flick of the wrist at a Tennessee rest stop, Jeanne Casner cast her vote for Fanny, for Church of Hope, for all sojourners joining hands and singing their way one step, one leap, at a time toward the Promised Land. Her choice of outward simplicity would be one of many mile markers along the way.

Fifty years later, here in Rebaland, a plain and simple snow-white ponytail follows Jeanne to the post office, potlucks, prayer. And it testifies. It testifies. Let those who see and hear take heart for the march.

* On the return journey they were run out of an Alabama restaurant, then drove for hours on painfully empty stomachs to get to a safe stopping place for some food. Before heading back north after the march was over, they'd learned that activist Viola Liuzzo, a white mother of five from Detroit, had been shot and killed by the KKK while transporting marchers back to Selma.

On the drive homeward, she struggled with her impulse to end things, thinking of the pain it would bring to people who cared about her. Her family. Her friends. Those who'd encouraged and supported her as she sought her work in the world. Submerged in urgent prayer, an idea surfaced.

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Shalom Connections

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