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 Strzelec’s at (800) 462-9908, PIN 64. They can fill you in on the process from that point.

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 singing “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

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Between 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 Cuna House, and vacation-foraging 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 multicultural urban neighborhood.

Between Thanksgivings and Longings

Thanksgivings and Longings

Church of the Sojourners

Central 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 cards 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. Thankful 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 Kleinen. Thankful for the section in The Message 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 Streezel: 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 Creager: 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 Luber 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.

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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Thanksgivings and Longings 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 humiliating 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 11:9

Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving continued on p.4

Thanksgiving continued on p.1
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 St. 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 engaging and motivated. She has found ways through prayer and friendships to guide our family on.

I hunger for the wisdom to keep walking in good ways with this issue 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 grace and grace and grace upon grace and a deeper and more complete sense of faith that we have started with our God.

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

Vicki Cahle: I am grateful for the Fellowship and Reha Place Church. for the brothers and sisters who share beliefs and concerns with me, that we can feel secure despite the September 11 tragedy, trusting in God to do what he wants and however chooses to dispose with me. It has stood constant in 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 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 Therapeutic sigmoidism 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 fol- lowed 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.

David Hovar: I’m thankful for meaningful work at L’Arche Chicago, for the good friendships there and at Reha Place Fellowship. I’m thankful for people with whom I 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.

Shalom Connections
Shalom Connections seeks to glorify God and pro-vokes a variety of fellowship and inspiration among sisters and brothers of the member churches of Shalom Mission Communities, and the wider network of intentional Christian communities.
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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) that 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 “pere- see.” 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 a action in which we washed the flag, cleaning 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 chil- dren 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 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.
From the rally, some 11 people from CPT had crossed and were carried away.
It was a deeply moving experience for us. During the hand washing two report- ers 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 CPT ers who recently returned from Colombia. Their sharing about the war and US involve- ment in it going on in Colombia was very moving, really bringing home our purpose in being there and doing the action. The time we walked the fence were given a ban and bar notice not to cross for five years—Helena was one of them.
Thank you for your interest, prayers, and support. Please write your congressmen and representatives showing your support of bill HR1810 to close SOA.
Extending the Tent—Advent at Hope Fellowship

Joe Gatlin
Hope Fellowship

Enlarge the size 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

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 pastor
• 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
• 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 Mueller’s sabbatical in Waco this season of Advent (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.”)
• The love and care of Anali, Gabriela, and J.B. as well as others in teaching Sunday School for the children
• 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.