

Shalom Connections

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NUMBER 4



Between Thanksgiving and Longing

An Editorial/Poem

David Janzen
Reba Place Fellowship

*And the Word became flesh and lived among us...
Full of grace and truth.*

Streaming heaven's glory He was hurled
hungry and crying into a rude manger of straw,
wonder of wonders to the shepherds and to Mary,

while angels' choirs and bleating sheep
perform on obligatory Christmas cards
and shopping malls with non-stop music
sing "Buy, Buy Baby"
lest God-of-the-Market be angry at us
and go into a serious depression,
and international terrorism rapes our women,
so pay your taxes and we'll protect your
freedom of religion.

What has happened?
We've seen this before.

"And the Word became flesh...
From his fullness we have received

› **Between** cont on p.7

Thanksgivings and Longings

Church of the Sojourners

Conrad Yoder
Church of the Sojourners

Dale Gish: Longing to be filled with the fullness of Christ, completeness, wholeness. Looking for all of us on Christmas morning to be filled with joy as we behold the Christ-child, Word become Flesh, Emmanuel—truly our God with us.

Jack Bernard: Longing for the Kingdom to be fully present. Thankful for growing spirit of unity among us.

Teri Creeger: Longing for the Prince of Peace to be in every Christian's heart, to share Him with the world. Thankful for Christmas carols with depth of meaning. Thankful for my household; that Steven Braney gets to be our "adopted" son. Thankful for all the kids that hang out at our house.

Jeff Hare: Thankful for the celebration of birth and recreation. Thankful for my wife, my marriage, and my daughter. Thank-



June Hildebrand

ful for growing old with friends who are also growing old.

Edith Bernard: Longing to have a clear eye to see the Kingdom present among us. Thankful for Kleenex. Thankful for the section in *The Messiah* where the "Prince of Peace" comes blasting out. Thankful for rain when I'm inside, and for sunshine when I'm outside.

Tim Lockie: Thankful for the extreme diversity in my household. It will be a difficult Christmas without John Alexander, but thankful that that is not permanent. Thankful for George. Thankful for Tim Otto's cigars, "rootbeer cervezas," and the roof of Big Blue.

Rick DiMicco: Thankful to be in a community which seeks the Kingdom so determinedly. Thankful for silence.

Tim Otto: Thankful for our celebration of Thanksgiving; thankful for the hope that there is Someone to thank; thankful for the hope of mercy in Christmas.

Dan Zazvorka: Looking forward to seeing presents under the tree. Thankful for my wife, Kelly, and for Jack Bernard.

Laura Strzelec: Thankful for the children among us, and also those on the way.

Louise Harris: Very thankful for Doug's coming wedding! Thankful that Carrie, my daughter, has given her life to the Lord.

Mike Creeger: Thankful that "Immanuel" is true. Thankful for Carissa Mast and all the pleasant noises she has been learning.

Steve Waye: Thankful for my household. Thankful for Rupert and his adoption

funding from the church.

Conrad Yoder: Thankful for all my family—both biological and church. Longing for a renewing of the Mennonite Church, to bring the desires of community, and peace and reconciliation among ourselves, back to be principal desires of everyone.

Steven Braney: Thankful for chocolate. Thankful for lunches with James. Thankful for bike rides in pouring down rain.

Laura Hare: Thankful for Austin being here, living with us. Thankful for Lizbet Guatemala and her family being a part of us.

Zoe Mullery: Longing for God to let me in on some of his schemes so I can delightedly participate with him. Thankful for the schemes he has let me in on already. Longing for deeper intimacy with God and humans. Thankful for God's husbandry and for a church that loves me waiting for me in San Francisco. Longing for this novel to flow out of me like a flash flood. Thankful for this strange, solitary, rich time in Wichita. Thankful that I will get to see the beloved children in my life over Christmas.

› **Thanksgivings** cont on p. 4

Moving?

If you have recently moved, or will be changing mailing addresses in the next couple months, please drop us a line at our Publishing Office, either by phone, letter, or email, to let us know of your new address. The Publishing Office contact information is on page 3. This will allow you to get your next issues in a timely manner, as well as save us the costs associated with USPS mail forwarding. Thank you for your assistance with this task.

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Shalom Connections

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EDITOR David Janzen
COPY EDITOR Zoe Mullery
PUBLISHER Conrad Yoder
ASSEMBLY Edith Bernard
Lilian Martinez
CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS Matthew Creeger
Chris Evans
Anne Gavitt
Various from *The Catholic Worker*

CONTRIBUTIONS/PERMISSIONS/REPRINTS:
Contact the Editorial Office, below.

SUBSCRIPTIONS/ADDRESS CHANGES:
Contact the Publishing Office, below.

EDITORIAL OFFICE	PUBLISHING OFFICE
726 Seward St #2	2818 22nd St
Evanston, IL 60626	San Francisco, CA 94110
(847) 475-8715 voice	(415) 824-1495 voice
(847) 328-0772 fax	(415) 824-8931 fax
dj-janzen@juno.com	cyoder@adobe.com

Shalom Mission Communities are:

Reba Place Fellowship
PO Box 6575
Evanston, IL 60204 <reba_place@juno.com>
(847) 328-6066 voice (847) 328-8431 fax

Plow Creek Fellowship
Route 2, Box 2A
Tiskilwa, IL 61368 <plowcreekfarm@juno.com>
(815) 646-6600 voice (815) 646-4672 fax

Hope Fellowship
1700 Morrow Ave
Waco, TX 76707 <hopecmty@flash.net>
(254) 754-5942 voice

Church of the Sojourners
866 Potrero Ave
San Francisco, CA 94110
<info@churchofthesojourners.org>
(415) 824-8931 voice & fax
<http://www.churchofthesojourners.org>

School of the Americas Action

Jim Fitz
Plow Creek Fellowship

We just got back (November 19, 2001) from the rally to close the School of the Americas (SOA). Sunday began with some speeches. Then we formed a funeral procession at which time the names of victims of the SOA were read and some 10,000 of us responded by raising our cross with the name of a victim on it and saying "presente." During the reading of the names, we marched in lines of ten toward the gate of the fort. Upon reaching the gate, people left their crosses as a tribute to those who had died. This lasted about three hours.

We joined Christian Peacemaker Team (CPT) in doing an action in which we washed the flag, cleansing it from the dirty actions our country has taken. Then we washed our hands to say we too have been part of complying with these dirty actions and need washing too. Then we did a liturgy and a reading explaining what we were doing and why we were doing it. All during

the washing we sang *Lord, listen to your children praying*. Then Scott Kerr, Ben Horst and another person carried the washed flag along the fence till they found a place where they could slip under. They crossed under the fence and explained to MP's there what they were doing and why. During this some 15 of us went along on the outside of the fence singing *Lord, listen to your children praying*, until some 11 people from CPT had crossed and were walked or carried away.

It was a deeply moving experience for us. During the hand washing two reporters covering the event (they weren't part of any major networks) joined in the hand washing. Helena Graham (16), from Plow Creek crossed over, which most of us didn't expect.

The night before we met as a CPT affinity group to talk over the action. During this, we heard from 2 CPTers who recently returned from Colombia. Their sharing about the war and US involvement in it going on in Colombia was very moving, really bringing home our purpose in being there and doing the action. The ones who walked beyond the fence were given a ban and bar notice not to cross for five years—Helena was one of those.

Thank you for your interest, prayers, and support. Please write your congressmen and representatives showing your support of bill HR1810 to close SOA. ©



From Plow Creek

Ruth Anne Friesen
Plow Creek Fellowship

Jim Harnish: I appreciated David Janzen's editorial in the last *Shalom Connections* newsletter. I am longing for release from the misery of life for Donna and for me.

Louise Stahnke: I'm thankful for good health and longing for the kingdom of God.

Meghan Reha: I'm grateful for the connections between Shalom Mission Community youth. I'm longing to be out of America. I'm planning to go on an overseas mission trip next year—hopefully to New Zealand.

Dani Dean: I'm thankful for health and family—something not to be taken for granted. It is hard to find words for my longing.

Pete Begley: We're grateful to have

Hasand (our adopted daughter from Haiti) with us. Otherwise, existing day to day is our focus now. Leonid and I are planning soon to celebrate our 5th wedding anniversary.

Margaret Gale: We're blessed in our family relationships—good connections. I'm longing for peace on this earth.

Tutuk Honring: I'm grateful for life and that small spark of life within that makes one useful even though one is so small—like a small bud. I have hope, even in a broken world. It is still there because Jesus Christ is there. That is why there is hope, peace and joy.

Lynn Reha: I'm thankful for protection for our son Matthew whose head was banged at his work in Mennonite Voluntary Service in Dallas.

Jim Fitz: I'm grateful for a pretty good farm year. I'm longing to be better in health and saner of spirit.

Gary Dean: I'm grateful for family.

Neil Honing: Right now I'm grateful for the community's help to chase the steers

that got out, for support in new ventures, and for a clearer sense of God's call in our lives.

Boo Graham: I'm grateful for a greater sense of freedom on a personal level—a greater sense of ministry and mission.

Rich Foss: We're happy for Hannah's engagement, John's decisions about school, for an extravagantly loving wife, and for my loose-limbed energetic body.

Carol Gale: I'm also glad for Hasand's adoption and arrival. Wow! I'm longing for a closer walk with Jesus Christ.

Tim Gale: I'm thankful for family, for girls that say, "Daddy, I love you," and a warm bed. Every day is worthwhile.

Mark Stahnke: I'm glad right now for my new light-weight glasses.

Meg Foxvog: I'm thankful for a loving community and lots of raspberries. I'm longing for a deeper faith in God and closer relationships with family.

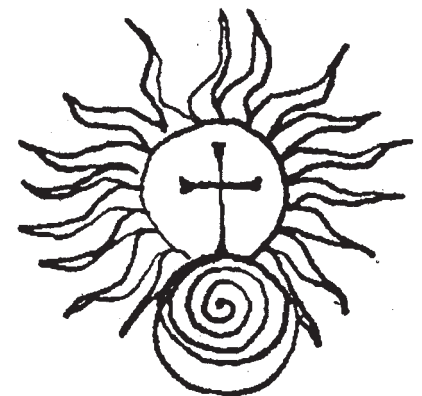
Ruth Anne Friesen: I'm glad for a beautiful Guatemalan Bible cover and a good small friend in Justin Graham—also for good health and peace.

[Recently heard at Plow Creek from Chicago visitor.] "This place sure has a lack of tall buildings!"



Three Kings

Brian Kavanagh



Extending the Tent— Advent at Hope Fellowship

Joe Gatlin
Hope Fellowship

Enlarge the site of your tent, and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out; do not hold back; lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes. Isaiah 54:2



A jam session at Hope Fellowship (l to r):
Dale Barron, J.B. Smith, John Garland, Phillip Bridgewater.

In the spirit of Isaiah's promise of abundance and prosperity we are focusing on the Middle East during this season of Advent. We hope to gain a greater understanding of the current issues and culture of the area where our Lord was born. Our themes (as well as the heart of our prayers) will be "increasing justice," "increasing peace," "increasing hope," and "increasing joy."

As we completed our Thanksgiving celebrations and looked toward the closing of 2001, we reflected on our thanksgivings and recognized that the tent that would hold our gratitude would be very large indeed. Following is only a partial list:

- J.B.'s move into the house with the Gatlins
- Teachings we have had on forgiveness, peace, and hope during this past year and

the way these have been applied in our lives

- The way that our church makes decisions, receives input from members, and moves toward consensus
- Spiritual growth of individual members and a deepening Anabaptist identity
- The love and wisdom of our pastors
- Willingness of the brothers and sisters to struggle during this past year with a number of hard issues
- Support that has been gathered for the Matamoros church
- Lives of our children and evidence that they are integrating the values of the kingdom into their lives
- The love and care of Anali, Gabriela, and J.B. as well as others in teaching Sunday School for the children



At the Hope Fellowship Women's Retreat (l to r):
Front: Lauren Barron, Cristina Dominguez, Ruth Boardman-Alexander, Nancy Gatlin.
Rear: Anali Gatlin, Norma Torres, Samuel Barron, Barbara Bridgewater, Ría Snyder

- Very clear signs of God's protection of our church during this past year as we worked through some controversies
- Tangible ways that brothers and sisters have supported each other such as reading to a child who is struggling with reading and school and assistance in repairing a washing machine
- Barbara's heart for evangelism in the neighborhood
- The patience of the church in considering Norma's pastoral candidacy for more than a year and God's clear leadership through this process.

At the end of the year we are waiting for a number of things, including in some cases waiting for the things we are grateful for to increase even more. As we wait, God has lengthened our cords of faith and strengthened our stakes of hope. Again, a partial list at year-end. We hope for:

- Return of Luis and Ramona and family from Mexico and their possible settlement in our neighborhood
- The Muellers' sabbatical in Waco this spring from their work in Kenya
- Possible arrival of the Eberhart-Phillips from New Zealand in August as they come to explore community with us
- A possible adoption of a baby for the Robinsons even before Christmas!
- The roof on the World Hunger school in Haiti to be finished
- The completion of the Bridgewaters' kitchen
- A vision of hope and for new ways for our tent to be extended
- Growth in character, understanding, and dedication of our membership, possibly followed by a growth in numbers
- Worship to be even more powerful and enjoyable
- Our children to increase in maturity and to continue to grow in faith
- Growth for our church in shalom and that the community would know us as children of peace.

Amen.

› Thanksgivings cont on p.6



From Reba Place Fellowship

David Janzen
Reba Place Fellowship

David Hovde: I'm thankful for meaningful work at L'Arche Chicago, for the good friendships there and at Reba Place Fellowship. I'm thankful for people who meet with me regularly as "accompanier" and spiritual director to hear what is going on with me. I'm grateful for meaningful involvement in the RPF internship program, the Clearing small group, and Fellowship meetings. I long for a special relationship of faithfulness and intimacy. I long to live out God's intent for sexuality in my life.



Joan Hyme

Nina Frantz: I feel grateful for this past year, at the same time I need eyes of faith to see all the fruits of the Lord's presence in our midst. I see our family still working hard at relationships, yet I see many great things happening. Each of the girls is finding her own school and adjusting to make it a good year and a good place for them to be. Tikva is in her final year at Saint Scholastica high school and is taking full advantage of this opportunity, as well as still working at the Romero center. Hilda has made a new start at Lakeview High School and is finding her way in that setting. Kessa rides the train

down to the Illinois Institute of Technology charter school, where she has found the new setting exciting and motivating. Ronn has found ways through prayer and friendships to guide our family on.

I hunger for the wisdom to keep walking in good ways with our family, and with all the violence and challenging relationships in our neighborhood, country and the world. I am blessed to see our youth leading us in these peacemaking endeavors through prayer vigils, drawing neighbors to worship, and fundraising for overseas causes. May we all have wisdom and grace to continue this complex dance that we have started with our God.

Albert Steiner: I'm thankful for life, God's continued love for me, food, shelter, work. I'm longing for a deeper, clearer hearing of God's voice, conviction of things that prevent me from hearing God, ability to witness for God's kingdom, that his kingdom may come. And I'm longing for continued health.

Vicki Caleb: I am grateful for the Fellowship and Reba Place Church, for the brothers and sisters who share beliefs and commitments with me; that with this group I can feel secure despite the September 11 tragedy, trusting in God to do what He wants and however chooses to dispose with me; that we can stand counter to the feeling that has swept our nation and brought us to war. I am grateful that together we can find, see, declare, and support what is true, against misunderstanding, pride, and the selfishness that causes many Americans to believe that what happens to Americans is much worse, and much more important, than what happens to others.

As to longing: I personally long for better health and a better character; to make a better adjustment between myself and my "needs," and the needs and rights of others.

Char Oda: At Karl and Charlotte Lehman's Theophostic seminar I received a real healing-blessing of my relationship with my father who died forty-one years ago. In the seminar there was a time of prayer for another woman, and as she was asked to renounce judgment against her father, I followed along with the same prayer for myself. That night I had a dream of a father with an infant whom he loved very much. But the child only spoke Swedish and the father could not understand her. I woke up and realized this was about me. I had been in Sweden with my mother the first year of my life, and then when I met my father, there was a barrier we never overcame. But in the

dream I could receive my father's love and love him in return. A great burden lifted for me, not just toward my father, but toward men in general. I feel freedom and joy, a new closeness to the Lord. I long to grow into the fullness of this new gift.

Doug Selph: I feel thankful for lots of things: the quality of people here, especially Lisa Blackwood and her girls with whom I get to experience life, my friend Ricky who calls a lot, my Church of the Sojourners friends, the teaching of John Alexander and its impact on my life, the teaching of Thomas Keating and the contemplative tradition, games I get to play, books like *Lord of the Rings* and *Harry Potter*, all the good celebrations around here, and the youth group I get to be with as Sunday School teacher. I'm longing for January 19 when I can live married with Lisa.

I'm giving thanks
these days for...
all the folks who don't
feel a need to move
or have a crisis!

Allan Howe: I'm giving thanks these days for a season of more honest dialogue between Blacks and Whites at Reba, good community oversight that happens in visitations between Shalom Missions Communities, a lack of winter in Chicago so far, several Fellowship members who've joined me on the board of Reba Place Day Nursery to see it through a time of crisis, the orderly way RPF is working through a backlog of big issues, the weekly outreach of Cana household as it hosts Monday evening potlucks and an interesting series of seminars on community themes, Brian Mosher who helps with all kinds of needs around here, and for all the folks who don't feel a need to move or have a crisis! I'm longing for some Kingdom creativity in circles of government, or at a minimum, common sense.

Nothing is more practical than finding God, that is, than falling in love in a quite absolute, final way. What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination, will affect everything. It will decide what will get you out of bed in the morning, what you do with your evenings, how you spend your weekends, what you read, who you know, what breaks your heart, and what amazes you with joy and gratitude. Fall in love, stay in love and it will decide everything. —Pedro Arrupe, S.J. ©

› *Between* cont from p.1

grace upon grace”
in a fragile space of freedom opened
by His persistent faithfulness
in His own world that did not know Him,
a source of terror to the mighty on their thrones,
trapped in their fear-filled reasons
of unavoidable violence,
opposed by suffering love in a body
that would not flee.

So here we stand in this eternal moment
in a clearing of freedom won
by his amazing grace and truth,
poised between thankfulness and longing,
between Christmas and His coming again.

On this holy ground I want to give thanks
for small things that make a big difference
in our life together.
I'm thankful for:

Crawling up shaky ladders, Brian and I,
to screw onto the Reba Meetinghouse wall a banner,
where folks on the Metra
and on Madison and Custer streets can see the words,
“God bless our country, our world, our enemies”

Unity with sisters and brothers
in meeting after Fellowship meeting
where the Holy Spirit has listened
to our many “reasons” and
melted our hearts
into practical answers that meet the needs.

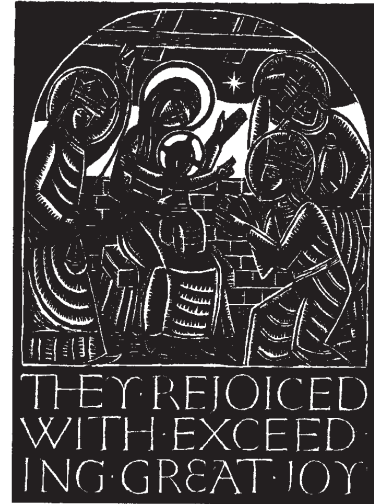
Great celebrations and parties,
Monday potlucks at Cana House,
and vocation-fortifying discussions at our
“Values and Practices of Community” seminars.

Struggles we're going through these days
in Reba Place Church
to find more honesty in our cross-cultural
and inter-racial relationships.

Life, energy, questions and renewal
coming to the Fellowship
through our gracious and truthful interns.

That web of ministries, relationships and love
that make a village home for us
in this multicolored urban neighborhood.

Shalom Mission Communities
with whom we could grieve John Alexander's death,
rejoice with the youth in a great summer retreat,
support leaders and refocus our vision
through community visitations,
grow in grace with all generations



Ken Thompson

at the Plow Creek camp meeting,
and follow joyfully the inter-community courtship
of Doug Selph and Lisa Blackwood
with Bethany and Hannah.

Committed sisters and brothers,
here and around the world,
who read these lines,
who put Jesus first.

A spirit of gratitude that helps us see
we already have everything we need,
that all will be well,
that the Messiah and His kingdom are among us.

And yet I'm longing for:

The nations of the world to understand and pursue
the things that make for peace.

A new generation of community
racially reconciled
and seasoned with youth.

Enough time,
if not on earth, then in heaven,
to outgrow the need for humbling experiences.

Just one more camp meeting with all the saints who've been grasped
by His grace and truth,
a society of salvation, justice and peace,
Shalom without end.

Between Thanksgiving and Longing
we are privileged to live the small things that make a big difference,
In the power of the promise...

“They will not hurt or destroy
on all my holy mountain;
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord
as the waters cover the sea.” Isaiah 9:11

Classifieds

Interns Wanted: Experience living in Mennonite Christian community, learn and share in work of growing fruits and vegetables ecologically. Helpful to have: interest in social justice and Spanish. Stipend included. Contact Plow Creek Mennonite Church at <mstahnke@juno.com> or (815) 646-4851.

Adoption Assistance Request: Laura and James Strzelec at Church of the Sojourners in San Francisco are eager to adopt a child. The most important (and difficult) part of the process involves finding a birthmother. If you know of any expectant women (anywhere in the U.S.) who might consider placing their newborn for adoption please contact the Strzelecs at (800) 462-9908, PIN 64. They can fill you in on the process from that point. ©



Shepherds Hear the Good News

Brian Kavanagh

SHALOM MISSION COMMUNITIES
2818 22ND ST
SAN FRANCISCO CA 94110-3461

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED