

Shalom Connections

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Sharing Community with the Third Generation

Julius Belser
Reba Place Fellowship

Over a milk shake at Wendy's our fifteen-year-old grandson, Jacob, accepted our invitation to join Peggy and me on a two week vacation trip to visit his sister, Sara, and her husband, Joe, in Charlotte, North Carolina and to visit our friends in Christian communities along the way.

We set off after our granddaughter, Betsy's, high school graduation on Sunday evening, June 13 and slept overnight at Tom and Ann (our daughter) Browns' in Lafayette, Indiana. Then early Monday we headed for Art and Peggy Gish in Athens, Ohio, while reading *The Cotton Patch Evidence* story of Clarence Jordan. Clarence was a pioneer for many of our communities, and his story grabbed us as we drove. The bed in the rear of the van was comfortable for Jacob and a good place for Peggy and me to get our afternoon naps.

We arrived at Gishes' community Monday evening and had a special chance, sitting together on their lawn, to probe how they maintain hope in their Christian Peacemaker assignments in Bagdad and Hebron. Peggy Gish had just sent her new book about her experiences in Iraq off to the publishers to be released in September. In her gracious and sober way, Peggy told of how the team sup-



ported one another in critical times as one was up while the other was down. But most basically they were set free from fear by the Lord himself. She was sustained through allergies living outside in tents during the bombing and oil fires of the early invasion. Their CPT report on prisoner abuse preceded *60 Minutes*, the Red Cross warnings and the Taguba Report and went to U.S. Ambassador Paul Bremer III and U.S. Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez.

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CPT Witness at Cornerstone Music Festival

Jim Fitz
Plow Creek Fellowship

Very quietly he came up to our booth and, almost in a whisper, said to me, "I'm not the normal kind of person attending this Cornerstone Festival. I'm an atheist. I just want to tell you that I've been very impressed by the way you guys are putting your lives on the line and living out your beliefs." And after a little conversation I shared that had I struggled with belief and considered myself an agnostic at one point in my life. When I shared my struggle with a farmer-preacher friend of mine, he said to me, "Don't try and pretend, God knows what's in your heart. But if you want to believe, ask for it." I sensed we really connected in our sharing together.

The Cornerstone Music Festival gathers up to 20,000 persons each year, and several of us had a chance to share with some of this crowd what Christian Peacemakers are doing. I also led several seminars on the biblical basis for peacemaking, to help people discover more about Jesus the peacemaker.

A fellow in the booth next to ours shared with me that he was an officer in the Army Reserves and was scheduled to go to Iraq soon. We dialogued for about fifteen minutes about our beliefs, and then he shared with me a story he had heard from other soldiers: In Iraq there was a funeral procession headed directly toward a patrol of U.S. Marines. As is the culture, the procession was



accompanied by much wailing and outward signs of grief, creating a situation that could easily erupt into violence. The Lieutenant in charge, instead of putting his soldiers on alert, commanded them to put their guns on their shoulders, take off their hats and stand still in reverence until the procession passed. Out of that gesture of respect, which is the way of Jesus, the people in that section of town changed completely and now respect the U.S. military. It is amazing how quickly people's attitudes and feelings can change when they experience respect rather than suspicion.

Another fellow came up to me at the booth and introduced himself as a Bush supporter and a rightist. He said, "I have a lot of friends who are leftist," and we talked for four or five minutes about our understanding of what is going on. In the end, I said "The bottom line is that no matter what, you're a rightist and I'm a leftist, but Jesus wants us to love each other." Then we vigorously hugged each other. The Lord connected us in a special way despite our differences.

Chris Haw, another worker at the CPT Booth, had this story to share: "A young man came and stared for a minute at our pictures. I asked if he would like to hear about CPT and he said, 'Yes.' I gave my description of Colombia, Baghdad, and my friends' travels with CPT. After I was done, I just let him look at the pictures. He went over and over the pictures for five minutes silently, just staring. I asked him if he had any thoughts or questions. He paused and quietly said, 'It's beautiful.'

"Soon thereafter he took some CPT literature and quietly and slowly walked away."

In August I will be having a CPT booth at our county fair. If you would like to get some experience doing this kind of thing, I can always use a hand. It is actually fun and lots easier than we imagine. To see the interest the Lord is raising in so many different people is very energizing. Pray about it and then maybe come join us for a few hours or days. I hope to hear from you.

Remember, take time to smell the roses. That's peacemaking too.

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Shalom Connections

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Children Peace Camp at Koinonia

Sanders Thornburgh
Koinonia Partners

From June 14-19, Koinonia Partners teamed up with an organization called the "Atlanta Peace Mobile" to present a "Children's Peace Camp" for 25 kids, mostly from low-income homes. This new experience of fun and peace took place at the Koinonia Community Outreach Center and included a large range of interactive

exhibits including arts & crafts, puppetry, computer programs, brass etching, giant puzzles and more.

"It was a wonderful week and one of the more meaningful projects that I've been involved with here at Koinonia," said Sanders Thornburgh, a partner at Koinonia and assistant at the peace camp. He went on to note that the children that attended this camp, as well as himself, walked away with a spiritual gift that will go with them throughout their lives. The camp week was centered on four spheres of peace, each given one day for exploration. The aspects were "Peace for Me," "Peace for Us," "Peace for Everyone," and "Peace for the Planet." Sanders sends out his thanks and love to all who helped make the Peace Camp, especially his Atlanta Peace Mobile friends for continuing their radiant witness of Jesus Christ. ©



Sanders Thornburgh and his son at Koinonia.

Baby Killer

Paul Rhode
Reba Place Fellowship

“Oh, *beautiful*.” The car slowed and he looked up from what he was reading. Traffic had stopped up ahead, and people were in the street. Protesters, from the look of it. “*Just* what we need,” continued the lieutenant colonel, who was driving. They both looked behind them, to see if they could get back to the last side street, but cars had blocked them in. They were going to have to wait it out.

It didn't look like an organized street demonstration; probably a protest at the civic center had spilled out onto the main thoroughfare. He noticed the usual signs: “No Blood For Oil!”; “No War In Iraq!” That one seemed a little out of date. There *was* war in Iraq. It was mostly over now, actually—he'd just come from there. And while “no blood for oil” was catchy, oil meant money, and

because it was such a limited and necessary resource, oil meant power. And people had always traded blood for money and power. Other signs focused on the occupation forces moving into Iraq. One had “Liberate Iraq” in big block letters, then below it said, “from US!” Which could be read “U.S.” or “us.” Clever. A similar one demanded, “Get US Out Now!” In a way, he agreed. He'd be happy to see all our troops come home. But it wouldn't be right to leave that country in the mess it was in, and the U.S. certainly wasn't going to just pull out now. It was a terrible mess over there. He was glad to be out of it, though he wished the circumstances were different.

“Here they come, Major.” But he already saw what the lieutenant colonel saw. Now that they had stopped traffic, the protesters were getting bolder and had started spreading out among the cars. They were moving this way. And there they sat, two army officers in their dress greens. This wasn't going to be pleasant.

Someone noticed them and shouted,

“Hey! Some Army guys!” That drew the attention of others, and he felt their stares. But he didn't stare back and the protesters kept moving and chanting. A few seemed to pause and direct their chants directly at his window, but no one touched the car and they didn't appear to be violent or even very angry. Until the hippie. She looked like she was about fifty, with lots of gray in her ponytail. He wouldn't have been surprised if she had been protesting nonstop since Vietnam. Now she was right up at the window, so close she was probably steaming up the glass. “Look what we got here! Some brass! When you gonna bring our boys home?” He didn't look at her, though that only seemed to provoke her more. “You got *blood* on your hands, y'know. Lots of it. Women and babies are dying over there. Do you know how many Iraqi *babies* you've killed—*Major*?” Now he turned and looked at her. She stopped shouting and he stared straight into her angry face. He held up three fingers.

The firefight hadn't been an especially bad

➤ **Baby Killer** cont on p.14



God Is So Good

The Sunshine Group of Reba Place Church

Charlotte Oda
Reba Place Fellowship

On the first and third Fridays of each month, the Sunshine Group gathers for supper at the Reba Meeting House in south Evanston IL. The thirty to forty people present begin their meal with a prayer, then enjoy food and fellowship, and end their evening with sharing and prayer for one another. These evenings together are times when the Lord's presence is sought and felt; each person there is special and welcomed, and God's love is celebrated.

The main purpose of the Sunshine Group ministry is to provide a place of welcome and acceptance at RPC for people with mental disabilities. The ministry gives folks a sense of belonging, a place where they can experience God's love, and a friendly social event which they can count on regularly.

A few people take turns preparing the simple, delicious meals, while another picks up some of the members, and others help with set up and clean up. At each meal, contributions are collected toward the cost of the food and supplies, and everyone chips in as they are able. Reba Place Church covers all

additional costs, and on occasion provides pastoral care, memorial services, and other attention as needed.

The Sunshine Group began about twenty years ago when some Reba Place members felt a call to reach out to persons living at the Albany Care Facility, a local residence for people with mental disabilities and illnesses, and who attended Reba's Sunday worship service. Over four hundred people live at Albany Care, and it is a challenging place to live. A few who participate in the Sunshine Group still live at Albany Care, but many have moved to other living situations, and the group now draws from a broader area of northern-Chicago and Evanston.

Many within the Sunshine Group have felt rejected by society and by family members; some were placed in inhospitable institutions in their youth. I believe this ministry is an illustration of what Jesus described in Luke 4:18: *"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*

Sunshine Group also ministers to me, although I'm not visibly disabled. I would not naturally choose to spend time with people with mental disabilities, but God has opened my eyes and heart to see how much He loves each person, including me. God wants me to love others, especially those who live with the challenge of a mental disability and have been marginalized by our society. I am learning from them about acceptance, faithfulness, friendship, simplicity, generosity of spirit, wonder and sincerity. I am blessed



when Kathleen shouts out on Sunday morning, "I love Jesus!" I feel a sense of satisfaction on Friday nights. I know God has blessed us, and our life together is one expression of His Kingdom already visible.

It is a blessing when people want to help with the Sunshine Group ministry. I am blessed because there is such a loving, helping spirit in everyone present at our events. Each time we gather is a success, because there is laughter and love, and the broken-hearted are blessed and healed.

I also feel challenged to focus more on Jesus, to share Him more, and to worry less about what I can or can't do. I am challenged to support and encourage others, but not to "do for" them more than is necessary. I am a friend, a companion along the journey, one listening and sharing. We eat together, clean up together, laugh, cry and pray together. We are bonded.

I am thankful for what God has given us at Reba Place through the Sunshine Group, and I look forward to what lies ahead.

Charlotte Oda is a member of Reba Place Church, a Mennonite congregation in Evanston, Illinois, and is part of the leadership team for the Sunshine Group Ministry. Charlotte can be contacted at (847) 328-6066. ☺



Sunshine group members (l to r) Linda Marendt, Lisa Frehling, and Charlotte Lehman.

Church News

News from Evanston

Eric Lawrence
Reba Place Fellowship

Only being a part of the Reba “operation” since mid-June, I was a bit intimidated when David prodded me to do some interviews around the community and type up the news, but here it goes...

It’s a beautiful moment when we realize that God is faithful, and through that faithfulness we are inspired to a renewed faithfulness with each other. “In these exciting days we’re seeing the answers to many prayers from the past few years,” Allan Howe remarked, referring to the Ekklesia House for seminary students, an expanded intern program, and a new store on Main Street named Plain and Simple. With all these major developments it would be easy to find ourselves separating and fracturing into camps, but according to Allan “there is a growing unity and spirit of adventure at work in the community.”

Ekklesia House

For a couple of years we have anticipated the startup of a communal household for seminarians co-sponsored by the Ekklesia Project and Reba Place Fellowship. According to the Ekklesia Project website, the Ekklesia House is intended “to remind the church of its true calling as the real-world community whose primary loyalty is to the Body of Christ, the priorities and practices of Jesus, and the inbreaking Kingdom of God. In doing so, The Ekklesia Project will work with, within, across, and beneath existing churches and structures.”

On August 1, seven students from three area seminaries (Northpark, Garrett and Trinity) began moving into a large Reba house at 720 Reba Place. All the students will take a course on discipleship from Garrett professor and author (*Divine Economy: Theology and the Market*, which I recommend), Steve Long, as well as living out their commitments to community in the Reba house. We give them until late September before they run off into the night hollering about the horrors of community kitchen uncleanness and early morning grumpiness—the true tests of patience and responsibility in community.



If they can learn forgiveness, they will stay here for a year. We are excited to see what the Lord will reveal to them and what they reveal to us. RPF member Heather Clark has coordinated all the work needed to prepare the household for its new guests. Heather will serve as Ekklesia House process facilitator and community coach in the coming year.

A Revived Internship Program

Heather Munn, a stayover from last summer’s intern group, has been working hard at redirecting the path of the intern program and is excited about the possibilities. It is a one year program designed to prepare young people for leadership in new Christian communities. “The interns are awesome, and I’m glad to have such smart and interested people. I’ve never done anything like this before.” said Heather with a small smirk of fear for the unknown.

The intern program in the fall will gain three new members (Joseph Marshak, Katie Dahlseng, and Jessie Miller) as well as all three survivors (Christina Waybright, Eric Lawrence, and Heather Munn of course) from the summer program who are “smart and interested.” (That includes me.) We are also starting a single women’s apartment to accommodate the sudden influx of younger

people. Three women are signed up for the apartment as of now, and there are rumors of other interested folk. Three interns will assist in the work at the new store, Plain and Simple, Reba Place’s newest edition to the retail sector right next door to the 10,000 Villages store Reba launched on Main Street six years ago.

A New Store, Plain and Simple, at 715 Main Street, is undergoing renovations in preparation for an early September opening date. The store will feature Chris Evans’s art work, Amish furniture and quilts, and other larger household furniture. We hope Plain and Simple will supplement the smaller craft items in which 10,000 Villages specializes, and we will have the same fair trade commitment. Princess Parker has agreed to be the new store manager.

Other news

The Leadership Team is still working on the Reba web site featuring art from Hilda Carper and writings by a host of other Rebites. Look for it soon—we hope—at www.rebaplacefellowship.org.

The Lukens recently returned from England where they reccelebrated the Thames Challenge Cup victory by an MIT crew won fifty years ago when David Lukens was the coxswain. Martha Lukens journeyed to Liberia in June to assist in the reconstruction of a hospital. Please pray for her safety and for all who are struggling to restore peace in that land.

We got a chance to celebrate on the waterfront of Lake Michigan with Bekka Youngquist and Jeff Summerling, who returned from Colorado Springs where they were married last year.

Also, this is a time of recovery for the Janzens and the Clarks who have been “reunioning” with family members this summer. Some people need vacations from vacations, especially if the earlier vacations include lots of time with younger humans. Amen.



News from Chicago

Sally Youngquist
Fellowship of Rogers Park

A New Center for Worship and Ministry

All of us in Rogers Park are caught up one way or another in an exciting transformation process, as Living Water Community Church is buying the Pratt Plaza from Reba Place Fellowship and renovating it to become the permanent location for worship and ministry. Fellowship of Rogers Park member Patty Peebles heads up our "Called to the Corner" capital campaign, in which Pastor Sally Youngquist actively participates. Ronn Frantz is project manager for renovation and building management of this site. Nina Frantz does maintenance and helps to supervise volunteer work crews there. Orwin Youngquist gives us needed input as a structural engineer. Lisa Selph, as LWCC's administrative assistant, provides invaluable office support work. Others in the FRP and LWCC are giving sacrificially of their time and money to help this vision become a reality. Reba Place Fellowship members, as well, have given most generously to help

us establish a more visible presence of the Kingdom of God in a location previously known for gang warfare and drug dealing. We invite the help and prayers of the rest of you in our SMC family.

In May, a number of us traveled to Arthur Mennonite Church, located downstate in the heart of Illinois' Amish community, to help establish a rural/urban partnership between our two congregations. We enjoyed hosting a delegation from Arthur to LWCC in July. We look forward to learning from one another in the months to come about how to be engaged in missional outreach in our differing settings.

Reaching out to 50 neighborhood kids

Our June 21-25 Vacation Bible School at LWCC gave us an opportunity to reach out to over fifty neighborhood kids, only thirteen of which came from our church. Nina, Tikva and Kessa Frantz and Bethany Blackwood led daily groups, while Doug and Lisa Selph shared their drama talents, playing characters who modeled opportunities to grow in faith. Doug, as an emaciated prisoner in a candle-lit basement dungeon, had a particularly striking effect on his little

visitors! We were excited to have several kids make first-time commitments to Christ and others affirm commitments they had already made. Nina and Sally are regular helpers in our after-school Homework Club for grade school children throughout the school year.

Urban life spreads our kids into many different specialized schools. Kessa Frantz enters high school at Whitney Young this fall, joining the ranks of FRP's other high schoolers, Bethany Blackwood at North Side College Prep, Ginny Frantz at Lakeview, and Carol Youngquist at Evanston Township High School. Nicholas Peebles continues in home school with his able teacher-parents, Patty and Tim Peebles, while Hannah Blackwood returns to LaSalle Language Academy. Tikva Frantz, a student at North Park University, is spending the month of August in Brazil, volunteering at an English teaching program in a school staffed by LWCC mission workers Rick and Debbie Lee. Orwin Youngquist's oldest daughter Bekka wed Jeff Simmering at a small family service in Iowa last September. Fuller public celebrations of this joyful event occurred July 31 in Evanston among the Reba community and August 8 in Colorado Springs, where Jeff and Bekka now live.

LWCC has attracted a number of young adults over the past year, which brings welcome life and energy to our congregation. Seth Jones and Rebekah Thibault have participated all year in our weekly FRP cell group. Eric Lawrence and Katie Dahlseng are entering the RPF Internship Program to further explore issues of Christian discipleship and service in the context of community. Selphs are offering temporary housing to an Americorps volunteer in August. The Peebles share their gift of hospitality by providing an "open house" lunch most Sundays for LWCC attenders and visitors. We give thanks for all God is doing in, around and among us these days. Come visit!

› Church News *cont on p. 8*



Timmy Horning's Cardinal.





Timmy Horning's Red-Headed Woodpecker.

› *Church News* cont from p.7

News from Tiskilwa

Ruth Anne Friesen
Plow Creek Fellowship

Many changes in our community keep us flexible and praying! We know by faith that the Lord is in charge; sometimes we wonder how all the details will fit together. Today Rich Foss was given the encouragement to float like a raft in God's current!

The Deans have moved to Virginia to a beautiful scenic locale next to Dani's grandparents' farm. This move means a return to farming for Gary, and it was with much excitement that their move happened. Many folks from Willow Springs helped us as the truck from Someone's in the Kitchen (where Gary had been working) was loaded. Everything fit! There were no empty spaces!

Jim Harnish has now moved to the farm. He's living in the Corner House apartment with his wife Donna. His legs did not support him well on a recent shopping trip, so

after various tests in an overnight hospital stay, the doctor thinks that his problem is not circulation nor stroke but arthritis deterioration. Jim settled into his new abode quickly, and three different families are scheduled to provide an evening meal each week. We thank God for the ease with which the whole move happened.

Friensens looking to the Chaco

Richard and Ruth Anne Friesen have been invited by Mennonite Mission Network to join the Mennonite Team in the Chaco of Northern Argentina. We are listening for the Lord's will in the process of working on the details at present. Richard would likely coordinate the translation of the New Testament into Toba, working in Spanish with the Toba leaders. He would also put his Greek to work again in the translation project. Ruth Anne and Gretchen Kingsley could visit the Toba women together, leading Bible studies and writing the oral history of the Toba churches. It sounds like an exciting adventure, and we invite your prayers to accompany us as we seek the Lord's will.

Steve Graham is on the job search trail,

looking for high school math or science teaching possibilities. Keep praying for Steve that he may find how and where God is leading for this school year.

Plow Creek is excited about the safe arrival of a new baby girl, and we welcome her with open arms. Eliana Marie Gale was born on July 7 to Tim and Carol Gale, a healthy 12 pounds 3 ounces at birth. She has already traveled to Kansas with her mom to visit a grandmother who is dying of cancer, so she's fully initiated into the family.

"Standing by our Hopes" was the theme of a worship in mid June after each of us in the Plow Creek Community were invited one Wednesday evening to write down our hopes and tape them to the wall all around the meeting room. It was good to see our hopes displayed. We'll see how the Lord brings those hopes to fruition. Likely great leaps of faith will be involved!

Various ones of us have been praying for and visiting aging parents. Lynn Reha's mom has just moved to a retirement setting in Maryland. Richard Friesen's dad has moved to assisted living at Greencroft in Goshen, Indiana, after spending several weeks in a nursing care facility. Meg Foxvog's mom and Carol Gale's mom are both battling cancer. We continue seeking the Lord's care.

Our summer Sunday school, with small groups of two adults paired with two children has been a good experience with a wide variety of activities. It will be interesting to share and evaluate together. We are presently seeking youth group advisors since Tim and Carol Gale are resigning at the end of the summer. We wonder who the Lord will lead into that role.

We are glad for the safe trips of the summer and the many opportunities to visit family and friends. David and Margaret Gale attended a Wenger reunion on the East coast and recently hosted their son Andy from California. Lynn, Rick, and Meghan Reha went to his mother's family reunion in North Dakota. Rich and Sarah Foss spent five days traveling in Minnesota and visiting fifty-four people, mostly relatives. They were accompanied by their oldest daughter Hannah and son-in-law Donny on his first trip to meet all the relatives!

Heidi Foss-Worabo is about to start a two-year course as a nurse practitioner in a family practice program at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville. Jon Foss will begin his third year at Colgate in New York, majoring in sociology and anthropology. May the Lord bless their studying.

The various farm workers have been

celebrating their summer work together by having picnics every two weeks on Thursday evenings, followed by singing, sharing, and prayer. Our last picnic featured Indonesian Gado Gado, accompanied by homegrown corn and tomatoes and blackberry pie! It will be hard to beat!

We are having ongoing conversations about incorporating and welcoming the next generation to community living at Plow Creek. Anyone interested in joining the conversations and the community? Keep us in your prayers!



News from the SMC Coordinator

David Janzen
Reba Place Fellowship

As Yogi Berra, or some other philosopher once observed, “The past is hard to predict—The future even more so.” Nevertheless, I will go out on a limb and predict some past and future SMC news.

The New Monasticism—Getting to Know a New (to Us) Circle of Youthful Communities

Rutba House, a fledgling Christian community of hospitality in Durham NC invited about twenty academics, pastors and practitioners of Christian Community for a June consultation on “The New Monasticism,” whatever that is. I was invited to speak for the practitioners.

But, what actually happened was far more exciting. By conference time the numbers had grown to about sixty persons—a majority of them in their 20’s from a circle of about ten recently-formed Christian

communities in some of the roughest inner cities on the East Coast. The most widely known of these communities is probably The Simple Way from Philadelphia. (See thesimpleway.org) “The Family Reunion” is what these groups call their get togethers.

A movement of radical rebirth grounded in God’s love and drawing on the rich tradition of Christian practices that have long formed disciples in the simple Way of Christ...

So what is the New Monasticism? A conference statement calls it “a movement of radical rebirth grounded in God’s love and drawing on the rich tradition of Christian practices that have long formed disciples in the simple Way of Christ. This contemporary school for conversion, which we have called a ‘new monasticism,’ is producing a grassroots ecumenism and prophetic witness within the North American Church.”

We spent a lot of time getting acquainted and telling stories about various dimensions of community life. Some of these communities at first thought they were the only ones doing this revolutionary Acts 2 thing until they discovered Jean Vanier, the Catholic Worker, Jubilee Partners, Reba Place—a movement. SMC was represented at this event by Tim Otto, Dale and Debbie Gish, and David Janzen. Us oldsters wondered if we had been time-warped back into the 1970’s communal fervor all over again. What we saw is at least as radical and creative, but less utopian and individualistic, more grounded in Bible study and willing to learn from historic monasticism—hence the name. In other words, an authentic work of the Spirit. The older communities agreed with the younger ones that we need each other and that God wants to do much more with us together. I predict you’ll read about these connections in upcoming newsletters.

We recommend your reading the conference summary document, “Twelve Marks of a New Monasticism” available from rutbahouse@aol.com.

Wheaties Checking Out SMC

In May the Grain of Wheat (GOW) community in Winnipeg decided to engage

in a two-year time of exploring membership with Shalom Mission Communities. Their hope is that Christian intentional communities in the Anabaptist tradition can provide solidarity and support not found in the wider church and society scene. Their main misgiving is to wonder just how much relationship and support can be sustained across the miles between Waco TX, San Francisco CA, Evanston and Tiskilwa, IL. The only way to know, we have concluded, is to begin visiting each other, share in leadership consultations, take vacations in each other’s homes, share news, and let the Spirit build a movement with five communities the way it has been happened with four. SMC Coordinator, David Janzen, will be visiting GOW for their anniversary celebration the weekend of September 11-12. Marvin Hamm, GOW leader predicted, “We plan on getting a handful of Wheaties to the gathering in Waco.”

Camp Meeting at Waco

Hope Fellowship is preparing to host a Shalom Missions Community camp meeting in Waco, October 8-11. Our theme is “One New Humanity: No Longer Strangers and Aliens.” As is the custom at Hope Fellowship, there will be translations in Spanish and English to facilitate full participation. We expect several of our friends from the Valle Nuevo community in El Salvador to be with us, participating in the program. For the youth the camp meeting will include “A Day on the Other Side,” an experiential exposure to issues of food, hunger and sustainable development at the World Hunger Relief Farm.

SMC, friends from Valle Neuvo in El Salvador, and other sister communities are coming together for three days to experience and celebrate the new culture of grace and reconciliation that has been created in God’s people. Join us for the fun and the challenge.

For more information call Barbara Bridgewater at (254) 759-1649 or email her at bpbridgeh2o@hotmail.com.

➤ **Church News** cont on p.10



› *Sharing Community* cont from p. 9

News from San Francisco

Zoe Mullery
Church of the Sojourners

Exciting news since the last update! Dale and Debbie Gish have adopted a tiny new baby: Rebecca Jane Gish, born June 30, 2004! After many ups and downs and all-arounds, Dale and Debbie made contact with a young woman, Hannah Fields, in North Carolina who was seven months pregnant and looking for adoptive parents desiring an open adoption. (Hannah's parents happened to have lived in community with Dale and his family when Dale was ten years old—and learned about Dale and Debbie's adoption process right here in Shalom Connections!)

Soon after their initial meeting and sense of mutual confirmation of a good match, Hannah developed symptoms of preeclampsia, a serious hypertensive pregnancy disorder, which ultimately caused the baby to be born six weeks premature. Little Rebecca Jane weighed 3 pounds 13 ounces at birth, teeny-tiny but she is otherwise in fine health and spirits. Hannah and birthfather, Iain McWilliam, entrusted Rebecca to Dale and Debbie from the time of her birth. She spent her first two weeks in the hospital, with thrilled parents Dale and Debbie touching and holding her as much as was medically allowed. (There seemed to be no medical limit on how much they were allowed to beam adoringly at her.)

It was very difficult for us here at Sojourners to be so far away from all the moment-to-moment unfolding of the drama, but Debbie kept us well-connected with daily email updates and photos of Rebecca sleeping in her incubator, sleeping in various people's arms, sleeping under her phototherapy lamp (the sunglasses were très chic) and finally sleeping in the ingenious homemade cradle Dale and Debbie created in their hastily-rented apartment.

Rebecca is now home and already has attended a number of meetings—getting well-groomed for community life from day one! It has been a source of much joy for all of us, not only the fact of her existence, but the joyful culmination of a long adoption road for Dale and Debbie, who persevered with much faith and hope all along the way. Keep your eyes and ears open; Dale and



Baby Rebecca Gish.

Debbie say they'll be ready for number two in the not too distant future!

SOJO Goes to Camp

Quite a few of us headed up to Lamoille, Nevada, in mid-July to be counselors, nurses, and various other kinds of helpers at Dan and Kelly Zazvorka's new church's week-long Christian High Adventure Camp for kids from third to seventh grade. It was in a stunningly beautiful setting in a high canyon in the Ruby Mountains, a gorgeous place with wildflowers, beaver ponds and dramatic rocky outcroppings. The Lamoille church was extremely well organized, having put on this camp for a number of years, and found good ways to make use of those of us who came to help.

In all their years of putting on the camp, I don't think they had ever seen the likes of the Bob and Lars show... Tim Lockie and Dan Zazvorka at their goofy best, exhibited a previously untapped chemistry as a comedy team of two hillbillies in hilarious, slapstick skits every single night.

I think both churches—Lamoille Presbyterian and Church of the Sojourners—came away from the week feeling mutually encouraged and that this week had been a seed of connection between our congregations. Who knows how God may make use of that in the future? Our time among them also was very gratifying for those of us who have prayed many prayers for the transition of Dan and Kelly to their new church family. They are extremely well-loved there, their spiritual gifts seem to be in constant use, and

there was a real sense of God being at work in their decision to serve in that church. We look forward to many more opportunities of partnership and fellowship with the Lamoille congregation in the years to come.

Gatlins Lead Retreats

Nancy and Joe Gatlin came to serve us recently by leading men's and women's retreats for our congregation. It was a refreshing weekend of sharing and fellowship and we felt very loved by their presence.

Hilda Munk and Caitlin Char from Portland Church of the Servant King came to stay with us for Caitlin's rite of passage. They spent a week serving in soup kitchens, coupled with intensive Bible study. We enjoyed their friendly presence, and the evidence of our churches' long and deep connections was an encouragement as well.

Judy Alexander is home for several weeks from her missionary work as a teacher in Taiwan, spending special time with her granddaughter Alexina, among others.

Tim Otto and Rick DiMicco attended the Ekklesia Project's annual conference in Chicago, with good reports of the fellowship there as well as the content of the conference, which was on "Singing Mary's Song: Practices of the Upside-Down Reign of God." To find out more about the Ekklesia Project visit their website at www.ekklesiaproject.org.

Apprenticeship at Sojourners

Tim Lockie has been working hard on brainstorming an "apprenticeship" at Sojourners—a "yearlong experience walk-

ing with us as we practice our calling to be a people as close-knit as Jesus is to his Father," in his words. This year will be the "beta version" as we try it out with a few people and see if it serves well as a way to introduce newcomers to our life together. Tim is hoping to create an experience that will assist people in getting a real sense of what our life is about and creating a context and framework to understand what it is that they are experiencing. We are eager to see how his ideas will unfold as they are put into practice.

Louise Harris made a trip back to her native Belize for the first time in several years for a two week whirlwind of visiting family. She managed to arrange it as a surprise visit, nearly causing several heart attacks. She is scheduled to return to work soon, after a year on disability after her major surgery last fall. Please keep her in your prayers.

Jeff Hare is having open-heart surgery for a valve replacement on August 20. He hopes to return to work sometime in October. Please remember him in your prayers as well. Laura Hare has begun her year-long sabbatical from leadership, well-timed as Jeff's surgery approaches and Naomi is about to start kindergarten.

A group of five young women who are veterans of the Mission Year ministry have moved into the apartment we had available. Though they are not specifically seeking to be part of Sojourners, there is a mutual hope that we can be encouraging and supportive to each other.

Dale's mom, Peggy Gish, has just returned to Baghdad with Christian Peacemaker Teams, and at the time of this writing, news is coming in about churches being bombed there. Peggy was not worshipping at a targeted church, but prayers are needed as the team there seeks to minister in a very scary and painful situation.

Hannah Zazvorka is leaving August 20 for a year with the SALT (Serve and Learn Together) Program in Cuernavaca, Mexico, near Mexico City. She will be teaching preschool and also leading a girls' club. Please pray for Hannah as she ventures into a year of intense service and new spiritual challenges.

We are looking forward to our All-Church Retreat in the redwoods in September, with our guest speakers and neighbors Mark and Lisa Scandrette of Re/Imagine (a San Francisco-based organization that fuels initiatives integrating spiritual formation, community making, the arts and social action).

Many of us are also anticipating attend-

ing the upcoming October Camp Meeting in Waco. The theme, "One New Humanity," seems very timely not only with the fragile state of the world, the situation in Iraq, and the potential divisiveness amongst believers in an election year, but also in our own congregation as we adopt new family members into our midst and love each other across the ordinary barriers which can come between us in our daily lives.



News from Waco

Nancy Gatlin
Hope Fellowship

Here in Waco we are so grateful for northern winds that have blown in our direction giving us an unusually temperate summer. We've had only one 100° day! So too, the breeze of the Spirit is bringing refreshment and renewal to Hope Fellowship.

After many fervent prayers a decade ago for a youth group, we look around us now at the young women and men and realized that God answered these prayers in God's own good time. Kristi Rowe-Miller and J.B. Smith are co-facilitating this group this year. We are also starting a mentoring program for the seven youth who are regularly involved.

Norma Torres took the challenge of directing the Mid-Texas Mennonite Children's Camp back in June. Though this was a first for her, by all accounts her leadership was affirmed. Barbara, Anali, Myra, and Luz also participated as staff, while Arranza and Emanuel were along as participants.

New people have come, bringing many enriching experiences and valuable gifts to Hope Fellowship. We've also put into place a new rotation system for caring and cleaning for the meeting house, a problem that has bedeviled us for a while. So far the new system is working, although we are aware that such things need regular overhauls.

During the summer we've been discussing nonviolence and greatly benefiting from watching the video series "A Force More Powerful." In August we will begin a monthly gathering, open to the public, that will use the "From Violence to Wholeness" curriculum and will explore the organization of an "Every Church a Peace Church" campaign in Waco.

Growth of Hope Fellowship and involvement in the neighborhood where our meetinghouse is located are two topics currently under exploration by our membership. As we celebrate our ten-year anniversary we have focused on how God has led us in the past, how God is working in our midst and in the world around us, and what God is calling us to in the days ahead.

In June we said goodbye to Hannah Zazvorka, who had been with us for one and a half years, as she headed back to San Francisco and prepared to go to Mexico with the MCC SALT program. We've enjoyed having Gabriela Gatlin back this summer after her year with Jubilee Partners, and in August, commissioned her as she left for her SALT experience in Honduras.

We do look forward to seeing many of you at our SMC gathering, October 8-11, here in Waco. We are excited as we plan the time together and anticipate what God's Spirit will show us. [©]



One New Humanity

An Editorial Reflection on Ephesians 2 and the Spiritual Jujitsu of Jesus

Eric Lawrence and David Janzen
Reba Place Fellowship

Jesus Christ is connecting our lives and our destinies in a new humanity. To do this, he first takes our concepts of neighbor, enemy, and stranger and engages them in a philosophical jujitsu.

(Jujitsu is a martial art that, instead of engaging aggressors in violent conflict, wears them out by redirecting their momentum and power.)

In answer to the question, “Who is my neighbor?” Jesus tells the familiar parable of a man whom robbers left half dead beside the road, and for whom a Samaritan provides four-legged emergency medical service. Jesus uses the momentum of a traditional Jewish prejudice against Samaritans to overthrow the listener’s prideful identity. The lines that separate nations and tribes are twisted together in this story to create the bonds of a new humanity and a new discovery. It is not where persons exist geographically that makes them neighbors. Rather, the look of recognition and a surprising act of charity lavished on a stranger have divine power to overcome historic alienation and make us the neighbors we already are in God’s coming kingdom.

Similarly, in his letter to the church in Ephesus, the Apostle Paul challenges the structures of nationality and culture with his own philosophical moves. “For [Jesus] is our peace; in his flesh he has made [Jews and Gentiles] into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.” (Ephesians 2:14) The enmity of the world directed at Jesus on the cross was swallowed up by his voluntary suffering, so that all who identify with him in discipleship are united into a new humanity despite our historically different and hostile cultures.

Today we live in a globalized world where America’s war on terrorism is forced upon all other nations. Just as the Jews were threatened by the dominant Greco-Roman world, the West is waging an imperial war

against all other cultures not willing to be assimilated into a western globalization. America’s war in Iraq, indeed, has split Christians around the world as many identify preemptive military aggression and Western democratic capitalism with God’s rule. This, of course, obscures the new humanity for which Christ died. To make it clear whose we are, we need to denounce all wars and challenge the church to a spiritual universalism between Christians.

We must guard, however, against a false and pretentious universalism. Human cultures are unique and shape us humans uniquely—praise God for that!

For us to claim unity with another suffering people in the name of universalism can be a cheap way to dismiss them.

Take for example... me, Eric; a young, white, upper-class, American suburbanite. Can I understand or identify with the suffering of the Palestinians or Sudanese refugees? This is absurd. But it is essential for me to recognize in their suffering the same powers that crucified our Lord. For we know that Jesus’ hand reaches out especially to the poor and oppressed, and Christians will find ways to do likewise.

Similarly, Paul discusses the differences and tensions between circumcision (Jews) and uncircumcision (Gentiles) in the church within the framework of Christ’s sacrifice. The mark of Jewishness, according to Paul, is “a physical circumcision made in the flesh by human hands.” (2:11) In other words, circumcision, like globalization, is a human cultural construct. According to Paul, no culture has the authority to claim superiority. What an exciting and liberating discovery that the death of Christ relativizes all cultural identities and pretensions to superiority.

So how does this New Humanity come to pass and realize itself in tangible ways that

are not themselves pretensions of superiority and domination? The first step, according to the Apostle Paul, is to reckon with the crucifixion of the Son of God, in which all humans had a hand. Once we realize that all of us, Jews and Gentiles, Whites and Blacks, male and female, old and young, poor and rich alike have played a role, we can be joined together in humble amazement at what God has nevertheless done for us in Christ. Once we have seen Jesus as the prototype of this New Humanity where sinners like us are forgiven and welcomed, there is a whole new creation. In Jesus’ defenselessness and capacity to suffer willingly for us, we have the divine promise of one another.

But if we are content to see the New Humanity as a beautiful sentiment or a wishful dream, it will forever stay in the future, without power to change our lives and our world. Paul’s vision becomes visible in history through a communal ethic. “So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another. Be angry and do not sin...” (Ephesians 4:25 ff.)

The truth is we are divided by many habits and social forces that will not be defeated except by a love that holds us close while our thinking, habits and character are challenged and reconstructed. This is great good news, for if something this radical this can happen to us, then anything is possible.

In this new humanity there is no alternative to honestly naming and confessing the barriers we have fearfully constructed in the old humanity to keep us safe, superior, and in control.

What are signs of this New Humanity breaking into our world?

Sharing Cultures and Stories

The Church of Christ must always strive



to become multi-cultural because heaven will include all tribes, nations and languages. Our God, the Trinity, is a harmony of differences. Efforts to bridge historic divides must begin with respectful listening. Our struggles at Reba to dismantle racism have shown us that good will and good intentions are not enough. We cannot know our own sin without honest dialogue that takes the time to hear the stories, both personal and collective, that have shaped us. We must allow each other's differences to exist without claiming to understand them beforehand. We can listen and struggle together in the confidence that the Holy Spirit is present in everyone's story, and by sharing our stories under the cross of Christ, a new humanity can emerge with its own story of death and resurrection.

Sharing Goods

In heaven there will be no private property. On earth possessions—more for the wealthy and less for the poor—keep us apart. So does the hope to one day become privately wealthy. This longing modifies our worship towards the security of Mammon.

Here, too, Jesus has given us a way through to the New Humanity by sharing God's gifts to care for the needs of all. Arriving at such a sharing does not lead to a simple formula, but it comes through faithful work for a common good and listening to each other's immediate needs within a shared life. In the New Humanity "no one said that anything they had was their own," and "there was not a needy person among them."

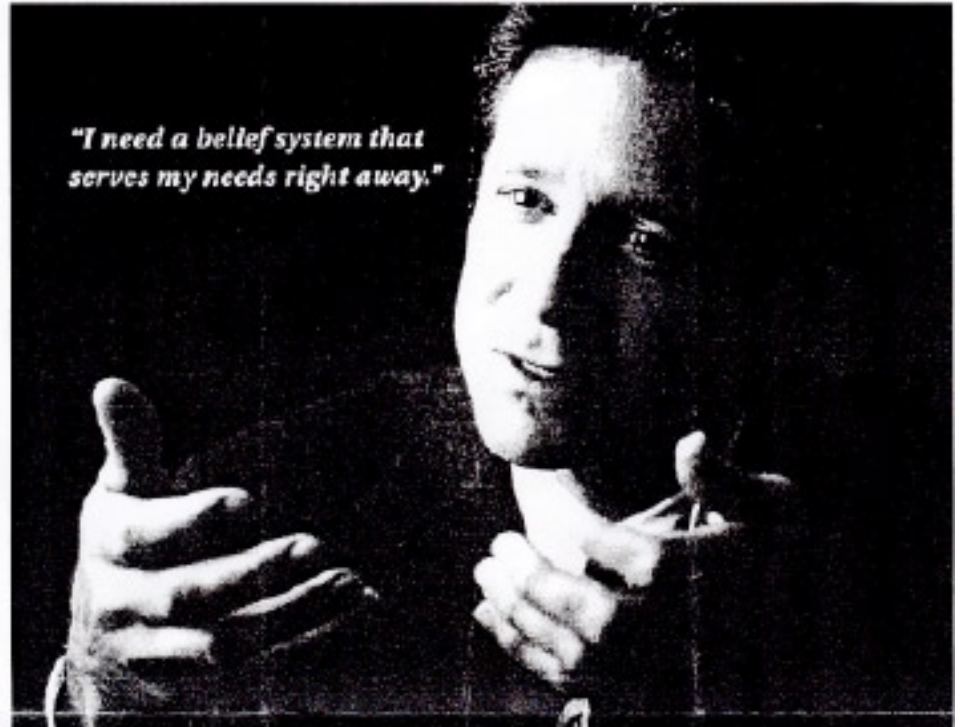
Leadership that Serves in the Manner of Jesus

The authority of Jesus is confirmed by an inner witness of the spirit. Therefore the New Humanity will be a voluntary community in which threats and power plays can have no part. The kingdom of God is indeed a government, but without the coercive apparatus of a state.

We could underline other marks of this New Humanity, but the rest of this newsletter will have to suffice. Here you will find other stories that will help us recognize this new way of being human that Jesus shows is possible in our time.

Most of these stories involve spending time with people who lack power in the world's system, and there we discover the divine presence.

Welcome to the New Humanity. ☺



Dean Sachs has a mortgage, a family, and an extremely demanding job. What he doesn't need is a religion that complicates his life with unreasonable ethical demands.

Spiritual providers in the past have required a huge amount of commitment – single-deity clauses, compulsory goodness, and a litany of mystifying mumbo-jumbo. It's no wonder people are switching to Mammon.

Mammon isn't the biggest player in the spiritual race. But our ability to deliver on our promises is unique. And our moral flexibility *unmatchable*.

MAMMON.

*Because you deserve to enjoy life – **ewilt-free**.*



Night-blooming Cereus

› **Baby Killer** cont from p.4

one. None of his guys had been killed or even wounded. And the Iraqis had fallen back and disengaged pretty quickly. But someone reported a small explosion on that street the next morning, and soon afterwards an Iraqi had brought a child to one of his men on patrol. Apparently some kids had found a grenade and it had gone off. Two of the children were killed instantly; the third was in the man's arms. Medics were called, but they asked a lot of questions since they weren't supposed to treat Iraqi injuries that weren't inflicted by U.S. troops, unless the injuries were life threatening. When they did arrive, after almost an hour, it was too late. The soldier who told him about the incident was almost crying before the end of the story. It was the helplessness. He felt it too. All this power, but it kept destroying the ones they were trying to save. He suspected it was a U.S. grenade the kids had found. Thrown in an engagement he had ordered. Now his "collateral damage" included three children.

The hippie woman looked confused. He saw "three" on her lips, but couldn't hear it. But others had seen his response and were

shouting now. That's when the traffic slowly started moving. There were more angry shouts, but the woman didn't try to stay with them, and as her face disappeared from view he looked ahead to where the police were clearing the street. Then something slammed against the back of the car. Both men jumped, and the lieutenant colonel hit the brakes. "Dammit!" They looked back. It was a sign. Someone had thrown a sign. It was still laying against the rear window: "Only Cowards Need Guns," with 'cowards' in huge capital letters. Obviously that protester hadn't seen his guys in Iraq.

They got moving again and he looked back at what he was reading. He was trying to find one particular part. Here... "*You have heard that it was said to the men of old, 'You shall not kill; and whoever kills shall be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother shall be liable...*" Wait, that's not it.

The lieutenant colonel interrupted him. "I wanted to stop and let you get something to eat, Major, but I don't think we have time now. Sorry about that. I hear the food's not

so great in there, and it's probably going to be a long ordeal processing you in." "That's OK, I'm not hungry," he replied. "But thanks." "I've never done an escort like this before," said the lieutenant colonel, "I guess they don't want the MPs dealing with officers. We only have a few minutes before we get there... you want to tell me what you did?" He thought for a moment. Then looked over at the senior officer. "I stopped giving orders."

Then it was quiet and they slowed as they approached the main gate. A young MP came to attention and saluted the car, and the lieutenant colonel returned the salute as they moved through the tall fences. He noticed the razor wire coiling along the top. Nasty stuff.

He looked down again. Here it is: "*You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you...*"

When they got to the brig, he was surprised at how small and ordinary it looked. They got out of the car. ☺

› Sharing Community *cont from p.1*

Art Gish told of how people in Hebron sustain life by passing chickens and sometimes people through the walls and fences that the Israelis built. It is not possible to fully separate people.

Peggy broke in with fresh lemonade.

With the help of one partner, Austin, the Gishes sustain themselves by summer work, selling their produce at a local farmer's market. It is no small challenge to pull weeds and pick asparagus and garlic in between assignments in the Middle East and attending peace conferences in Spain and Boston. Art and Peggy listen to National Public Radio before picking asparagus at 5:30 am and cooking a hearty breakfast. They live simply and peacefully. Our friendship goes back a long way, and I can see that though their community is small, they still have faithfully served lots of people.

Thursday morning we headed for Charlotte to visit Sara and Joe. They had just moved into a very nice two bedroom apartment near Joe's work. I was much more interested in working with Joe in the cabinet-making and finishing shop than in sight seeing around the city. So I helped Joe finish some dividers Friday morning.

Friday afternoon and Saturday we designed, bought materials and built a series of ramps to get their ferret up to the ceiling and across to an enclosure atop their cupboard. Integrating our ideas and building relationships required some patience, but was good.

Friday night we went to church at Morningstar Ministries, the church Sara and Joe attend. Maurice and Roselyn Darr, Reba members years ago, are leaders in Sara and Joe's small group. The worship and teachings were really fine. There was a strong interest in paying attention to the "stuff" that Jesus shared with the inner circle of his followers. After the service, teams of three prepared to share words of prophetic encouragement or direction to persons without any previous acquaintance. Jacob and I found this meaningful.

Monday we headed for Jubilee Partners at Comer, Georgia. On the way we read *With Our Own Eyes*, the story by Don Mosley of the beginning of the Jubilee Partners. They grew out of the Clarence Jordan and Koinonia Community in Americus. We had lots of relationship with Jubilee in the '80s when the Overground Railroad for Central American refugees was running. Jubilee's primary ministry has been the welcoming



The Gishes and the Belsers (l to r): Peggy Belser, Peggy Gish, Art Gish, Julius Belser, Jacob Belser.

and orienting of refugees from the current most violent places of the world. They teach refugees English and help them feel at home in their community. A team of young interns do a lot of the teaching and childcare daily.

But over the years, their peacemaking has also involved helping victims of land mines in Nicaragua, building Habitat homes in the Middle East, and efforts to send aid and prevent war in Iraq. The community just celebrated their 25th anniversary.

Jacob especially enjoyed the company of three fellows his age at Jubilee—Eli, Misha and Ben. Quickly they were off playing volleyball, composting the garden, bowling, picking blueberries, and going to a movie.

Don and Carolyn Mosley invited Peggy and me and a couple from South Africa to deliver a year's supply of blueberries to their friends, Jimmy and Roslyn Carter, at the Carter Center in Atlanta. The Carters were not there, but we had a very interesting tour and introduction to their reconciliation and healthcare work around the world.

Wednesday we went to the New Hope Community south of Atlanta, where Ed and Mary Ruth Weir host families of death row inmates in prison nearby. Ed and Mary Ruth also carry on lots of very personal work with the death row inmates. They attend the trials and advocate for them where possible. They also work for the abolition of the death penalty. "It takes a chunk out of you every time one of these prisoners dies," said Ed. Mary Ruth is working hard on her rehab from a

very bad accident when she was driving on an interstate at 70 mph and came over a rise into the back of a big truck going 5 mph.

Ed and Mary Ruth are sustained by friendship and worship at the Open Door Community in Atlanta and by their brothers and sisters at Jubilee Partners. They have a house in the woods with lots of birds around and a three-bedroom double trailer for hosting families. They are wonderfully gracious hosts.

The prayer by Thomas Merton on the wall in their guest room ends with: "Therefore I will trust you always though I seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone."

On the way home I asked Jacob about his sense of direction. He has so many things he is interested in and enjoys—no real ideas. I urged him to consider how many different practical gifts peacemaking and community building in the God movement can utilize.

Clarence Jordan got trained as a farmer, then a preacher, then a Greek scholar, but also knew the people of South Georgia really well. Don Mosley tears the road grader engine apart, picks blueberries, travels the world in peacemaking missions and also encourages Jimmy Carter.

What a gift to share our friends who have shared our journey over the years and to introduce our grandson to them and to the hope that sustains them. ©

The Futility of "War Against Terrorism"

A war against terrorism would have no end. It would go on and on, every act of terrorism and response escalating until at some point, someone would use a nuclear device or some chemical or biological weapon. That would wipe out hundreds of thousands, even millions of people. War against terrorism only gets worse and worse.

What we need is to know who the people are who are waging this war. Try to discover something about them... If we want to avoid utter and final destruction of this world, we must come to empathize with our enemies. By coming to know them, to know why they act the way they do, we can respond to the humanness in them. If we don't, we will all perish.

©

Thomas J. Gumbleton, auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Detroit, Michigan, from a March 14, 2004, sermon.

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