

# Shalom Connections

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF SHALOM MISSION COMMUNITIES

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## Loving and Dying

### A Visit with Michele Cutts

*Joanne Janzen*  
Reba Place Fellowship

We were twenty minutes early, but surprise! there she was, already waiting for us in the lobby. Michele's warm welcome and hugs underlined the friendship we've shared in these past years when Michele was living at Plow Creek Fellowship. Hilda Carper and I had taken the EL from Reba Place and headed for the Friendly Towers of Jesus People USA. For a month we had looked forward to our March 6 visit with Michele Cutts.

As we took the elevator and hallways up to Michele's ninth-floor room, the people we passed greeted us warmly, introduced themselves and sometimes stopped to talk. We could sample the JPUSA community that was Michele's home for many years and is now again. At the first of December, after three years at Plow Creek, she moved back to JPUSA to be close to long-time friends and especially to her daughter Robin's family, who live in the Friendly Towers. Last spring Michele was diagnosed with advanced colon cancer and at that time her doctors said she'd probably have about a year to live.

Michele took the lead to tell us how she's feeling: needing to sleep more, some weakness and dizziness and "feeling too full" at the start of the day. The cancer often gives her fevers. She had a couple of recent bouts with severe pain until she learned she could take more pain pills. But Michele said much more about the peace the Lord has given as she approaches the end of her earthly



life.

She spoke freely about arrangements she's making now "...when I'm winding down. I've cancelled all my magazine subscriptions so no one else will have to deal with that. Two days ago I officially signed up for Horizon Hospice. I have morphine and a pain patch available if I need them. There are now three people who have

› *Loving and Dying* cont on p.13

# Redemption, Basketball and Twelve Years

*Sarah Foss*  
Plow Creek Fellowship

Jon is eighteen years old and six foot, seven inches tall. He has signed to play Division One basketball next school year at Colgate University.

When Jon was six years old, his Grandma disowned his mom (me) and her family. The cutting off came after I broke the silence and secrets of my extended family on the topic of sexual abuse.

Feeling shocked, shunned and rejected by the majority of my extended family was painful for everyone in our family (understatement). The Foss family received support from John Lehman, Anne Stewart and all the brothers and sisters at PCF. The healing journey has spanned twelve years since the initial rejection. Twelve years of our children's childhood. Twelve years since my mom had been in our home. Each summer on our trip to northern Minnesota we never knew what sort of reception we'd receive from my relatives.

God brought so much healing to me in those twelve years. A long, painful, seemingly never-ending drudgery through dark, murky, muddy, yucky terrain. Yet Jesus continued to speak the truth. I felt His love, protection and warm embrace over and over. It

sustained me through the shadows of death. It brought me out of the miry clay on to the Rock to stay!

After years of misery, God had set me free from past hurts and pain connected with my mom. I had continued to do small steps of kindnesses for my mom, never expecting her to respond in kind. Last fall her sister died. I drove the 650 miles to her funeral. At the funeral I saw my youngest brother, Joel, for the first time in over 14 years. He embraced me and sobbed. As we stood embracing I wondered what he was thinking. He said, "I remember you holding me". I was sixteen. He was two years old during one of my stepfather's drunken rages. Joel was remembering my love and protection of him in that memory.

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seemingly never-  
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muddy, yucky terrain.  
Yet Jesus continued  
to speak the truth.**

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Later my mom said, "When I saw Joel sobbing on your shoulder, I realized for the

first time that it wasn't just me who had been traumatized. You kids were even more traumatized."

I knew February 16, 2002 was going to be an emotional day. It was the last home basketball game at Princeton High School and it was Senior Parent Night. Rich and I had spent many hours in gymnasiums for the last twelve years watching our three children excel in sports. The joy of the gym contrasted with the grief of family pain. God blessed us with this "gym joy" in the midst of much pain. This chapter of joy was coming to a close on the evening of February 16.

At 10 am on February 16, Sarah answered the phone. My brother Carl asked, "What's for dinner tonight?"

"Where are you?" I said.

"Mom and I are in Princeton. We came to watch Jon's last home game," Carl said.

My heart surged with joy. A miracle—  
**GOD HAS DONE A MIRACLE.**

After twelve years my mom surprised us all by traveling 650 miles to see her grandson's final home basketball game. God had woven redemption and basketball over twelve years of time. A reminder to never give up. To be surprised by God's mysterious ways. Joy and loss mixed together screaming of God's redemption. Praise and thank the Lord! Ⓜ

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Rich & Sarah Foss

Jon Foss

## Shalom Connections

*Shalom Connections* seeks to glorify God and provide a means of fellowship and inspiration among sisters and brothers of the member churches of Shalom Mission Communities, and the wider network of intentional Christian communities. *Shalom Connections* is published quarterly in March, June, September and December by Church of the Sojourners, 866 Potrero Ave, San Francisco, CA 94110-2841. Subscriptions are free. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the official position of *Shalom Connections*, Church of the Sojourners, Shalom Mission Communities, or its member churches. **Postmaster:** send address changes to the Publishing Office address, below. Non-profit standard mail postage paid at San Francisco, CA 94188.

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# The Faithfulness of Our God

Louise Stahnke  
Plow Creek Fellowship

## Classifieds

A workcamp, from July 6-20, 2002, with a focus on community, simple living, and nonviolent action is being hosted by New Covenant Fellowship, an Anabaptist intentional Christian Community in Southeast Ohio. Participants will be part of study sessions, exploring living out their faith, help with garlic harvest and organic farming, take part in local peace and justice witness. No charge. Contact:

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Four years ago, Donna Harnish left the hospital and arrived home at Plow Creek. She was totally unable to care for herself due to Alzheimers. As that anniversary time comes by again, I reflect on the total faithfulness of our Lord. For four years, Donna has not missed a meal, an afternoon time in her chair, or the companionship of her husband or caring friends. The washing machine has run twice a day with needed laundry. Jim could be relieved to go home for noon breaks and to sleep at night. His car is faithfully in its place each day in front of Donna's apartment. No one has said to Jim, "Sorry, I just can't make it tonight. You'll have to be there yourself." And Jim has never said, "I'm not in the mood to come in this morning, maybe the night person can stay." As human beings, our faithfulness is so much less than God's. Surely we can trust Him to meet our every need, as Donna trusts us. ☺



# Church News

## News from Tiskilwa

Ruth Anne Friesen  
Plow Creek Fellowship

Gene Stoltzfus, the U.S. Director of Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT), came to Plow Creek on February 17 and shared with the adult class after worship. We had a good dialogue about the happenings in various countries where CPT is carrying out its violence-reduction ministry. It was interesting to hear how, in Palestine, CPT has been hosting various dignitaries in recent times so they might get a look at the areas where Israeli Defense Forces are demolishing homes. When one honored guest came, he was escorted to see the action and sure enough, the bulldozer arrived and started its work. It wasn't in the plan for the guest's limousine to be bulldozed into the pile of rubble as well!

Sunday evening Gene shared experiences from his recent trip to Afghanistan to a good crowd at a local Princeton church. It was impressive to hear how CPT's peacemaking instruments include a pen, a notebook, a camera, and a red hat that identifies the CPT organization—pretty simple and non-lethal.

Matt Reha is learning a lot about building homes with Habitat for Humanity in Dallas. He finds the work challenging and has decided to extend for another year.

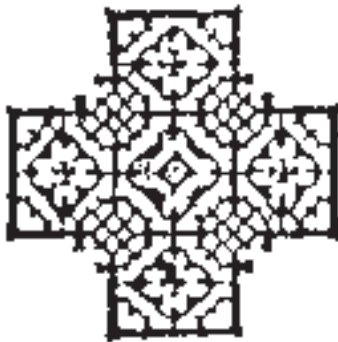
Jim Fitz is serving two months in Colombia with CPT (mid-January to mid-March). The challenges of accompanying and protecting poor people from death seems never-ending. (See Jim Fitz's journal for more news about his work with CPT in Colombia.) Jim hopes to return by way of El Salvador, visiting our sister community Valle Nuevo, along with others in the Shalom Communities delegation.

Rich Foss plans, Lord willing, to be on sabbatical in April, May, August and September. He will stay here at Plow Creek to rest, read and write about leadership. He is already looking forward with passion to April.

Jon Foss's Princeton High basketball team lost their last game on March 1. They were regional champs and runners-up in the sectionals. Their outstanding play this year has made them famous for miles around. We

wish Jon well as he looks ahead to attending Colgate University in the fall, to study and play basketball big time.

Well, those are some of the news tidbits from Plow Creek. We look forward to spring. It seems that the rains are already beginning with temperatures in the 40's. This has, indeed, been a most unusual winter, if you could even call it one.



## News from Waco

Lee Piché, Mary London  
Hope Fellowship

Since my first trip to Haiti thirteen years ago, I have struggled with calling our groups in any developing country "work teams." The Haitians are extremely skilled at their type of building, and farming as

well. I realized then that, even with a lot of construction experience, I am not as useful as a Haitian worker. I also realized that the money it cost to fly me there could have paid for half a year's salary for a Haitian worker, fed his family, and gotten a lot more done. The trip we took in January reminded me in a powerful way of why we go anyway.

So we don't go help get schools built or fields planted. Why do we go? We go to "ruin" lives by awakening compassion. Please read, hear and feel and, perhaps, get a glimpse of what being "ruined" means.

*Lee Piche is the executive director of World Hunger Relief and a member of Hope Fellowship. He took a group to Haiti in January of this year.*

**Prayer from a Full Heart** What can I say about the impact the Haiti trip has had on me without sounding cliché, trite, or overly dramatic? The fact is, the experience for me was dramatic. The fact is, the situation—all around this earth—is dramatic. The fact is, my life can never be the same. I hope it never will be.

During my first hour in Haiti, these thoughts sounded repeatedly: "I have not know what it is to suffer. I can never complain again." What I encountered robbed me immediately (but probably not fully) of the ability to enjoy my ignorance—ignorance about the way much of humanity lives, and how my culture and I make choices that keep things that way. The living conditions,



At the Hope Fellowship Men's Retreat.

Jim Snyder

and more so the expressions in eyes and on faces were so unfamiliar to me—so strained, so strong; so exhausted and sad; angering and angry, beautiful and loving, and almost all—even children—so knowing.

During our time there, I met men and women for whom years of mental and physical hard work would never pay off, no matter what they might do. I saw tiny children display incredible ingenuity and tenacity—any creative way to earn a few cents for a meal or a pair of shoes. I met an eight-year-old boy without parents who asked me to take him home with me. It was he who comforted me when he understood that I could not help him that day.

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I realized then that,  
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There was honesty, an acknowledgment of some complex, unnamable yet recognizable truth that made a lasting impression on me. Though I felt grief, I did not feel sorry for the people I was among. They carried too much dignity and wisdom for that. Perhaps it was the combination of palpable pain and gentle courage these folks wear in their eyes and strong bodies that penetrated what would have previously been my tendency to feel sympathy and helplessness over their/our situation. I was instead, inspired to shake myself out of the stupor of being overwhelmed and ignorant, and resolve to do the best I can from now on to inform myself both mentally and heartfully, about the circumstances of “all my relations” and how I can live in a more balanced, just, intelligent and Christ-like way.

A prayer emerged for me out of this experience: “Please God, forgive my pettiness, my gluttony, and my ignorance. Please teach me my true needs... Help me to ask every day, ‘How much is enough? How do my actions here affect my brothers and sisters everywhere? How do my choices today affect the children of the generations to come?’ Please give me courage to see the truths you would have me see, as well as the courage to respond accordingly. I am most grateful for all that I am blessed with, and humbly ask for the potency to serve my Family by sharing your gifts freely and without fear. And when I forget all of this

please bring to mind the faces and names of my friends in Haiti; remind me of the reality of struggle and of my place in it all.

“In gratitude. Amen.”

*Mary London was part of the group from Hope Fellowship which travelled to Haiti.*



## News from Rogers Park

Lisa Selph  
Fellowship of Rogers Park

With the joyful support of twenty-some guests from San Francisco and others from Plow Creek, the marriage of Lisa Blackwood and Doug Selph on January 19 was a big SMC event. A unique part of the ceremony came when Lisa gave a necklace to her daughters, Hannah and Bethany, along with this vow: “Though the hearts on these necklaces may be small, my heart will always be big enough to love both of you and Doug.” Lisa

› **Church News** cont on p.10



Lisa and Doug Selph (foreground) exchange vows with Sally Schreiner (holding mic) and Jack Bernard (reading).

Lisa Selph

# Getting Acquainted

## James and Laura tell on each other

*James and Laura Strzelec*  
Church of the Sojourners

Laura was born in Big Sky Country—Great Falls, Montana, that is. Her family moved to rural, small-town Western Washington when she was 5. Her family regularly attended the Presbyterian Church. She and her three younger sisters were quite involved in 4-H activities while growing up.

Meanwhile, James was born in Buffalo, New York. He and his three older brothers were raised in the Catholic Church. Unlike Laura, he recalls their family being exceedingly uninvolved in the life of their suburban community while growing up. Other reminiscences: going to Sunday school classes and weekday (say the following two words with a very deep, resonant, intimidating voice) RELIGIOUS EDUCATION classes and Family Cluster activities (something big in the highly folk-influenced Catholic Church at the time, along with intimate sit-in-a-circle Masses led by priests with guitars—very radical stuff); and the intriguing,

provocative and alluring stories about Jesus, and parables told by Jesus.

Both Laura and James went away to college—Laura, out of state to Stanford University, and James, within state to Rensselaer Polytechnic. Laura was quite involved with her InterVarsity chapter while at Stanford, although she rebelliously didn't follow the 'model' of what it meant to be a serious Christian in the fellowship. That would have meant signing up to lead a freshman Bible study as a sophomore. The IVCF staff challenged all freshmen (the freshmen at Stanford were almost universally used to being leaders in their high school context) to learn to be followers. Laura decided that was a good challenge and would take more than a year to learn. <chuckle>

James was certainly a shadowy character on campus—not the most extroverted disciple of Jesus you've ever laid eyes on. He attended Mass on campus, and admired (from a distance) and felt warmly towards the priest there. James made a stab or two at the Newman Fellowship on campus, but was lured away from the Catholic faith by a well-meaning <grin> friend, to the tempting grounds of the Episcopal Church. The Episcopal Church had wonderful liturgy, but none of the stuffiness or narrow-mindedness attendant with obedience to Rome <double-grin>. The Episcopal Church led to <gasp> the Presbyterian Church, and thankfully, it got no worse than that—for the time being. <triple-grin>.

After graduating from Stanford, Laura

worked in New York City with the United Church Board for World Ministries, focusing on informing and educating the North American church about the Central American church experience in the mid-80's. The following year, Laura earned a graduate degree in England studying Latin American politics. After that, arriving back in the Bay Area, she began relationships that still continue to this day. In 1990, Laura and some six women decided to live and minister together in a community they called The Well. The Well was situated in a large Victorian house which—not incidental to our story—was located very near the Church of the Sojourners' only home at the time, and friendships between the two groups developed. The Well became the official Church of the Sojourners New Year's Eve party location. Laura and the other women in her community were part of the San Francisco Vineyard church, where they had originally met each other.

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### Their first date involved feeding snack crackers to crocodiles.

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James made some important friends during his years of studies. There was Ravi, whom he met while an undergraduate. There was Tim, whom he met while doing time, um, I mean, while doing graduate study, at SUNY Stony Brook. When James came to study at Stanford University, he met Conrad and Rick. Both Conrad and Rick were at the InterVarsity Fellowship when (say the following name with a booming, door-shaking voice: ) JOHN ALEXANDER of Sojourners came there (accompanied by meek little Doug Selph, from whom nary a word was heard—Sojourners not being allowed to travel alone to such an evil and worldly and heathen place as Stanford) to speak to graduate students about calling—not to their studies, but to being part of the church, to being members of the Body of Christ. Radical and bracing (and offensive, John would be proud to know), to the well-developed sensibilities of a graduate student's ears. Thus began James' relationship with the Church of the Sojourners. Before long he moved to the City to more fully enter into the life of the church.

Laura and James met for the first time through mutual friends. The first time they laid eyes on each other was in the candle-lit



James and Laura Strzelec

James and Laura Strzelec

foyer of a convent (do convents have foyers?) still basking in a post-Taizé-prayer spiritual-uplift <insert heavenly music> talk about spiritual people! Their first date involved feeding snack crackers to crocodiles, but better than that, led ultimately to something much more exciting and long-lasting: a wonderful marriage that they are both exceptionally thankful for. They are currently pursuing members at Sojourners, living in church housing with Tim Otto and Steve Waye, within the context of a larger household which also contains (barely) Conrad, Margaret, Josh, Judy and Anne-Marie (and Zoe, when she's not barnstorming across the country as a high-falutin' writer who actually gets paid for fiction and other what-nots).



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## Penny Luken's Life

Patricia Delano  
Reba Place Fellowship

Eleanor Lukens was born in Rochester, NY. "My parents always called me Penny. We were Episcopalians, so I was baptized and brought up in that church. I had two brothers and a sister, and we lived in Rochester until the end of WWII. When my father returned from the war, he took a position at Cornell University Law School and we

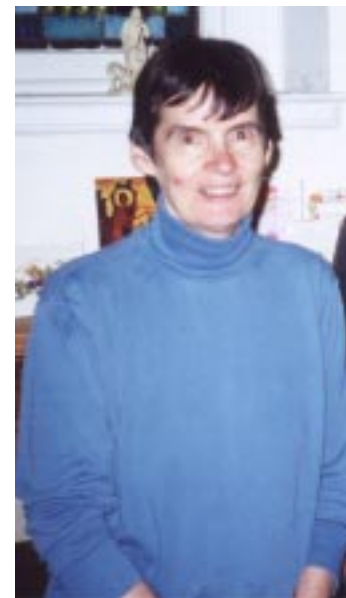
moved to Ithaca. Later, he was called to Harvard Law School and we moved to Cambridge where I lived until I was married.

"My two brothers went to law school. I attended Radcliffe and majored in classics, studying Latin and Greek literature. It's interesting that our youngest daughter, Martha, will be finishing law school this spring."

Penny and David met and married in Cambridge. "We met at a student church service. David was attending MIT. Our first child, Caroline, was born in England. We lived there about two years while David was in the Air Force. We returned to Massachusetts where our other three children, John, Martha and Edd were born.

"David wanted to teach at a college where he could admit that Christianity was an important part of Western culture. He applied for a college teaching position in Liberia and we were there for seven years. Our time in Liberia was a good experience in many ways. There were some missionaries and Peace Corps volunteers on campus. It was a close community of people who helped each other.

"We next moved to Canada so David could take a PhD at the U. of Toronto. We looked around for a charismatic community and a friend there told us about Reba Place. When we returned to the U.S., we were very conscious that our children didn't have any place they could say they came from; they had lived all these different places and we wanted them to have some stability. We were looking for a place to settle down and where we could be in touch with a Christian community. In 1979, we came to Evanston because we knew we could be guests of Reba Place Fellowship for a short time. We realized that we wanted to stay here for good. We went to common meals, attended a membership, worshiped on Sundays where we



Penny Lukens

found the service very charismatic.

"A personal relationship with Jesus developed gradually for me after I became an adult. In Liberia, we learned more about conducting a relationship with the Lord, reading the Bible regularly, reading it to the children at meals, and in a prayer group where we had conversational prayer."

At Reba Place, Penny served as church secretary for eight years. In 1997, Penny and Susanne Donahue opened a Ten Thousand Villages store on Main Street. The store's mission is to provide a stable income for people in thirty developing countries by giving them orders and buying their handmade crafts. Ten Thousand Villages pays them a fair wage and pays them up front, so they don't have to borrow money to do their crafts and they have enough income that they can build homes, send their children to school, and afford health care. Penny will be retiring from the store in a few months.

For about seven years David and Penny headed the drama committee at Reba. Penny has been in the Racial Reconciliation Choir and has volunteered at the Reba food coop, the Harvest, for many years.

"It is very meaningful to us to be in Christian community, where we can practice total sharing with our brothers and sisters. We like living in a larger household where we can share the tasks. I was talking to a volunteer at the store about this and it was hard for her to understand being that open and trusting people enough to share your income and to open your thoughts to them. It made me realize again how precious that is."

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# Is Sharing Required of Everyone?

## A Lenten Editorial

David Janzen  
Reba Place Fellowship

Greg Clark and I recently met with fifty Greenville College students and their professors as they visited Reba. They were touring a few Chicago churches, a temple, and a mosque as part of a course in “Faith and Action.” Someone asked the inevitable question we hear whenever we’ve talked about our Reba common purse, “Is the way you share money and possessions required of everyone?” So many times I’ve heard that question, and I still don’t feel like I’ve given the right answer. I’m sure this time will be no different.

Jesus says rather flatly, “None of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.” (Luke 14:33) So what is the answer to the question? The answer is “No, of course not. Everyone doesn’t have to share their possessions. Only those who want to be disciples of Jesus.”

We don’t need to water down Jesus’ sayings till they can apply to everyone. Jesus’ sayings are for people who have heard and received the Good News. And for those who are awakened by God’s love and want to be Jesus’ disciples, they can read the Gospels and be inspired by the Holy Spirit. We don’t need to make rules for them either. The readiness to act on Jesus’ radical teachings is, it seems to me, a measure of how much we have experienced God’s radical love, how much we trust the One who calls us. But a community of sharing is a tremendous help

in living the life of Jesus with his disciples, for which we can not be grateful enough.

The state can require the same thing of everybody. But the Good News is different; it is good precisely because God pours out gifts of forgiveness, healing, and acceptance, and then waits for our response. The community of Jesus’ followers is a voluntary association. You don’t have to join. But if you want to follow Jesus and claim him as Lord, then sharing possessions, forgiving sins, loving enemies, etc. is what He does and what we are called to do if we want to be with Him. If you want discipleship on your own terms, then whom are your following, and who is your Lord?

Well, all those things I have said sound really bold and prophetic when they are for others. But then later, when I listen to what I’ve said as if it were meant for me, I am troubled. I have to admit, I am constantly wanting to be and choosing to be a disciple on my own terms. I am constantly (though not as constantly) repenting and seeing how great a sinner I am in contrast to the love of the One I have chosen to follow.

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**Humility, I used to think, was a trick mirror. As soon as I’d see a little of it in myself, I’d get proud of my virtue, the mirror would break, I’d be sent back to GO and not collect \$200.**

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In community we don’t just share possessions—that is the easy part. We share life and that means we share our sins—twice. The first time we share our sins by inflicting them on one another. The second time we share them in confession, forgiveness and repentance. And as St. Francis reminds us, that is pure joy. That is why we cannot be

too grateful for community.

In Jean Vanier’s Christmas letter to the network of L’Arche communities, I noticed these lines: “Never before have I been so conscious of my own failings, inadequacies and brokenness. And never before have I been so grateful to Jesus for L’Arche [communities]... as little signs of love in the world.” Now Jean Vanier is certainly a person to include in your All-Time Holiness Hall of Fame. And he struggles to convey how worthless he is. What gives?

Saint Francis spoke of himself as the worst of sinners, the least worthy of all human beings to receive the love that God had lavished upon him. If God had given as much love to others, he insisted, they would have accomplished far more than he had done with it.

I used to read such words and think, “Humility like this is an attitude ‘holy’ people cultivate in order to not get carried away with their achievements. But I’m having doubts about that theory. Perhaps Francis really was that bad, and that is why God chose to work through him so marvelously. The same for Jean Vanier. And maybe you and me.

Humility, I used to think, was a trick mirror. As soon as I’d see a little of it in myself, I’d get proud of my virtue, the mirror would break, I’d be sent back to GO and not collect \$200. Whenever I’d try to measure my humble progress, it would spoil everything. I’m coming to see that humility is simply not a virtue one grows into. It is a matter of seeing clearly. Humility is the result of seeing myself as I am, in contrast to how much Jesus loves, serves and forgives me.

Community is helpful to us precisely because it brings out the worst in us. Our sin is experienced daily. But the fact that I’m a sinner no longer leads me to despair or to make useless resolutions to do better. The mercy and forgiveness I have received only makes me more conscious of how much more I need. And in my nothingness there





arises a secret joy that cannot be described. I am loved. And there is no reason for it I can tell except that God loves to love sinners until they can't help but love back from sheer gratitude. Most days it is my joy to work as hard as I can for Jesus, with flawed people like myself, because of what I have already received, not because of what else I expect to get for the effort.

So what does all this have to do Lent? In the first half of the Gospel of Mark we see Jesus on a triumphant march plundering the devil's territory—bestowing healings and exorcisms, calling disciples, telling amazing parables, exposing oppressors, growing crowds, producing free bread and fish, heralding the kingdom coming. In Mark 8:22-26 we read of Jesus healing a blind man—twice. The first time he sees people “like trees walking.” The second time he sees clearly.

Then Jesus gathers his disciples to ask, “Who do you say that I am?” Peter blurts out the growing awareness they had not yet dared to speak, “You are the Messiah.” Like the blind man, Peter sees. But Jesus strikes fear and dismay into their hearts when he adds, “The Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.” Peter rebuked Jesus. He wanted a Messiah on his own terms. Jesus rebuked him, “Get behind me, Satan.”

Many of us, like Peter, can call Jesus “Messiah.” But like the blind man, we only see half-way. Clear sight comes from going to Jerusalem with Jesus, recognizing the kind of Messiah he really is. The disciples will share not just triumphs with him, they will share suffering and death with him and so come close to God. They will discover the very worst in themselves, and be forgiven. Then the Holy Spirit will allow them to see clearly, to receive the second sight of knowing who Jesus is.

Francis and Jean Vanier have discovered that we come close to God and to each other when we share everything in trust of the One who calls us. We don't just trust Him with our souls, but God asks for our possessions, our sin, and our lives together with other broken people like ourselves. The less we hold our souls, possessions and sin to ourselves the closer we can come to one another and to God. This is the journey of Lent, the way of the Cross. Is this for everyone? It is. It is an invitation to walk with Jesus through suffering and death, to receive clear sight and perfect joy on the only path of reconciliation.



# Making Peace

Jim Fitz  
PLow Creek Fellowship

**In the face of violent threats—the way of the cross** February 18: Couldn't sleep so here I'm writing at 1:30am. On the street the other day a very fragile-looking woman approached me asking for help for her family. She had a baby and said that she had no husband and that she has diabetes, showing me the sores on her legs. It is a real challenge to know what Jesus would do. It nearly brought tears to my eyes. Our mission here is not material aid, and there is always the reasoning that if we start it we will have a line at the door asking for handouts. I gave her the change in my pocket, but should I have given her more? Beggars on the street in the shopping area are common. They often have some missing limbs. How should we respond? I don't think there is any kind of welfare system. In the States, we say they would use it for drugs, though I don't think it would be the case here. What do you do when there are three or four in a row? It pricks my conscience. I hope you can share in the prick. Lord, help us rich people to do what you would have us do!

**WIJCUT?** Been thinking lately about what is Jesus calling us to? My answer, I pray it comes from the Lord, is to support the

desire of the people to follow the way of the cross, in the face of violent threats from people with guns. These guns are the wood that feeds the flames of war and suffering here.

It was very encouraging at our recent Lenten action the way the Lord showed his Presence and Gospel rising in the people as they made banners full of prayers for peace, disarmament, and the way of non-violence. We hung them at the place of a Para[military] checkpoint. We CPTers camped on this point for two nights and three days, symbolically claiming the region for peace with and for the *campesinos*. It has been a place where the *campesinos* have experienced a lot of fear and intimidation. Some fifty of them had the courage to come to visit and pray and eat *sopocho sopa* (soup). Great is our God—He is alive and well bringing his kingdom.

**Planting Seeds** We heard that in Chiapas, Mexico, CPTers there met two soldiers who said they had left the army as the result of such conversations, and there could have been more (who knows). So these conversations could have more significance than we imagine. May the Lord give us the right attitude (not righteous indignation), and the right words. Pray with us.

It's 5am! I better get some sleep.

**Breaking Through with Prayer** In a meeting with a *campesino* group, we noted

› **Making Peace** cont on p.11



Jim Fitz

## › Church News *cont from p.5*

changed her last name to Selph and Doug has become a novice member of Reba Place Fellowship.

Orwin Youngquist has joined the Fellowship of Rogers Park (while still living in Evanston) in order to grow in friendship with Sally Schreiner. Tim and Patty Peebles have also joined the small group to explore RPF membership. Ronn Frantz, who was the only male in the FRP for years, now is in a band of four couples where none are leading other groups. This enables the FRP to work together on issues of communal identity.

While relationships are coming together, vehicles are falling apart. The van has died and gone to heaven. The Honda is rusting away. The Toyota has a temperamental alternator. But through all this, the Frantzes offer cheerful 24-hour road service, so we keep on rolling.



## News from Evanston

*David Janzen*  
Reba Place Fellowship

Following the great reunion time of Doug and Lisa's wedding, Reba hosted the January 20-22 SMC leaders' retreat. We reviewed the past year and sought God's guidance for events in the year ahead. David Janzen was encouraged to adjust his schedule to visit and build contacts with a wider circle of Shalom Connections Communities in the months ahead.

Reba intern Brian Mosher was baptized on February 3, followed by a delightful dinner of fish and bread. His spiritual awakening and joyful service have been signs of God's love among us.

Community life continues, centered in small group meetings and Monday evening potlucks, followed by seminars on Values and Practices of Christian Community.

The gloom of winter was shattered in our "Fat Tuesday" Fellowship members meeting where we learned how to give the "kiss of peace" while wearing eye masks with big red noses. Our spiritual leader, Greg Clark, taught us to tolerate a song from his youth with the lines, "Ananias and Saphira/ did conspire a/ plot to deceive..." The first verse

concludes with "and they dropped dead. Hey!" Verse two begins with, "God loves a cheerful giver who gives all..." Ask Greg to sing it. No one else will.

This winter we've held an End-of-Winter Sweepstakes in which the winner was promised "unimaginable glory" along with possible prizes such as "A Congelated Condo in Nome, Alaska; a husky-powered snowmobile; or an all-expenses-paid week in an ice-fishing hut on Camp Lake, Wisconsin." The winner was Reba intern Jodi Thompson, who guessed February 16 as the date when all the snow would be melted in the courtyard outside the Reba shop. In a private ceremony in the Fellowship Office, Jodi was coronated End-of-Winter Queen by donning three Hawaiian leis and a crepe-paper grass skirt. This event was duly authenticated by the court photographer and a certificate notarized by Char Oda. Two days later, we had the largest snow of the winter (eight inches) and the temperature plunged to -7°F. But we don't believe it, since we already have our End-of-Winter Queen.



## News from San Francisco

*Conrad Yoder*  
Church of the Sojourners

On the morning of January 17, about twenty-five of us at Church of the Sojourners boarded United flight 858, headed for

Chicago and the big event of the wedding of Doug Selph and Lisa Blackwood. Even though it was a tad colder than we're used to in San Francisco, we all had a wonderful time throughout this festive wedding weekend, where we worked and played alongside our friends from Reba Place Fellowship and Living Water Church. We set up tables, made napkin rings, confetti, and wedding favor boxes, decorated vases, practiced music, arranged flowers, and folded programs. We ate many good meals together, sang, told jokes and stories about our dear brother Doug and sister Lisa, and made new friends, as well as renewed ties with old ones.

While the Bachelorette Party consisted of Lisa having a quiet evening with her daughters, Doug's Bachelor Party was definitely more adventuresome. Doug and the rest of the men brave enough to venture on this journey were given the task of an elaborate quest for the Ring With Which to Wed Lisa, based on the recent "Lord of the Ring" movie. We adventured in Rivedell (The Clearing), the Mines of Moria (RPC Activities Center), and the Wilderness Journey (Evanston Lakefront Park). The evening ended with popcorn, hot chocolate and Drambuie, with only one upset stomach and one pulled hamstring.

The wedding was a great celebration of the betrothed couple, manifested in God's great love and outpouring of gifts on all, with Jack Bernard and Sally Schreiner officiating. The ceremony not only marked the culmination of Doug and Lisa's courtship, but a deepening bond between our two communities as well. We continue to give thanks for this gift of brothers and sisters with whom we can walk closely together.

Our youth are planning a service work trip to Montana this summer, and with any trip of this nature comes fund raisers. On Valentine's Day, we were treated to a candle-lit gourmet dinner and a silent auction (which wasn't all that silent). The youth did a fantastic job of serving us and also (perhaps unintentionally?) providing us with entertainment. For their hard work, they raised about \$550 towards their summer trip.

Dan, Kelly and Hannah Zazvorka have begun foster parenting as of November 8, 2001. Leo Guerrero, now 9 months old, is a big bundle of joy and is beginning to walk. Although he slobbers a lot, everyone at Sojourners is excited about his presence. It was initially thought that he would be going back to his birth parents relatively soon after he arrived at the Zazvorkas, but he is still with us and we will enjoy his time

here, however long that may be.

We have all been blessed greatly by a new addition to the Lockie family: Alexina Noelle Lockie, born at 1:00 p.m. on February 19, weighing in at 6 lbs. 14 oz., 18 1/2" long. Tim and Jenny are beaming with joy over their daughter, and the rest of us along with them. The Lockies chose not to know their child's sex before she was born, so the mystery baby's nursery was painted and decorated in a gender-neutral yellow and light-blue motif, with clouds painted on the ceiling, along with glow-in-the-dark paint for the stars and moon. Mother and daughter are doing extremely well, and Dad is taking many pictures and home movies, to be sprung on her at her 18th birthday party. It was on last year's Good Friday that Jenny's dad John Alexander died, and the joy that Alexina brings is a counter-weight to the painful loss of our well-loved pastor, which we still feel deeply and perhaps even more profoundly in this Lenten season.

[And a tag-on news tidbit: Zoe here, editing this article, reports that she misses her church family a lot but at least can say that a couple of weeks ago she passed the 100-page mark on her novel, and recently preached her first (and possibly last) sermon, at Mennonite Church of the Servant here in Wichita.]



Tim Lockie

Jenny, Tim and Alexina Lockie

### › *Making Peace* cont from p.9

how the Paras seem to be getting braver and braver in their many illegal activities. Just don't know what to do. So at that moment of the meeting I took the leap and said, "I feel a little embarrassed about bringing this up, and I'm not sure how to say this (I wasn't sure of the Spanish words either) but in this stuck situation where we find ourselves, I think that we should ask for God's help."

### May the Lord give us the right attitude (not righteous indignation), and the right words.

A local woman, "Betty," said, "You're right! We should have started all our meetings asking for God's help. We're comfortable with doing it." Others were quiet, though she was really adamant that everyone was OK with it. So we prayed. She prayed

to ask God's pardon for our not calling on him at the beginning of this meeting and the other meetings and for help in our stuck situation. Duane, a CPTer, thanked the Lord for the many things of creation that were surrounding us, and I prayed for help in security, and gave praise to God.

**Lord, teach us to pray** Later we did an evaluation of the Lenten action, and it came up that during the prayer time there not many *campesinos* who participated during the time when we opened it up for open prayer. We wondered, are there things that could be done so people would participate more? Betty said, "People just are not accustomed to praying out loud. Years ago some Protestants came and held meetings in our village and lots of people attended. People are interested in religion, in my family we are accustomed to it, but for most of us we just don't know how to do it." Jack, another local, said, "I pray privately, but words don't come publicly." Others didn't say much, though my sense was they agreed with what Betty

and Jack were saying. Brenda, a CPTer, said that we sure don't want to be forcing something on anyone. They tried to assure us that we were not forcing them. Duane said maybe what is happening is that the Lord is teaching us ALL how to pray.

Alleluia! Amen, Amen, as they say here.

### **The Lord is my helper; I will not fear**

I'm not sure how to convey this, but everyone keeps telling us how dangerous the situation is here in the city, especially in the Port. Yet almost never do we see anything actually happen. Everyone is dressed in civilian clothes with all the ordinary things going on: mothers with babies, children playing, people buying and selling, teens with their music and the newest styles just like in the states, people laughing and having ordinary conversations, motorcycles and bikes buzzing everywhere—many times with the whole family on it. And yet we are constantly reminded of the lurking danger. Psychologi-

### › *Making Peace* cont on p.12

# On the John Howard Yoder Conference

March 7-9 at Notre Dame University

David Janzen  
Reba Place Fellowship

“Interesting to theologians,” you might say, “but why should I care?” Allan Howe (Reba), Tim Pebbles (Living Water Community Church), and I traveled together to attend a Believers Church Conference whose topic was “Assessing the Theological Legacy of John Howard Yoder.”

Richard Hays, in *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, cites Reba Place Fellowship and other Christian intentional communities as prime social examples of John Howard Yoder’s theology of the church, tested over time in real life. Yoder, as teacher, writer and mentor, spoke to the questions that mattered to us: violence, wars, the Gospel of peace, and living an alternative vision of community as residents aliens. We are, in many ways, the legacy of John Howard Yoder’s work, both as a friend and as a theologian.

My first blessing in this lively gathering of over 300 was to meet at least five of my teachers there, many college and seminary peers, and a surprising number of new acquaintances in their 20’s, fired up by Yoder’s theology which makes living the social politics of Jesus seem compelling for our time. This was also a time to meet up with some major-league theologians and practitioners who claim Yoder as their mentor—Stanley Hauerwas, Glen Stassen and John

Paul Lederach, among others.

By rigorous Bible study and theological analysis, John Howard Yoder helped Mennonites, and also thousands outside the believers’ churches circle, to see that the nature of God as incarnate in Jesus Christ is inescapably non-violent. And if we will be disciples of Jesus, we must follow in this way, not just in regard to the wars that nation-states wage, but in all aspects of personal and church life. Nothing is outside the Lordship of Christ. This has had a revolutionary impact on countless seminarians and serious Christians around the the world, many of whom were closet Anabaptists, now “coming out” in their various denominational settings. The fact that this conference could be hosted by Notre Dame University with a significant number of Catholic faculty and students attending is a testimony to Yoder’s witness.

Despite his huge and growing impact, why is Yoder so hard for many to read? In order to see things right, the way the Bible sees them, we need to give up everyday habits of thinking and of speech, especially the habits of a dominant culture that assume we have to take control of history, institutions and others in order to solve life’s problems. The defenseless faithfulness of Jesus, who trusted in the resurrection, and who created an alternative community guided by his Spirit—that is a new way of thinking, talking and being in the world. This is not a new insight—it is the insight of Jesus, but it is largely avoided by the church of the dominant culture and its theologians. In these arenas, Yoder had a lifetime of respectful and persistent dialogue that has won an amazing number of converts from all denominations, with whom we were privileged to fellowship in these last days.

Finally, what I will remember most from this conference, is the Friday night session where we looked at John’s own experience of coming under church discipline because of accusations of sexual mis-

conduct brought against John by eight women. For three years an accountability/support group from Prairie Street Mennonite Church (John’s home congregation) wrestled with him, a process that at first he resisted, but in the end, submitted to. One person reported John saying after this whole ordeal, “My greatest temptation was to use the intellectual gifts God had given me to defend myself from the pain of my accusers.” In the end, six of the eight accusers accepted John’s confession and offered forgiveness.

The accountability/support group recommended John be reinstated in his service to the Mennonite church. He was able to teach one course at the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary and to return with his wife to Prairie Street Mennonite Church before his sudden death in 1997. How blessed we all are that this intellectual giant could allow himself to be humbled and submit to the kind of church discipline that he himself revived in the church by his teaching. His wrong behavior did not invalidate his teaching, but his repentance put a seal of authenticity on all his career that brings glory to the God whom he sought to serve.

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## › Making Peace cont from p.11

cally, I have a lot of trouble wrapping my mind around being afraid. If I were living in constant fear, I wouldn’t be able to stay here very long. But it is a joy to be here, in spite the ever-present danger that seems to surround us. Now don’t forget to keep praying for us. Thanks.

**High emergency!** February 27: Just got the news that the Paras are all over in the Opon and Cimitara. Please pray for the Lord to hold down the violence, and provide protection for the *campesinos* and us. I will go as part of the team, either tonight or tomorrow am. Lord help. Please spread the word for everyone to pray. Must be some kind of operation. Jim

*Jim Fitz is a member of Plow Creek Fellowship, serving with Christian Peacemaker Teams in Colombia for two months this winter. Here are a few journal excerpts from his participation in CPT’s work accompanying campesinos who have determined to return to the land and build an unarmed community in the midst of a civil war.*

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## › Loving and Dying cont from p.1

medical power of attorney for me.” In her small room, with a large north window, Michele delighted in showing us a beautiful folding rocking chair her father built and caned himself, an heirloom which will go to her daughter Robin.

Hilda asked, “Do you ever think about what it will be like when you are at the River’s edge, or what Heaven will be like?”

Michele answered, “I don’t think much about what it will be like. I know we will be more fully with Him than even in our closest moments here on earth. But what I think it will be won’t change what it is. It is what it is.”

Michele’s grounding in reality and thanksgiving met us at every turn in the conversation. “I love my window! I can see a bit of everything from my window—the high school just so close, all the different buildings and homes, those distant trees that mark the Lakefront, the sky, and some days, I can see the Lake. I especially love the colors of the sunset and sunrise glow.”

Michelle continued pouring out her gratitude for:

—the freedom to be around the children, the young people and other JPUSA folks as much as she’d like, to eat either in the Senior Center or the JPUSA dining room.

—remaining a member of Plow Creek. “Margaret and Rich are coming to visit me tomorrow.”

—her Hospice nurse who reassures her that, while she may have more hours of pain in the future than she’s yet experienced, the pain will not be more intense.

—“my daughter and her husband and grandchildren Simon, Sabastian, and Sierra living so close, and for all the times they can come see me.”

—the gift of an old small refrigerator when she moved into her room, and then, when that fridge “conked out” two weeks later, for a \$200 inheritance from her mother, which was enough to buy another fridge.

—JPUSA’s money gift for a holiday outing with her daughter and husband and their three children to an indoor water park.

—the gift from many friends of a week’s Caribbean cruise last summer for Michele and daughter Robin, including a support person. By the payment deadline, they were still \$700 short, but the woman who’d assisted Robin in planning the project offered the last \$700 out of her own bank account. Michele and Robin prayed that

additional contributions would still come in to cover the woman’s gift. It did! with \$300 extra for spending money. This trip was most meaningful as Robin had wanted years ago to celebrate her High School graduation with a cruise, but there had not been enough money for it at the time.

—little granddaughter Sierra’s understanding of death, as expressed at Michele’s mother’s funeral last year. “When you die, the body turns back to dust, but the spirit just says ‘Yippee’ and goes right on.”

—the gift “that all the denial and anger I had to work through when my friend was diagnosed with terminal cancer did not seem to be as present when I heard my own diagnosis. I was shocked; I’d had no idea anything serious was wrong with my body. But I was soon at peace with it. And my peace helped Robin and others close to me come to peace more quickly. Even Monday, when my liver was giving me severe pain and I was in tears, I still felt deep-down the real peace and joy of the Lord.”

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**“I am understanding living more profoundly than I ever did before I knew I was dying.”**

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—a precious memory of the Lord preparing Michele for this present part of her journey. “Back when I lived at Plow Creek, before anyone suspected my cancer, I was praying about wanting to contribute more financially to Plow Creek. I heard the Lord tell me in a quiet gentle way, ‘Michele, I’m beginning to call you Home now, so you don’t need to be concerned about that any more.’ It was so peaceful and reassuring. But by the next morning and for weeks after, I forgot all about those words. Later after I’d been diagnosed with cancer, had undergone surgery and had come to peace with my cancer being terminal, I felt the Lord reminding me softly, ‘Remember? I told you I’m beginning to call you Home now.’ I felt so much of the Lord’s loving care and assurance in preparing me.”

—Rich Foss’s word from the Lord that he shouldn’t pray for Michele’s healing; that this was not God’s will, but that he should pray for Michele’s heart to be filled with a lot of love. “And,” Michele continued, “that’s just what has happened. I feel my heart already overwhelmed with love from and for the Lord. And it is full of love from and for other people, too.”



—“the experience of my friend, who was dying of cancer last year, finally coming to peace and a good attitude about it. She could finally say, ‘I know if it is not the Lord’s will to heal me, then He’ll take me in his arms to Himself.’ After that, much emotional and spiritual healing came to my friend. When I saw this, I prayed, ‘Lord, if I’m ever seriously ill, let it be like this for me.’ And, you know, I too have received more emotional and spiritual healing than I ever could have if I weren’t facing serious cancer. I am understanding Living more profoundly than I ever did before I knew I was dying.”

Our hour and a half in Michele’s room had passed too quickly. Michele had spent the whole time sitting up straight on the edge of her bed. She wanted to be sure Hilda and I were comfortable in her two chairs. She had shared with such animation and joy. I couldn’t imagine her someday not alive, not with us. When I tried, my heart cramped a little. We shared several rounds of tender good-byes with Michele, and she accompanied us to the lobby to make sure we could find our way out.

As our train rolled back to Evanston, I recalled asking Michele how she wanted us to pray for her now. She invited us to remember those persons who go through anguish and turmoil because of her departing. “It’s not an effort for me to be ‘up,’ I just am. But I can’t keep others up.”

And I know Michele can’t keep me up either. And yet, as we are linked in the Spirit and in prayer, her dying does lift up my amazement at this mysterious and wonderful way of living, so grounded in reality and thanksgiving. ©

# A Camp Meeting Invitation

Think ahead to the Shalom Connections 2002 Camp Meeting at Plow Creek, August 8 to 11. "Oh that you would know the things that make for Peace!" was Jesus' lament and longing when he looked over Jerusalem before his violent death. His words will be our Camp Meeting theme. In this time when our nation seeks God's blessing for war, we are pressed to know more profoundly what kind of God we serve in Jesus, and what is the way that leads to reconciliation. What are we learning about the things that make for peace in worship, in our families, with youth, in our neighborhoods, in Christian Peacemaker Teams, in our sister communities, and in the signs of our times? Come join us with your stories, your questions, and your experiences of peace in the midst of conflict on the way to peace.

As always, the camp meeting weekend at Plow Creek Farm will include ample time for conversation, play, worship and free time, surrounded by God's good creation. In about a month we will send out a brochure and registration forms. Contact Louise Stahnke at [mstahnke@juno.com](mailto:mstahnke@juno.com) or at 19183 Plow Creek Rd., Tiskilwa IL 61368.

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