

# Shalom Connections

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## Blessed Be the Ties that Bind

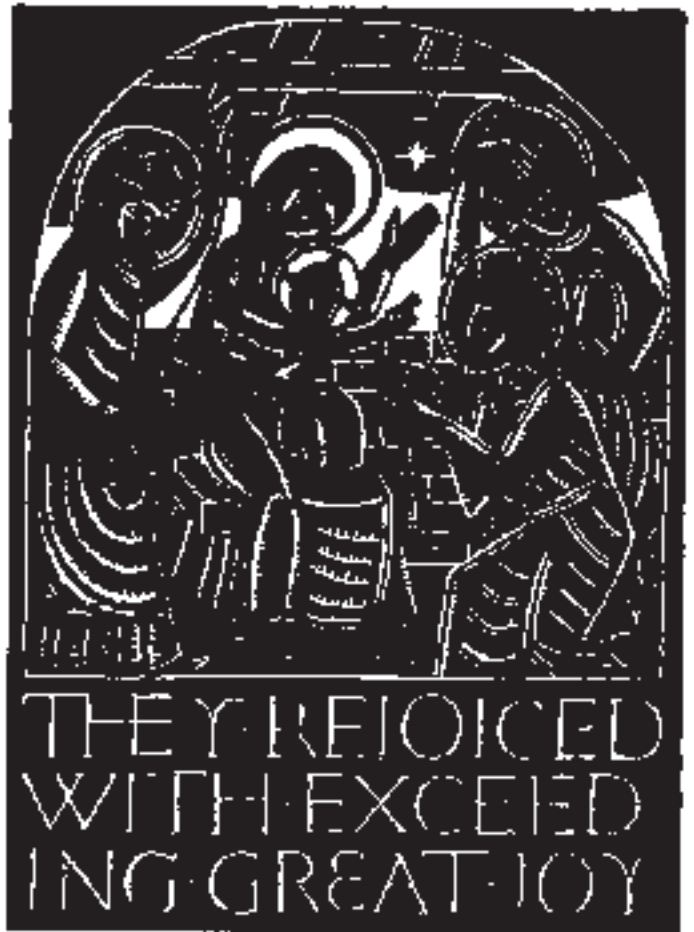
### Reflections on the Waco 2004 SMC Camp Meeting

*Marcus Remple*  
Grain of Wheat Church Community

Embraces, fond farewells, invitations to visit, smiles on faces that had belonged to strangers a few days before: this was the scene as we said our goodbyes in Waco. The SMC “Camp Meeting” had been aptly named: “Strangers no more: One New Humanity.”

We Canadians had missed out on Thanksgiving dinners back home, but had participated in a family feast equally rich. Our hosts served up delicious banquets of authentic Mexican food: not just the rice and beans of the simple lifestyle emphasized in SMC circles, but the festive foods of abundant hospitality (also an SMC value): tender roast beef, mouth-watering shrimp, fantastic fish soups, ample tamales.

We participated in worship services that our hearts could really say “Amen” to. (Although we quiet Northerners didn’t shout Amen as vocally as some of our more charismatic sisters and brothers.) We were heartened to hear the Gospel of nonviolence and racial reconciliation preached deep in the heart of “Bush Country.” Music was joyfully and masterfully led with guitars, charanga and congas and twangy Texas vocals. Three of us stayed up into the wee hours of Monday morning jamming, singing



Ken Thompson

and trading favorite songs with other SMC musicians.

We were inspired by the Hope Fellowship-affiliated World Hunger Relief Farm which trains interns in sustainable farming and appropriate technology in preparation for overseas service, as well as operating an organic CSA and educating the public about food justice and ecological

› **Blessed Be the Ties** cont on p.15

# Being Responsible

Cliff Kindy  
Christian Peacemaker Teams

This past year I spent five months again in Iraq with Christian Peacemaker Teams. Our close work with Iraqi human rights groups, leaders in the Christian and Muslim (both Shia and Sunni) communities, contacts with US foot soldiers and high ranking military officers, experiences in the homes and shops of “uncommon, common” Iraqis, opportunities to visit in the schools, hospitals, and universities across Iraq, and working relationships with international justice, development, and peace organizations all combined to give us a privileged position from which to share a slice of the of events in Iraq.

In February two young men visited our apartment to announce that they were on a “mission” to take out our building and all who were in it. They ended up only taking material things, perhaps because of the way we responded to them, but it was a rather sobering incident. It made clear that internationals are now being seen as complicit in the occupation and that we walk some of the same paths as Iraqis.

Our regular CPT work with Iraqi detainees of the US forces (trying to help families find where members are being detained, what the charges are, and how family can visit) took a very prominent role in our work. We met with some of the highest ranking civilian and military officials in the US occupation to share our detailed report and a series of recommendations. Initially we felt they just blew us off, but when the

revelations from Abu Ghraib Prison hit the fan in May, our concerns were confirmed.

Stories of house raids and sweeps in rural communities were normal parts of testimony from detainees and their families. Those house raids and the sweeps led to the International Committee of the Red Cross report that 70-90% of detainees were held without cause. This proved to be a disaster for Iraqis and the US occupation. Families had cars, money, jewelry, and property taken and destroyed with little chance of return or compensation and the US forces were setting up one of the best recruiting plans for the resistance as frustration and anger at those events led to a massive turn of opinion against the US occupation.

Two steps might make a dramatic change in the situation in Iraq. 1) Pull US forces back from the urban areas—a plan that was to have been implemented in April. 2) Use the billions of dollars allocated for Iraq to hire Iraqis to rebuild their own infrastructure. They have the expertise; they built Iraq initially; unemployment is at 70%, and the Iraqi resistance is paying good money for attacks on US soldiers and internationals, so they will find a paying job one way or the other. We would get ten Iraqis for the cost of one US contractor and Iraqis don't have the security concerns that have virtually shut down international rebuilding of the destroyed infrastructure of Iraq. In two weeks we might begin to see a dramatic change in the spirit across Iraq. These two steps are quite simple.

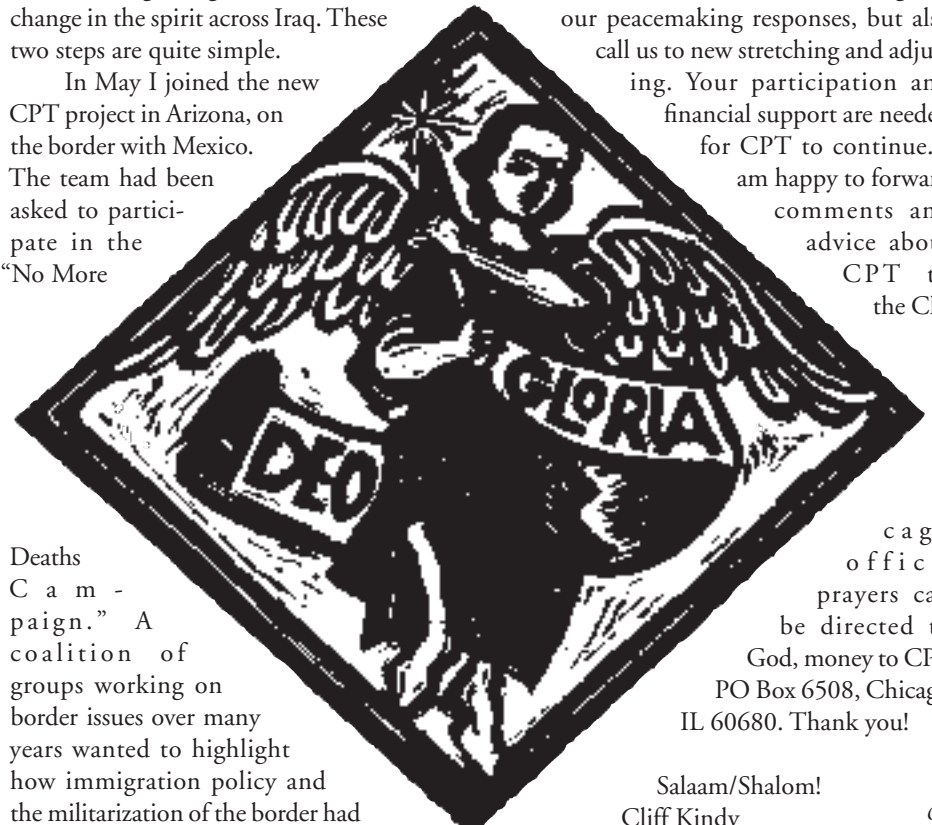
In May I joined the new CPT project in Arizona, on the border with Mexico. The team had been asked to participate in the “No More

led to the deaths of hundreds of people crossing that border, people who were quickly hired on this side of the border once they made the crossing. The seventy-five mile walk that kicked off the summer campaign was brutal. Not many miles each day, but, even with support vehicles accompanying us, we had three walkers succumb to the heat and desert conditions. It made so clear the great difficulty for individuals to make that passage. I only did the walk and the team continued throughout the summer to offer hospitality and encouragement to travelers from a base near Douglas, Arizona.

The summer was my time to work with Arlene in our organic market garden. That space becomes my healing place each time I return from conflict zones of the world. This summer I have had about 150 opportunities across fifteen states and provinces to speak about our CPT work in Iraq. Media invitations abounded, often because of the initiative of folks like you. Thank you!

I am scheduled to return to the field in Iraq within the next week. We should have a team of six there before the end of November. We still have teams in Colombia, Western Ontario, and Palestine. Your prayers for the people and situation in each place are coveted.

CPT continues to expand and face new obstacles. Having four teams in the field simultaneously and new CPT people from other countries and cultures will strengthen our peacemaking responses, but also call us to new stretching and adjusting. Your participation and financial support are needed for CPT to continue. I am happy to forward comments and advice about CPT to the Chi-



Deaths  
C a m -  
paign.” A  
coalition of  
groups working on  
border issues over many  
years wanted to highlight  
how immigration policy and  
the militarization of the border had

c a g o  
o f f i c e,  
prayers can  
be directed to  
God, money to CPT,  
PO Box 6508, Chicago,  
IL 60680. Thank you!

Salaam/Shalom!  
Cliff Kindy



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## 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. Subscriptions are free. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the official position of *Shalom Connections*, Shalom Mission Communities, or its member churches. **Postmaster:** send address changes to the Publishing Office address, below. Standard mail postage paid at Coshocton, OH 43812.

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# Christian Peacemaker Team News

## A Letter from Colombia

Jim Fitz  
Plow Creek Fellowship

Hello, Friends,

In hushed voices, the Colombian Mennonites I was staying with told this story, which had happened just the day before I arrived. A hunted man (we will call José), who has been on the paramilitary's (paras) do-away-with list, was kidnapped here in Bogota. José had, by God's grace, escaped when the kidnapping car broke down. In running away he fell and cut his abdomen. Fortunately, no organs were damaged; the hospital refused to give him further treatment because José was not registered in the system.

José, part of a family with two small children, was on his way to meet with a Mennonite pastor. He had suffered gunshot wounds and stabbing from previous attacks. The church has been trying to help him get asylum in Canada. It looked like he would get asylum, and then the Canadian administration changed, and they have now rejected him. His case is now on appeal.

Many Mennonite church people and leaders fear for their safety. And so I want to beg you to pray for these concerns and for justice and peace for Colombia. Through your prayers and concern, you are an intimate part of my work. The violence has gotten considerably worse for the Men-

nonite church since I was here a year ago. The Mennonite church has held regular meetings to pray for protection, justice, and peace. These unsafe times are increasing the church's dependence on the Lord.

I have had to make some adjustments. One was in coping with the ten hour bus ride from Bogota to Barrancabermeja (Barranca). The first four hours consisted of continued switchbacks up and down mountains thru some beautiful country. Then for the next six hours the bus dove into the tropics. My body has to adjust because it approaches 100 degrees every day. When it gets down to 80, I am very grateful.

On the trip we had a good conversation with an eleventh grade girl about Christian Peacemaker Team work. I showed her some photos of CPT projects and shared stories about my work there and about my involvement in El Salvador, Bolivia, and with overground railroad refugees. She hopes to become a physical therapist and help children who have been injured from landmines in Colombia. She asked how she could get involved with the Church with helping people like I have been doing. Since she is from Bogota, I gave her Mennonite church contacts there that are doing lots of work with people suffering from the 40-year civil war here. She asked me to pray for her and her broken family.

I mentioned that we believe Jesus calls us to love our enemies. She said, "That is hard, if not impossible." I said it is hard, but if we ask God to help us, God can make it a reality. Time will tell how God might use this sharing; it seemed a real gift.

I got my visa fine, thanks for your prayers.

Shalom, Jim

☺

*"Let us not be disheartened, as though human realities made impossible the accomplishments of God's plans"* —Oscar Romero



St. Folk Book

# Poetry

Erin Kindy  
Plow Creek Fellowship

These poems are reflections on impunity and voice after the September 6 assassination of Ancizar Giraldo in the Los Neques community that Christian Peacemaker Teams accompanies in Colombia.

## Impunity I

Oh, my God, what were they thinking?  
¿Qué pasó en sus corazones? {What happened in their hearts?}  
Yesterday she had a husband  
and today she's taking their four children to  
his funeral.  
One of them will not remember his father.  
The AUC came through (paramilitaries)  
bravos ¿y porqué? {angry, and why?}  
The only ones present  
except for the man—  
un machetazo y un tiro— {a machete blow and a shot}  
were the compañeros of the killer(s.) {companions}  
¿Que berraco! {how tough!}  
So, what could anyone investigate?  
After much of the community bore  
the body to the city  
the armed police stood guard  
to assure the body would get to the morgue.  
What more could they do?  
He was already dead (one more number)  
and the killers far away,  
even if people know who was responsible.  
The autoridades didn't have to rush out here; {authorities}  
They'd only find  
the fear of helpful neighbors.  
The perpetrators had moved through again.  
This is the face of impunity from another side.  
Es complicado. {It's complicated.}  
Que tristeza. {What sadness.}  
What anger!

I carry this community in my heart.  
This will happen again.

## Impunity II

*The wicked draw the sword and bend their bows to bring down the poor and needy, to kill those who walk uprightly; their sword shall enter their own heart, and their bows shall be broken.* Psalm 37:14, 15

The face of impunity from another side is:  
The new widow telling us she won't make a denouncement  
because it was dark  
they didn't identify themselves when they asked for lemonade  
she didn't see their faces.  
Her neighbors telling us the bloque and origin of the armed men,  
(bloc)  
but some of them leaving in fear.

Because armed men do what they want  
because they know they can get by with it,  
and they do.

Because the police aren't there  
and the witnesses won't speak because they fear for their lives  
so the reports are always, "hombres desconocidos," (unknown men)  
(All the time!)  
And, you can't prosecute them.  
The authorities themselves are sometimes implicated—  
and that's too messy to prosecute.

So, people stay silent—  
because it might not be worth the risk.  
And, we stay silent—  
because if we speak wrong it might bring more guns  
into the lives of people we love.  
Authorities stay silent—  
because, mostly, they're not there.

And, the men with guns keep speaking with the loudest.  
But the OFP puts up billboards that read:  
Ni una mujer, (Not a woman)  
Ni un hombre, (Not a man)  
Ni un peso (Not a peso)  
para la guerra. (for war.)  
and  
Las ideas son (Ideas are)  
mas fuertes (stronger)  
que las armas. (than guns.)  
And, their voice  
persists.



ARTIST UNKNOWN

# Open Heart— Open Home

## Finding joy in sharing your home with others

Eric Lawrence  
Reba Place Fellowship

Across my bed are scattered books, some of them creased to mark where I had left off. The titles include *Middle East Illusions* by Noam Chomsky, *One Land, Two Peoples* by Deborah Gerner, and other heavy political tomes saturated with big words and paragraph-long sentences. What I'm trying to say is that there isn't much diversity in my reading. The point and joy of reading gets lost. But at the foot of my bed was a book I was asked to review for the SMC newsletter.

I scanned the title, *Open Heart—Open Home*, opened the book and expected to find the usual Christian drivel, devoid of any critical thought, repeating the same concepts with different adjectives for 200 pages. I'd rather spare myself the torture. But as I delved into its pages I found myself surprised by this refreshing reflection on a biblical instruction that is largely over-looked in our culture: Hospitality. The author, Karen Burton Mains, takes us on an insightful journey through her past to find what it is to open our homes to the people around us, which in the end invites us to create a permanent space for the Lord in our hearts and our homes.

Mains's narrative engages us to look at all our relationships, alert to the spirit of God within them. Hospitality is not a sterile gesture, a show, or an entertainment act. It is a way of life that puts God's will before all else. If we are not allowing God to work through all our intimate relationships, our ego will taint our hospitality. The world of *Better Homes* magazines that nags "perfection" at us is a result of this spiritually void mindset. When inviting others into our home, Jesus is not asking us to impress them with our spotless toilet or the patterns on the wall. Jesus asks that we give our lives to others. Hospitality means we allow others to be with us, in our weaknesses and strengths, embarrassments and triumphs. As long as we put on a show, we are not being honest with ourselves or those around us.

Karen Mains illuminates her struggles

with trying to maintain her house, her life, and her unruly children as guests continually entered and exited. Life was becoming too much, which brought on a panic attack that disrupted her thought process. During a period of recuperation, it dawned on her that she had to give it all up to the Lord. She allowed God to organize her schedule, take all her possessions and control of her life. In a rare moment of deep introspection, she felt God wanted her to revisit her childhood relationships, the way her parents viewed hospitality, and how she had conceptualized hospitality in her context. These reflections come across the page with a vivid tenderness and a sense of practical experience that could only be conveyed by a person imbued with a calm spiritual sensitivity.

One of the provocations of the panic attack was the fact that she would not allow people to see her weakness. She did not want others to know that she needed help. It didn't take much more than a panic attack to realize that nothing could have been further from the truth. She needed all the help and grace she could get from all the guests in her life, a common tale worth telling. Soon she was welcoming others to be hospitable to her in her own home and to help her out with all

of the chores and tasks. The potential insanity-provoking situations were diminishing. Not only that, but she had a renewed sense of God's love and work in her life.

I feel we all could learn a lesson from Karen Mains's self-awareness. Among those lessons is the importance of welcoming children in Jesus' name. I have always been child-like (both in the positive sense and the negative), but never too eager to have children of my own. As Karen shared her methods of relating to her children, I felt a deep longing both to have children of my own and to invite more children into my life. I'm not sure if bringing children into my presence will be a positive experience (for the children) quite yet, but I can say her words had a transforming effect on me.

Since *Open Heart—Open Home* is written from the perspective of a married woman with a family, it can be better suited to people in that same position, but the book will still provide profound spiritual insight for those of us living the single life. With a style and a pace that commands one's attention, Mains's words will grab your spirit and open you to a new lifestyle of hospitality. Read this book and you may well discover how to find joy in sharing your home with others. ©



Edith Bernard, by Christen Mattix.

# Church News

## News from Chicago

Lisa Selph  
Fellowship of Rogers Park

When I heard that this issue of the newsletter was focusing on hospitality, I immediately thought of Tim and Patty Peebles. Each Sunday afternoon, following worship, the Peebles' open their home to those in the church (and neighborhood) who want to share a simple meal of soup and bread, enjoy an opportunity for fellowship and conversation, or find a place for rest and recreation. Among the regular attendees have been folks without immediate family near by, folks needing a place to hang out for the afternoon, and folks visiting our church for the first time. But the most faithful attendees have been two men with developmental disabilities, who greet Tim or Patty each Sunday morning with the question, "Is it gonna happen today?" and arrive before anyone else to set the table and stir the soup. In the summer folks hang out on the back porch. Occasionally a few will break off and play a game or two of chess. "I can't imagine Christian fellowship without sharing food. Christian hospitality is very different from our culture's view of hospitality. It is

an opportunity to practice and proclaim the welcome of God, receiving the diverse gifts and attending to the diverse needs of those who arrive," says Tim. The Peebles probably include more people around the dinner table than anyone I know, too – and there are several church members who consider it a second home, including Liam Jackson (the pre-school age grandson of Dave and Neta) whose first spoken phrases included a hopeful "go Pattytim's house?"

Opportunities for hospitality have increased with a fall "migration" of folks to LWCC/Rogers Park. Kelley Johnson, Americorp volunteer, happened upon our church and immediately felt it was where God wanted her. She stayed with the us in August while considering longer-term housing options. Now she, Sara Rickard and Amy Ornee, two other young women from Living Water felt called to move into the immediate neighborhood, are sharing Sally Schreiner Youngquist's old apartment halfway between the Selphs/Peebles/Putnam building and Frantz's down the alley.

Andy Senter and Jake Sikora recently graduated from Huntington College in Indiana. Searching for a church community in an urban neighborhood within reach of Garrett Seminary led them to LWCC. They are now living in "the Pratt building" where church office is located and several church families live. The newly-married Moyles moved to Rogers Park in August, as did Sue Juzwik, who had been worshipping with us, and her

two roomies. Katie Dahlseng and Eric Lawrence have been LWCCers living at a distance and are now both in the RPF intern program and living in Evanston. Yet another LWCCer, Rebekah Thibault, has moved in with Katie and some other young women... It's great to have this concentration of folks living in close proximity. Five years ago there was one "twenty-something" in Living Water—and now there over twenty!

Of course the new church building project is providing many opportunities for common work (addressing envelopes, stacking ceiling tiles...), outreach (serving lemonade as kids pass by on the way home from school, intervening in a serious beating incident...), and corporate discernment (which of the fourteen odd patches of color I see on the east side of the building will be *the* color(s)...?) The latest news is that the building permit has *finally* been granted—so we're off and running (or "off and renovating," to be more precise). We're glad for prayer to undergird our fundraising efforts, since now having sufficient "cash on hand" is the only thing keeping us from getting the build-out done. If you'd like more info, contact us at [livingwatercc@juno.com](mailto:livingwatercc@juno.com) or call (773) 764-5872!



## News from Tiskilwa

Ruth Anne Friesen  
Plow Creek Fellowship

Fall has arrived at Plow Creek and Lantern Festival is scheduled for Saturday, Oct. 30! Preparations involve learning Bruderhof Lantern Festival Songs from the Graham family through the week. Everyone is invited to participate in lantern making and song practice on Friday evening and in donut making and bonfire preparation on Sat. morning. Then as the festival begins in the evening, we expect to hear scripture from Hebrews 11 and I John 1. All are invited



Rachel Hudgens, Rachel Shelley and Rachel Flecke demonstrate togetherness at a Reba party.



Salomé demonstrates his first-touch-ever computer skills at the Reba Fellowship office.

to share about what light means. This is followed by two lines of people crossing the meadow with lighted lanterns and singing antiphonally. At the bonfire afterward persons share about the Saints we remember and who have encouraged us in our faith journeys. We hope to share donuts and cider and more music around the campfire this year. It is an event that has been very meaningful in celebrating the pilgrimage of faith for all the saints at Plow Creek.

Red raspberries and blackberries were the most prolific berries at Plow Creek this summer. Unfortunately, the strawberry harvest did not do very well, and that caused a shortfall in farm income. The market barn was painted near the end of the summer, so there's a clean, neat look as people come to the farm to purchase vegetables and berries. The farm team was blessed through the summer with Thursday evening picnic gatherings and sharing times. Good fellowship and prayer were an encouraging part of the hard work on the farm.

The end of September the youth group, led by Lyn Fitz and Lynn Reha, sponsored a hunger meal for one of our Friday evening gatherings. It was an experience choosing colored beads from a hat and then being ushered to small tables with decorative tablecloths and lots of food choices or long tables without cloths but with basic foods or blankets on the floor and a pot of beans accompanied by tortillas. The majority of us ended up on the floor, watching the others

being served their delicious desserts or their sodas. There were several thought-provoking dramas and lots of good information about hunger issues around the world and what small steps we can take as we decide to do something to make a difference about awareness of the issue. It was a good opportunity to think together about hunger and why it is happening even in the United States.

We are processing as a church the possibility of having Communion together on Sunday mornings, perhaps a few times in the church year, rather than only on Wednesday evenings once a month. Rich Foss has agreed to do some teaching on Communion soon. Some of the questions raised have involved how children and visitors could be included in Communion so that they come to understand the importance of Communion in our lives. Perhaps we will need to choose to experiment with a Sunday Communion two to four times a year and then make a further decision about it. We'd be glad to hear how other communities handle Communion and what seems to work best.

Our worship committee has scheduled a retreat here at Plow Creek for Nov. 5–7 with Marlene Kropf, director of congregational ministries in the Mennonite Church U.S.A. We look forward to the theme "Making space for the Spirit in worship." Marlene is suggesting a variety of ways this topic will be developed in different sessions: 1) The spiritual preparation of leaders and worshipers, 2) Making space for the Spirit in the ordinary

actions of worship, 3) Making space for the Spirit through the arts, 4) Making space for the Spirit to move us beyond worship to mission, and 5) Remaining energized by the Spirit for the long haul. We expect good gifts beyond what we can imagine as the Spirit moves in the weekend together!

The Newhouse couple with a small daughter has just moved to Plow Creek in October. William and Kate, along with little Isa, are settling into the small apartment above the Fosses in the East House. We look forward to getting to know them and sharing life together. We are glad for their honesty and openness as they share in various settings. May the Lord richly bless our fellowship together.

Boo Graham's father died from cancer in September. Boo traveled to Ohio after her dad had surgery, so she had some chance to talk with him and to be present for him and with her Mother as death neared. Now at the end of October Boo again traveled to Ohio to celebrate her Mother's birthday. It is good to be present when milestones happen, especially when the finality of death has just occurred.

Richard and Ruth Anne Friesen are preparing for their Mennonite Mission Network assignment as pastoral accompaniment facilitators with the Mennonite team in the Chaco of Northern Argentina. The heart of the work there is accompanying the indigenous and honoring their language and culture as the Holy Spirit is active through them. Their churches are flourishing and growing as God is showing them how to affirm both their Christian and tribal heritages. The Friesens are planning on leaving for Argentina on December 1, Lord willing. Please be in prayer for their preparation, their learning the Toba language, and their ability to value and affirm the persons with whom they come in contact along with their culture.

At Plow Creek we would appreciate your prayers also for...

-Steve Graham's job search, especially that he might find a job in the area of alternative energy, for which he has a real passion.

-Louise and Mark Stahnke's healing through Theophostic prayer.

-Jim and Donna Harnish as Jim's arthritis advances and Donna continues bedfast.

-Tim and Carol Gale as they look forward to moving and living at Camp MennoHaven but have had to wait for housing to open.

› **Church News** *cont on p.8*

➤ **Church News** *cont from p.7*

-Tutuk Horning and her sister Utami in Indonesia as Utami faces surgery the end of Oct. for a breast lump and possible malignancy.

-David Gale's asthma and freedom from respiratory illnesses.

-Rich Foss' immune system, his arthritis and bouts of illness.

-Ed and Esther Johnson as divorce happens.



## News from Winnipeg

*Marcus Rempel*

Grain of Wheat Church Community

The Elm and Basswood trees that make up the "urban forest" of our Wolsley neighbourhood are turning golden yellow, a brief and glorious drama of dying that signals the coming of winter. It's a time of bracing ourselves. After the summer we've had, few of us feel ready for the prospect of freezing temperatures and long, dark nights. The sporadic warm sunny spells we've had this September had a lot of people out of their houses, soaking in the warm, bright beams, trying to make up for the summer that never really showed up this year.

The Amaras, our new refugee family from Sierra Leone, are doing their best to be brave in facing this harsher climate. Trying to acclimatize his body to its new environment, Mr. Amara spent hours walking outside without a jacket. We hope the warmth of our welcome will moderate the chill. The day we moved them into their new townhouse, the refugee committee had to ask people to stop bringing more new housewarming gifts until the Amaras had had a bit of time to adjust to their newfound wealth. Mrs. Amara was already tearfully overwhelmed by the contrast between her beautiful house, its furnishings and fully

stocked refrigerator and the squalor in which she had left behind so many loved ones. We tried to make clear to them that what seemed like acts of extravagant generosity were often welcome opportunities for us to declutter our own homes. It was a lesson in contrasting worlds that will take time to sink in for the Amaras and for the rest of us. What else will we learn from one another this year?

As we welcomed the Amaras this summer, we also sent forth a number of young adults, all bound for service work in warmer climes. We trust their altruism was the primary motive. Phil & Kirsten Krymusa are teaching at an English Language school in Nairobi, Kenya. Their students are mostly the children of NGO workers, which makes Phil and Kristen service workers to the service workers. Phil & Kiersten are fairly recent arrivals, having worshipped with us for two years before leaving for Kenya this summer. We are still glad to bless and claim their ministry as an extension of our own. Tessa Callan went to do administrative work and teach Mediation Skills at a school in Jamaica, where she faced and survived the fury of Hurricane Ivan shortly after her arrival. Marianne Mutch is assisting in the documentation of human rights abuses against miners by their employers in the Phillipines. One of the prominent companies involved is Canadian, which adds a special relevance to her involvement.

Both Marianne and Tessa became novice

members just shortly before they headed overseas, so it felt like welcoming and bidding farewell all at the same time. Rather than just setting out on their own, they wanted to be sent by a community to which they would return. We were honored by their decision to embrace us in this way and look forward to news of their adventures.

Back here at home base, Grain of Wheat is on the move too. We are settling into our new worship space at St. Matthews Maryland, a grand old cathedral whose disrepair is mirrored in the poverty of the inner city streets that surround it. We are one of four congregations who worship there, taking the 9:00-10:30 time slot, tucked into a corner. There is loss and confusion in this new place, but also excitement. During the week, St. Matt's is home to a myriad of ministries that touch the lives of Winnipeg's most marginalized: programs that teach people to grow, preserve and sell local produce, an Aboriginal women's sewing circle, a drop-in center for people living with and at high risk for HIV/AIDS patients are but a few examples. We feel good that the rent we pay will subsidize these programs. Will more of our lives be drawn into this life and work among the poor?

Another circle may be drawing us in as well: your circle. Grain of Wheat is actively exploring membership in Shalom Mission Communities this year. We recently hosted David Janzen and Doug Selph for a week-



Hilda Carper encourages Valle Nuevo visitor Margarita Avilez in her first ever encounter with cold fall weather.

Eric Lawrence





Margarita and Salomé tell Valle Nuevo stories at a Reba party while Nelson Sosa translates. David Hovde and Joseph Marshak listen in.

end visitation, which made our connection to SMC more real and dear for many of us once again. In his Sunday message to us, David likened the invitation to join SMC to the process of joining an AA group: a group of broken sinners who recognize the fragility of their condition, the precarity of the life they have been called into and the need for mutual support and reliance on a Higher Power in resisting the temptations of the life they have been called out of. It was a very humble, yet compelling invitation that moved many of our hearts.

Grain of Wheat set aside considerable monies to send four members to the Camp Meeting in Waco this year. The great distance between Winnipeg and Waco and the time and money given to make this trip happen represent both the daunting challenge of this very long-distance relationship and the seriousness of our commitment to see if we can make a go of it. Whatever the outcome, we give thanks for the witness and fellowship extended to us by SMC and for the traveling “Apostles” like Virgil Vogt and David Janzen who have visited and corresponded with us over the years to encourage us in our walk with God and have kept up the ties that bind amongst this diaspora of communitarian Christians.



## News from San Francisco

Zoe Mullery  
Church of the Sojourners

As of this writing, Church of the Sojourners is heading into our (sometimes) annual Celebration of the Faithful, a week of learning about and being inspired by the lives of faithful people, whether historical figures or members of our own family (we will cap off the week with a surprise honoring of the faithful life of our very own Tim Otto). The week will include stories, cameos, and movies and we are looking forward to steeping ourselves in the particulars of a few of the “cloud of witnesses.”

Our new Apprenticeship, which started in September, is going extremely well. We have been blessed by the attitude of service and enthusiasm with which Matt, Steven, Jon and IvaJo have anointed us. Jon and IvaJo have decided to move up their wedding date from May to January which will put the first few months of their married life within the timeline of the Apprenticeship, a decision arising out of their positive response to the Apprenticeship and sense of love and support here at Sojourners—which of course was extremely encouraging news to the rest of us.

Jeff Hare is back at work after successful

valve replacement surgery in August and a long recuperation. It’s both disconcerting and reassuring to sit next to him and hear his heart go tick, tick, tick. All in all, the process couldn’t have gone any better; many prayers were answered. He is teaching an Old Testament class at our Tuesday night Bible Study; the prep for the class helped him through many a long day of not being able to be as active as he would have liked.

Rebecca Jane Gish, age four months, is hardly recognizable from the tiny little bumblebee she was when she arrived (less than four pounds at birth). Now at eleven pounds or so, she has dimples at every knuckle and joint and is capable of eliciting cooing noises from adults with her winning smile. Dale and Debbie are in the beginning stages of preparing for the process of adoption number two.

The Lockie baby is here! Johnathan David Lockie, also known as John David or J.D., gave his own birthday surprise party on November 4, almost a month before his official due date. After a quick and relatively easy delivery, he arrived on the scene at 6 lbs. 10 oz., a hefty enough weight to make the early delivery feel like a blessing. There have been no complications, and the Lockies were all home by the sixth. The thought of a small version of TimL running around has terrified some and caused others to go into a kind of glazed shock reaction. It is possible, of course, that his gender will not necessarily entail a download of all of TimL’s DNA and, though male, could receive an abundant dose of Jenny’s quieter lineage.

Louise continues to seek work that she can do with the physical limitations she has since her surgery last year; please keep her in your prayers. She has been doing part-time work administering flu shots.

Practically the entire church traveled to Waco for the “One New Humanity” gathering. The cross-pollination from such gatherings is essential to our growth; who knows what God will do with the seeds planted there? Much gratitude to Hope Fellowship for taking on the huge task of welcoming so many people into your homes. Tomasa came to San Francisco for the following week and we were deeply blessed by her humility and graciousness. Her story of their exodus to Honduras and God’s faithfulness to them through many trials has so many Biblical resonances, and her powerful way of telling it never ceases to inspire. I told her at one point during her visit that she has “the soul of a poet,” and she blushed and nodded,

› **Church News** cont on p.10

## ► Church News cont from p. 9

which I took to mean that she knows it is true. Of course, my Spanish is very limited, so it's quite possible I said something quite different. (In trying to tell her that Jon and IvaJo were getting married, she understood me to say that Jon was marrying *me*, and congratulated us heartily.)

Teri's dad took ill suddenly in August, and died a few days later; Teri was able to have the gift of some time with him before he died. Now just a few days ago, Mike was summoned to San Diego to his mother's bedside, who it was believed might be in her last days. She has since stabilized, and Mike and Teri returned home. Please keep both Mike and Teri in your prayers.

Dan and Katie Piché have added much dimension and life to our worship teams—not just in their musical participation but in the heartfelt worship songs which Katie writes and shares with us.

Peggy Gish's book *Iraq: A Gift of Hope and Peace* has come out recently and we have just received some copies here; those who have read it already have found it quite moving.

Hannah Zazvorka's newsy and inspiring emails from her year with the Mennonite SALT (Serve And Learn Together) Program in Cuernavaca, Mexico, have been an answer to prayer. It seems God has chosen to bless Hannah with a time of many of the things which nourish her the most deeply: children, loving service, Mexico, friends to go dancing with, wonderful places and faces to photograph, speaking Spanish, new adventures and experiences. The high level of contentment and excitement which her emails communicate brings much joy to her church family here in San Francisco.

Edith has been gone for a month visiting her daughter Joanna and son-in-law Jamie in York, England; she's due back soon and we will be glad to have her in our midst again.

I'm sure I've neglected important events and highlights—our life is so full that it is hard to keep track of all the rich ingredients that go into the pot. I think I will sign off in Edith-fashion, and let it catch all that I have failed to write down: *God is good.*



## News from Waco

Joe Gatlin  
Hope Fellowship

“Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.” (1 Peter 2.10) We have reflected on this verse throughout our tenth anniversary year.

The week before the camp meeting Hope Fellowship was hyper-ventilating. In addition to the final preparations for our seventy-some out-of-town guests, it was also only two days until our three visitors from Valle Nuevo were arriving, two weeks before several of us were also hosting a large Habitat regional conference in Arkansas, and only two more weeks until a public “Farm Day” at World Hunger Relief.

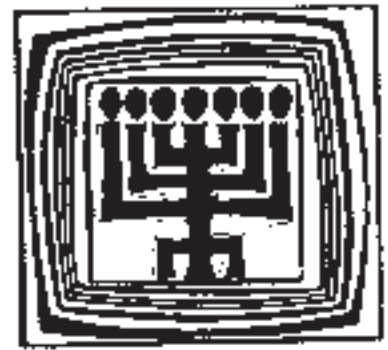
In addition to the special events we had the normal daily and weekly happenings of community life: a new youth mentoring program, the Violence to Wholeness meeting, Norma's mini-sabbatical from pastoring, Kristi's frustration with her job, health issues for several, a discernment group meeting with J.B. about his future, repairs on the meeting house and repairs on our homes, new worship teams, the conflicts that come from misunderstanding despite our knowing each other so well, juggling broken cars and interrupted childcare plans, teachings and reflections about how to make better use of our mutual aid fund, and so on you know the story.

That Wednesday evening we had scheduled a membership meeting to follow our dinner. By Monday, though, it was clear that further discussion about our relationship with the neighborhood surrounding our meeting house and other issues brought on by growth would be the equivalent of adding a twenty-five pound weight on our back for the final uphill mile of a long marathon.

So instead, we opted for another type of membership event. We paused, invited the youth to join us, and took refreshment as we broke bread and shared the cup. On a flip chart we listed all of those things that seemed to weigh us down, the tasks yet undone, and the matters that perpetually fill our prayers. Ten years ago, we realized, the paper would have been empty. Ten years ago Hope Fellowship had not yet been created as a people, and while some in our group were part of other faith communities, many were carrying their burdens individually.

We literally can understand the meaning of “Once you were not a people, but now you are a people.” We have lived and are living those words. On that Wednesday night as we took of the broken body and spilled blood of Christ, the flip chart page, rather than serving as an amalgam of grief and uncompleted labors, became a sacrament of God's grace and creative work of mercy. Its concerns belong collectively to us as a people, Hope Fellowship.

Kristi has since found a new midwifery job. We had a great time with our guests from Valle Nuevo, Margarita, Tomasa, and Salomé. The SMC gathering was loads of fun. The youth all have mentors. For the balance of the year we will be reviewing and renewing our vision. And the rest of the work continues.



## News from Evanston

Eric Lawrence  
Reba Place Fellowship

Shifting gears can be one of those real satisfying feelings. Like when you're merging onto the highway in between the Hummer and that VW bus, fearing for your very life as your little Ford Escort shakes uncontrollably with all sorts of esoteric lights flashing at you and the rickety bread maker in the trunk klickity-klankaty-ing away, distracting you from the tons of mobile sheet metal zooming towards you at 70 mph! But just then that last jolt propels you into fourth gear, and as you nudge comfortably in a nook between the vehicles, the car whispers confidently to you, “We're on our way.” It almost makes you feel like there is nothing left to do, but unfortunately that's never true. Cars can be kinda deceptive like that. So can cheesecake, but that's another story. As you may have noticed from the last newsletter, we were gearing up to get a lot of new ideas off the ground. Well, with them up and flying, it

seems to be a smooth ride, with moments of all too expected turbulence. I guess I should get you reacquainted with what happened and what we're up to.

### Plain and Simple

Allan Howe has been putting his life force into getting RPF's new store, Plain and Simple, up and running, not without the essential assistance of store manager, Princess Parker, and assistant manager/intern, Jesse Miller. Plain and Simple, open since September 4, features handcrafted Amish furniture from northern Indiana, quilts from central Illinois, and art from Rebite Chris Evans. The store's viability could be a little more promising according to Allan who mentioned that they have "seen more costumers and more sales by mid-October than in September and we now have a full inventory. It is just a matter of selling the inventory which is giving us some problems." Now that all the contingencies and schedules have been settled, and with Princess's business expertise and strong leadership fomenting, Allan has been able to step back to working three days a week as a "consultant," remembering all that other work he is also responsible for. He has now managed to set 17 minutes and 23 seconds aside a month for free time, which he usually spends preparing for the ensuing month, or talking with Jeanne, his wife. He's committed like that.

### Intern Program

The first year of RPF's new eleven-month intern program began September 1. May the Lord strengthen us! Heather Munn and David Janzen serve as leaders, striving to facilitate an open forum space where everyone can freely utilize their spiritual gifts, at least in theory. In fitting into her new leadership role, Heather realized that "leadership is not the exercise of power, but the exercise of initiative. I'm trying to learn about my gifts, so I can help bring out other's gifts."

Thanks to Heather Munn, the intern program is focused on service to the church in community. The program is meant to foster the calling of those who feel led to life within RPF, and those who want to venture into other communities or even start their own.

The curriculum has been rigorous, combining our daily work with a seminar on Monday, a Bible study on Tuesday, an intensive seminar on Wednesday, and prayer gathering on Sunday, all alongside our research papers and such. Gratifyingly grueling. In a short time we have experienced great con-



nectedness, moments of euphoric hacky-sack unity and sporadic outbursts of laughter. The Shalom Missions Connections Conference in Waco was the first time we interns have had an extended time together. David Hovde proved to also be part of the group with the six other interns, participating in

discussions and Bible studies. We appreciate his presence.

### Leadership Team Retreat

Seeking a spirit of renewal, the leadership team, GHLAD (Greg, Heather, Lisa, Allan, David), is going on a one-day retreat to review the economic practices and overall vision of the Fellowship. "God has brought us to the place where we can now work on some areas that have really needed attention for a while. We want to step away from what is urgent and work on what is important." Allan said.

### Other Important Happenings & Goings-on

Gus Roddy, a long-time member of the Reba "village" who now attends Living Water Community Church, in Rogers Park, is a RPF seeker/novice with the Fellowship of Rogers Park as his small group. He is also a darn good musician, plus an all around cool guy who is earnestly seeking God's will.

Virgil Vogt has accepted to serve as the conference minister for Mennonite churches in the Chicago Metropolitan area. He began work in early October and welcomes your prayers on transitioning to the heavy workload.

Susan Flecke, Ann Gavit, and Barb Grimsley celebrated their collective "141st birthday" on October 16 at the Cana Household, with a raucous crowd, including the beautiful Margarita Avilez and Salomé Acensio from Valle Nuevo. ©



Eric Lawrence

# Remembering the Waco 2004 SMC Camp Meeting

A photo collage

*David Janzen, Neil Miller, Eric Lawrence*





# Hospitality Like Heaven: And for No Reason

## A Two-Faced Editorial

David Janzen  
Reba Place Fellowship

As everyone who has met the Shalom Mission Communities Coordinator knows, David Janzen is a two-faced multi-tasking flimflammer. One advantage of this character defect is that he can interview himself and call it an editorial.

Face 1: So, how was the October SMC Camp Meeting like heaven?

Face 2: Our theme was “One New Humanity.” Every hour we had the opportunity to communicate with people of a mother tongue not our own—some of them

speaking Spanish, others Canadian-Canadian, and some Texicanese. Lo and behold, everyone had an accent in somebody’s ears. And the dominant culture—which ever that was—didn’t get to dominate all the time. We were mostly from six communities who are becoming family, including more recent arrivals: Grain of Wheat from Winnipeg and Valle Nuevo, El Salvador. Side by side in the Camp Meeting chores and celebrations, we ceased to be strangers or guests, and we experienced the inter-generational, international New Humanity of Jesus.

Face 1: How else like heaven?

Face 2: I’m glad you asked, since I still have more to say about that. We got to play a delightful version of musical chairs where the chairs became scarcer while the laps turned out always to be enough for everyone to sit on somebody, if not on a chair. Somewhere in that *dynamica* we found a parable of poverty, gracious justice and community.

Most heavenly of all, we approached the communion table singing from the Salvadoran Campesino mass, “Vamos todos al Banquete...” “Come, Let’s all go to the Banquet, to the mass of the New Creation. There’s a seat for everyone, with a role, and a mission.”

Face 1: Where is heaven?

Face 2: Heaven is the future, but it has already begun in the New Humanity. We taste heaven each time we arrive as stranger and are welcomed as family because of Jesus. We all know how to be hospitable to “our own kind,” but Jesus teaches how to welcome the stranger, even the enemy. Practicing this kind of hospitality gets us ready for heaven, and makes real the kingdom of heaven on earth in a way visible even to those who can’t believe in God or heaven.

Face 1: How was the camp meeting experience not like heaven?

Face 2: Plane rides and airport security checks, where we were guilty-until-proven-innocent of terrorist intent. Recent elections notwithstanding, we still can’t imagine being raptured to Texas on a commercial airline.

Face 1: I sense you have some pet peeves you want to vent on the theme of hospitality?

Face 2: You are so perceptive. I have been in groups (both as a guest and as a host) that ask earnestly why they have not been able to attract new members. Then, minutes later they are talking about inside news of their community without noticing that their guest is totally left out, with no connection to what they are talking about, as if only “people like us” matter. If new people wanted to join the group, I can see that they would have to leave behind their own story and culture, and start over as second-class citizens. The New Humanity of Jesus, by contrast, invites everyone to join a pilgrimage, transforming our consciousness and cultures till each one can express their gifts, and giving the poor priority attention.

Face 1: You’ve traveled a bit. In your experience, what kinds of people are most hospitable, and why?

Face 2: Country folk and children. In the city, people are often hurried and worn out from relating to other people. They often lack the solitude that prepares them for listening. Farm families, Central American campesinos, and African villagers, in my experience, have been especially hospitable because their daily life is a little boring and they look forward to interruptions by strangers. They are eager for outside news or any word of God the visitor may bring. With a cup of cold water, a little food, and their attention, they honor their guest without even thinking about it.

› *Hospitality* cont on p.15



► **Blessed Be the Ties** *cont from p.1*

issues. It made Rachel so homesick for the goat dairy her family used to run that she came back at 6:00 am Monday morning to help milk the goats.

We warmed easily to the delegation from Valle Nuevo, three sweet, humble elders who shared their story of being exploited, brutally persecuted, and finally displaced from their homeland in El Salvador for challenging the wealthy landowners of their area to pay a living wage. Against all odds they organized themselves in the refugee camps and eventually managed to return. Their deep faith in God and their commitment to care for one another sacrificially has borne grassroots health and education programs, and perhaps most precious, a spirit of courage and unity in adversity where other communities would have disintegrated. It was a joy to donate money towards some chairs and tables for the community center built with the sweat of these people, many of whom do not even have a proper roof over their own heads. But even more than a call to give charitably, we heard a call to relate familiarly. Nancy Gatlin gave an impassioned, plea: "These people are your family. What do you do for family? You send them pictures, you phone them, you write them letters, you visit them. Consider visiting Valle Nuevo. They love to receive us and host us, to know that they are not

forgotten." It was a passionate insight from a woman who has spent her life living among and loving the poor. Charitable responses are important when our neighbours are suffering. Authentic relationships are more so.

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The whole challenge of maintaining authentic relationships was on my mind as I wrote this on the airplane ride home. There was a bittersweet ache in the many fond farewells. Realistically, when would we see these people again? Within our communities we emphasize the value of proximity. Living in the same neighbourhood lets us "come close

enough often enough to make community work" as David Janzen recently put it to us GoWers. What significance do we hope these long-distance relationships will have for us? I met a lot of people whom I'd love to get to know better, have deeper fellowship with. This would require regular getting together. I already feel ambivalent about the money that was spent on our airfare for this trip, the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and the donation to Dick Cheney's war chest that all that fossil fuel consumption represents.

In a recent questionnaire about relationships to the larger church, Grain of Wheaters strongly felt a need for relationships beyond ourselves with people whom we trust enough to counsel us when we as a body are in pain or in need of direction. There are some people locally who make sense in this capacity, but I think it's safe to say that no one feels as much like spiritual kinfolk to us as SMC, as far-flung as you all are. Being in Waco evoked a "yes" response in us: Yes, these are the people who we want to be influenced by. Yes, this is the culture of biblically-based, humble, peace-loving counter-cultural communitarianism that we need to tie into as a bulwark against the many weapons of mass distraction that assault our commitment to Jesus and his Way. Too bad you're all so far away. I guess that's what family is like for a lot of folks these days. Blessed be the ties that bind. Ⓒ



► **Hospitality** *cont from p.14*

Before modern communications, poor people had to depend on hospitality whenever they traveled, and this reinforced a culture of making vulnerable people welcome. In such a society Jesus said, "Whoever welcomes the least of these . . . welcomes me."

Face 1: What about children?

Face 2: I remember the children of Valle Nuevo at dawn, peeking into my room, whispering to each other about what the big Gringo is going to do next. If I look at them, acknowledge the twinkle in their eye, soon they are at my side talking excitedly in response to any dumb question I can come up with in my poor Spanish. Their cultural poverty (i.e., poor in the distractions of

modern culture) makes them rich in hospitality. They are eager to show me their home, teach me their games, draw me pictures, and repeat as many times as necessary what I did not understand. I am welcomed by the gift of their delight and attention. What would it take for me to become hospitable like them? "Unless you become as little children, you can not receive the kingdom of God."

Face 1: Why is God so hospitable?

Face 2: Jesus' words in the Gospels don't give us a reason; rather, it's a mystery we get to live with. The difference between real Christians and those prodigal sons who have "just come home" is that real Christians have "just come home" so many times that they have stopped trying to figure out the

astounding absurdity of the Father's hospitality. The older brother is right. It makes no sense for the Father to suffer, forgive and welcome so much. But real Christians have come to accept that they are loved beyond reason, simply because the Father is "like that." And they pray to come alive "like that" too.

Face 1: Isn't Advent amazing, that this most hospitable God comes to earth, to Mary and Joseph and to us, helplessly in need of a home?

Face 2: So, helpless as we are to find God, God comes to find us in helplessness. In Advent, in communion, in holy interruptions, we meet face to face and are made whole. Ⓒ



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Sally Elliott

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