



A Quarterly Newsletter of Shalom Mission communities

Shalomconnections.org

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## Take, Bless, Break and Give

### SMC Camp Meeting: A Rollicking River of Blessing

*An editorial by David Janzen*

**Jesus takes:** Like the 5,000 who trekked into the wilderness to hear Jesus' words and be healed, we gathered for the Shalom Connections Camp Meeting in the Plow Creek meadow and set up a village of tents around the central pavilion. From Winnipeg, San Francisco, Camden, Philadelphia, Evanston, Chicago, Waco, Comer, Elkhart, Tiskilwa, rural Wisconsin and Saskatchewan--we came as eight communities and assorted seekers, offering our meager "five loaves and two fishes." Under the Camp Meeting tent we offered our communities and our needs to Jesus, present in the home-made bread and grape juice from Plow Creek's vines. In longing for His kingdom we offered the stuff of our lives to Jesus, to take and make of them what he will.



*There was plenty of time to get to know each other at the Camp Meeting*

**Jesus blesses:** "Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and blessed . . . them." Not just our gifts, but we ourselves are lifted up to heaven and blessed by Jesus.

For three days we saw our gifts multiplied, a rollicking river of blessing: worship, play with children, becoming children once again, tears of confession, impromptu skits, poems and music, horseback rides, fire-juggling, fresh garden

*Continued on page 3*

# Planting Seeds of Peace

Jim Fitz  
Plow Creek Fellowship

Right off the bat as I arrived at Princeton Amtrak Station, another passenger, Marie, said, "You must be going a ways with all that luggage, Where are you headed?" That sparked a extensive conversation about Christian Peacemaker Teams and Colombia.



Plow Creekers demonstrating for PAZ!

After the peace vigil in Evanston, where I stayed overnight with the Janzens, we invited Jorge, a Mexican, home to eat with us. I told him a little about CPT and he said he would like to do that. We'll see. He is considering joining the Monday night potluck and seminar at Reba Place Fellowship. Jorge has studied English at St. Augustine College

### Contents

Take, Bless, Break and Give....	1
Planting Seeds of Peace.....	2
Plow Creek News.....	2
Prayer Needs.....	4
Hope Fellowship News.....	6
Grain of Wheat News.....	7
Church of the Sojourners News.	8
Reba Place Fellowship News...	9
Isn't it Odd that God Should	
Choose the Jews?.....	11
Christianity and Anarchy.....	15

under our close friend Mary Jude Ramirez.

In the airport I struck up a conversation with a twenty-one year old Mexican from Miami. I shared with him about CPT and gave him a Peace Pilgrim pamphlet. He heartily affirmed our peace work and the pamphlet after reading some of it. When we arrived in Atlanta I translated for him and helped him find his next gate.

Then at my gate, I met Gerry, a Pentecostal diary farmer/pastor on his way to adopt four children in Bogota. I shared with him about CPT work and a paper I was reading about the nonviolence of the early Pentecostal movement in the U.S. He read a bit of the paper, and said he was familiar with some of the writers quoted there.

When we entered the plane, there was Rick Warldorf a Pentecostal I had recently met at the Seeking Peace Conference a week before.

Rick was on his way to Quito to teach cross-cultural mission work. I introduced him to the Pentecostal farmer. They had a lively time of visiting, in which Rick invited him to the upcoming Pentecostal Peace conference in Texas. (For more info go to: pcpf.org )

And to top it off, I was sitting beside a Colombian physician/ professor in genetics returning from China. I showed him my photos about CPT work. He shared that "in the peace process we need to center on reconciliation and repairing relationships, not on punishment. Jailing seldom helps." He added, "The recent visit to Colombia of Desmond Tutu and his sharing about the Truth Commission in South Africa points the way to lasting Peace."

All but one of the above are slated to receive my letters. It seems as though these encounters were planned by Someone. I enjoy visiting about the way of peace so much it was just fun.

Thanks for your prayers!

# Plow Creek News

Louise Stahnke  
Plow Creek Fellowship

Lots of comings, goings and growings: The Plow Creek bakery keeps producing more goodies and selling them. Strawberries did much better this year. Kevin Behrens managed to sell 27,000 strawberries to an area caterer, along with all the U-picks and market sales. Blueberries, watermelons and pumpkins are popular now.

Jim Fitz has returned to Colombia with Christian Peacemaker Teams for a three-month term. Erin Kindy is finishing her three-year commitment with CPT in Colombia and will come to live here after September 30. Erin and Rick Reha have begun planning for an ongoing intern program at Plow Creek.

Kevin and Lori Behrens are the happy parents of Mary, born about six months ago. Elena Newhouse was born to Bill and Kate in early September. Bill is heading off to Australia for a two-and-a-half-week music tour featuring electronic hip-hop on his own label.

Meg Foxvog is home from surgery which, according to the doctors, has successfully removed breast cancer.

Bethany Davis has arrived from Hawaii to settle in at Plow Creek with Vicki (14), Brooke (12), and Katie (8). Tim and Carol Gale are moving to Colorado to serve under Youth with a Mission.

We enjoyed you all at the Shalom Camp Meeting.

Thanks for coming.



## 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 Missions Communities and the wider network of intentional Christian Communities. Shalom Missions is published quarterly in Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter. Subscriptions are free. The views expressed do not necessarily reflect the official position of Shalom Connections, Shalom Mission Communities, or its member churches. **Postmaster:**

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Editorial Office	Publishing Office
726 Seward St. #2 Evanston, IL 60202 (847) 328-6066 voice (847) 328-8431 fax dhjanzen2@juno.com	55211 Township Rd 170 Fresno, OH 43824 (740) 545-2222 voice (740) 545-5222 fax conrad@yoders.org

**Shalom Mission Communities are:**

**Reba Place Fellowship**  
PO Box 6575 www.rebaplacefellowship.org  
Evanston, IL 60204 r\_p\_f@juno.com  
(847) 328-6066 voice (847) 328-8431 fax

**Plow Creek Fellowship**  
19183 Plow Crk Unit 2 www.plowcreek.org  
Tiskilwa, IL 61638 pemcl@plowcreek.org  
(815) 646-6600 voice (815) 646-4672 fax

**Hope Fellowship**  
1700 Morrow Ave  
Waco, TX 76707  
(254) 754-5942 voice  
<http://www.mennowdc.org/texaschurches.htm>

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

**Grain of Wheat** (Exploring SMC membership)  
266 Home St.  
Winnipeg MB  
Canada R36 1X3  
(204) 788-4842 voice

*SMC Campmeeting, continued from page 1*

produce, dishwashing service and cleanup help, workshops on sustainable agriculture and peak oil, loving attention to one another in the pains of life, discerning God's will, laughing with friends, Christian Peacemaker Team reports, lamentations and protests against war, water fights, late night singing and sleepy children finding a lap.

Rich Foss taught us to ask "What time is it?" and to respond with a shout, "Kingdom time! Hunh!"

Matthew Williams said, "Our being together is like a family reunion, the

coming together, welcoming one another as Christ has welcomed us. And at the heart of this welcome is Jesus, present in communion."

**Jesus breaks:** "Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it. . ." And so we pass the broken bread, repeat the words and remember him, "Christ's body broken for you."

Our gifts do not remain what they were, nor do we. What amazing power Jesus releases for living community as we allow him to break us, to set us free from our illusions of self-direction and being in control! What tenderness and love are given as we confess our sins and are for-



*A meal together in view of our tents*

family of Jesus."

Katie Dahlseng said, "My last year was hard. But coming to the Camp Meeting we felt the love. We were coming home."

Chico Fajardo remarked, "So many young people have been hurt by the church. Young people have a lot of good energy, but they also carry cynicism and pride. Thanks for opening to us with grounding and mentoring. Many young folks need you."

Joe Gatlin recalled the theme of our gathering by saying, "The preeminent sign of our times is Christians

given! What joy and solidarity are ours when we listen deeply to the hurts of others! How the needs of so many are met when we let go of possessions, career plans, and our own way. Like his body on the cross, we become living sacrifices for the salvation of the world.

Broken, we are not alone, but we are given to each other and discover Who is among us. "When he was at table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him."

**Jesus gives:** "And all ate and

*Continued on next page*

were filled; and they took up what was left over, twelve baskets full." What a mystery is the kingdom of God! What Jesus gives is no longer just what we have given him, but it has been transformed. When we give all to Jesus and receive all from his hand, there is enough for us and enough to give away. As individuals living for ourselves we are invited to participate in what God is doing for the world. The signs of the times are also signs of what God is doing. Here are some of the signs that caused us to take notice:

--Young evangelicals are forming new communities, discovering downward mobility, pioneering in the burned out places of empire.

--Many young people are lost but seeking purpose, an authentic life with others.

--Our communities are invigorated by urgently-seeking youth, and some have caught the fire of Jesus' call.

--The American church is worshipping false gods of wealth, messianic imperialism, and individual autonomy, but courageous souls are unmasking these idolatries.



*Dance, Dance, Dance to the beat of the Kingdom Revolution*

--Listening to those who are suffering leads to witness on their behalf. As peacemakers we are also learning to listen to those who are offended by our witness, thus humanizing our enemies and finding surprising new connections.

--Radical discipleship Christians are

discovering how much we have in common with peacemakers in other denominations and groups. We always have more to learn from each other.

**Take, bless, break and give**--these four verbs are the shape of table fellowship and communion, a focal practice of Jesus with his disciples. But they are also the focus of community life, the essence of hospitality, and the means of our participation in the God's redemption of the world. "Do this," Jesus says, "And remember me." □

## **Prayer Needs Shared at the SMC Camp Meeting**

### **Jubilee Partners:**

-Balancing personal and community needs vs. urgent world needs.

-For a good conclusion to the summer sabbatical and a new season of refugee service. The ongoing need for rest.

-Prayers against depression are badly needed.

-That the U.S. State Department not close the "door" to Central American leaders seeking to visit, learn from

and inspire folks at Jubilee.

-For the Winterfelds as they start a new life with family in Canada.

### **Plow Creek:**

-That healing be a thing both prayed for and expected for Neil, Meg, and



*Josh Winterfeld drumming in the shade*

others.

-For Meg Foxvog with breast cancer, that she can stay close to God through this time of trial.

-For anxieties around finances, drought, and struggles.

-For a renewed sense of purpose, to be able to thank God for what is given each day.

--That they not be so focused on survival that they miss doing God's will including loving and serving one another.

-For Jim Fitz, times of depression and service with CPT in Colombia.

### **Camden House:**

-Finding the balance between work, service, and spiritual retreat.

-For current members; Chris and Cassie's marriage, and Jeremy as he bikes across the U.S.

-For the winter months when it is harder for the community and the kids they teach, to find hope.

-Discernment for each member as they decide how long to stay.

### **The Simple Way:**

-For transitions, future structure, and more partners.

### **Grain of Wheat:**

-For new leadership, especially Paul Langel who has had some health problems and needs strength and endurance. He has given leadership

to the bakery, and now must make time for community work

-For life and rejuvenation.

-For the affordable housing ministry beginning with renovation of a house in a more depressed neighborhood.

-A good job for the refugee family from Sierra Leone who wants to stay in the neighborhood.

-A softened heart for the owner of a farm thinking of selling to a few "urban pioneers" from GoW.

### Hope Fellowship:

-For the Spirit to move particularly among the young.

-Healing of arm and chest pain for Christina.

-Thanks for the good process of dividing into cell groups and prayer for the challenges they will face.

### Church of the Sojourners:

-New leadership, none of whom were in charge three years ago.

-Courage for Dale and Zoe to lead, and not look for a more charismatic leader.

-Discernment for how to integrate new people.

-For balance in stretching; how much to push forward, how much to hold on to old traditions.



*Tutuk Horning, Mary, Cora, and Lorie Behrens lunching at Plow Creek*

-Clear vision for Tim Otto going to study at Duke Divinity School.

-Guidance for new apprentices.

### Reba Place Fellowship:

-For elderly members with health problems, for the feeble feeling in the whole body.

-Reba feels like it is pregnant in its old age with many young people circling and participating as interns and the Monday night seminars.

-For the interns staying on, seeking a covenant together.

-The current review of economic

resources and practices.

-For the end of Allan Howe's leadership term coming to an end. What next?

-For the Recyclery, a used and refurbished bicycle ministry, that more people would get involved.

### Rogers Park:

-For the process of completing and moving into a new meeting and ministry building.

-For unity and health of the congregation.

-To pull people on the outskirts closer in.

### Fellowship of Hope (Elkhart IN):

-Peace evangelism; wisdom and strength in stepping into the next process.

-Leadership transition for the new pastor.

-For companionship in ministry of hospitality.

### Rose Allsup (rural Wisconsin):

-Torn between mainstream churches and a socially active but secular peace and justice community.

-Discernment and guidance for starting a new community. □



*Playing music after bedtime at the Camp Meeting*

# Hope Fellowship

Joe Gatlin  
Hope Fellowship

*“Welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.” Romans 15:7*

In the last few months we have done a great deal of welcoming in Hope Fellowship. Most notably, we have two more babies! Samuel Caruthers is the newly adopted son of Laura and Alan; Christopher the newly adopted son of John and Lisa Robinson. Adoption has become a regular event in Hope Fellowship, and yet each one is very special—a long period of prayer and waiting and hoping beyond hope for what seems to never come, and then suddenly we have new life and joy in our midst.

And, speaking of adoptions, Ellie Alexander decided she was not too young to join the club. “Black Beauty eats a lot!” comments Ellie about her fast growing, German Shepherd mix puppy. Rumor has it that Ellie’s parents, John and Ruth—who for years have taken an adamant, anti-pet stance, yielded to the canine acquisition only under the duress of trying to figure out what would reduce break-ins at their house—have been seen hugging, petting, and walking Black Beauty.

We have also welcomed newlyweds David and Hanna Heddy, former World Hunger Relief interns, as they have begun to worship with us.

Over the last months we have also enjoyed visits from Gene Stoltzfus of Christian Peacemaker Teams, Judy Alexander of Sojourners, Al Lawler and Don, Carolyn, and Robyn Mosley of Jubilee Partners, and Gabriela Gatlin from Jubilee – uh Sojourners – uh Hope Fellowship (Gabriela seems to belong a number of communities these days) was

here a month between her return from Honduras and her departure for Jubilee. We also welcomed ourselves as people settled back in at the end of a summer of visits and trips to many places. The Matias-Ryan family again took the record with a three month sojourn in Oaxaca, Mexico.

We are pleased to share that Robyn Mosley enjoyed her visit so much



*David and Joe sharing deep theological secrets... hey, tell us!*

that she is returning to Waco to become part of Hope Fellowship where she will live in the household with the Gatlins and J.B. Smith.

Please pray for Robyn as she looks for a job and settles into life in Waco.

Comings are, of course, not without departures too. It was sad to say goodbye to Brett Dewey and Esther Calderon and their growing family of three daughters, Moira, Audrey, and Isabella, but we rejoice about the four years they were able to spend with us and that we know our family is now more extended. They have moved to Newton where Brett is teaching at Bethel College.

Paul’s exhortation to hospitality in Romans 15 was in the context of a radical social creation – the body of Christ, that new community of generosity, forgiveness, and love, composed of people with ethnic, cultural, racial, economic, social-status, and linguistic differences. In the creation of this new community God is glorified. In the building of God’s church

we take on this very ministry of welcoming each other.

In the last Shalom Connections we reported that we were attempting to set up cell groups within Hope Fellowship. Our sense is that with about 60 people including children and no paid staff, it has become difficult to flesh out fully the reality of Christ’s body. While we can each learn to love 59 other people, it is difficult with our human limitations to know where to concentrate, who to turn to for discernment, how to follow-up on multiple needs, or when to pursue one individual or another.

God led us through summer discussions to a plan for cell groups that people have enthusiastically endorsed even though we know it will mean the loss of some valued and treasured forms our life has taken over the last ten years.

We now have the groups identified and they are ready to

meet. Please pray for us as we take our next steps forward, unsure of our own wisdom and abilities, but confident in God’s grace and leadership.

Other parts of our related ministries continue with their own work of welcoming in the world. Waco Habitat has completed more houses. World Hunger Relief has a whole new crop of volunteers (although a couple of staff members have left). In late September we are helping to host a one day “Every Church a Peace Church” in concert with Christians from several other churches and with Don Mosley as our keynote speaker. And the 1 John 3 campaign (formerly known as the living wage campaign) on the Baylor campus is going well.

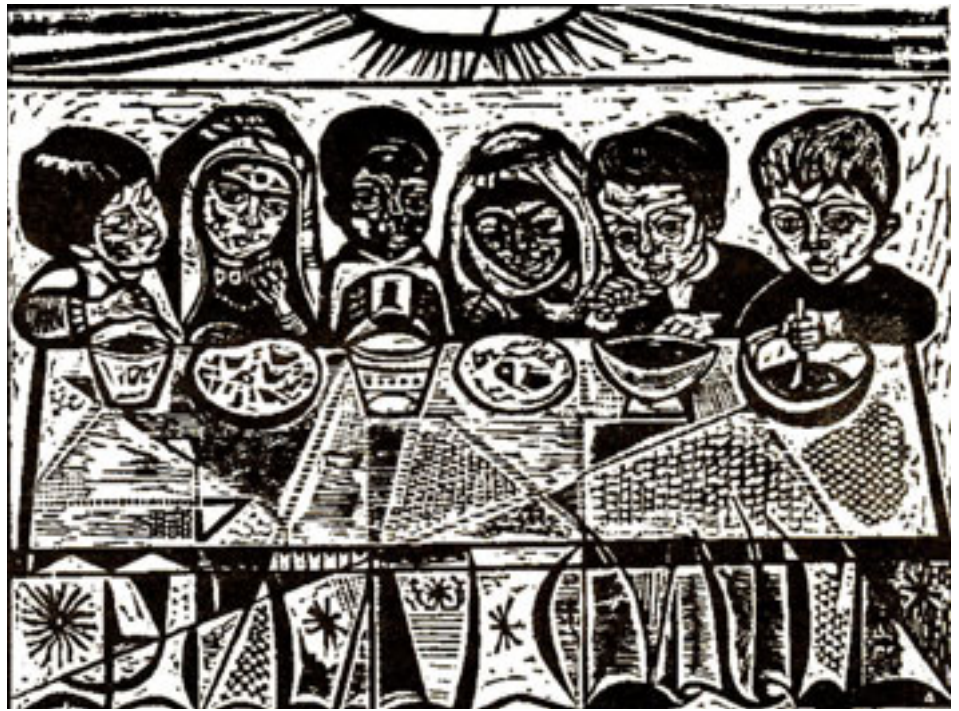
In Hope Fellowship’s “Year of Hope” we hope that God will redeem our differences and transform us, a group of multi-cultural mongrels, into a people with a divine culture of hospitality. □

# Grain of Wheat News

*Marcus Rempel  
Grain of Wheat Community*

As I sometimes do before writing this update, I asked for another person's take on what's new in Grain of Wheat. Irene Wiens, one of our Servant Leaders pointed out that we inaugurated a new worship songbook this summer. We've culled some of the 70's music heritage that we brought over from Reba and other places, held on to the songs that have stood the test of time and made a place for some new songs that have stirred our hearts to enter into worship.

Irene has added them up: In our new songbook, there are 12 James Croegaert tunes, plus 16 other songs from Reba; there are 27! home-grown Grain of Wheat songs, 8 from Steve Bell and 9 from Gord Johnson, our most prolific musicians, both of whom are no longer members. When they left, it felt like it would be the end of music ministry at GoW. The remaining 10 songs from the grassroots are a testament to God's ongoing generosity to us in this area.



Another music source of increasing significance to us is the ecumenical Iona community of Scotland. We are singing 14 of their songs on a regular basis. The Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg has hosted John Bell, one of their leaders and gifted musicians, twice now for worship conferences, attended heavily by GoWers. When GoW member Laura Funk spent this year's Holy Week on the wee island of Iona, and brought home many lovely liturgical and musical treasures, it strengthened the bond. If you're unfamiliar with the songs and liturgies coming out of Iona, we heartily recommend you tap into this tributary of the

great Christian river. Perhaps because they are Celts, evangelised long ago by St. Patrick without the long sword of Rome to escort him, they carry within them an ancient Christian spirituality that is so deeply nourishing to hungry souls today--a stream of Christianity that remained unmarried to Empire and close to the Earth, a rare and precious stream indeed.

Irene also notes that our music themes are expanding, more songs of justice, of praise and of lament. We're still exploring "Hymnal: A Worship Book," the new blue hymnal of the Mennonites that we purchased a couple years ago. We keep finding more gems, especially contributions from the non-European Church that are new to us, but rouse us and speak to us.

The new songbook represents change that has been happening gradually over time, and I wouldn't have thought it all that noteworthy until Irene drew it to my attention.

A few other newsworthy bits: Numerous travelers have been coming, going and coming again this summer. Jarem and Rhona Sawatsky and their twin girls Sara and Koila left for a three year term in England.



*The children had a great time on the horse-drawn cart*

*Continued next page*

Jarem left our Servant Leader Team this summer to pursue his PhD in Conflict Studies across the Big Water. We miss and bless them and look forward to what they will bring back when they return. Norm and Dorothy Rempel, GoW "oldtimers" who will be known to a good number of you have returned from Norway. Carpenter Norm had a "working vacation" with John Krahn, another carpenter and GoW oldtimer who met Hilde, a lovely young Norwegian at Reba place many moons ago, and followed her home to Norge. The Rempels and Krahns spent three months together building up old ties, and by the end, surrogate Grandparents Norm and Dorothy and the three Scandinavian Krahn blondies, Katinka, Tiril and Frieda were trying out each others' languages. Norm and Dorothy come home wondering what the meaning is of these loving, long-long-distance relationships.

On that note, love and peace to you all ("y'all" for the Southern-most recipients of this greeting) from Marcus, on behalf of Grain of Wheat, and in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. See you on this side or the other. □



Terri Creager as Mother Theresa. A reminder of the challenge of Sainthood



Children on the Plow Creek trampoline

## Church of the Sojourners News

Zoe Mullery  
Church of the Sojourners

After three weeks scattered to the winds in August, fall started with a bang as we had a major household shuffle to incorporate new people and patch household holes left by departures. My math counted twenty people actually moving from one place to another within our houses, sixteen staying put. Every household has changed substantially and as of this writing many of us are still in the process of settling in, figuring out whose dishes, mattresses, and desks to use, what other people's shower preferences are, who's a morning person and who's not, and what to hang on the wall.

A couple of years ago we wrote out our "Commitments, Practices and Disciplines," and agreed together that one of our shared commitments is the practice of hospitality, with the understanding that this also includes hospitality to one another. The making of new households is a concrete opportunity to put that into practice.

Our move was followed up by our

annual Fall Retreat at the Quaker Center. It's always good to be in the redwoods and get away from the relentless concrete. This year we had longtime friends of Sojourners Rich and Lisa Lamb speak to us on the power of words to hurt and heal, with engaging Bible studies on Solomon and Abigail.

The retreat also marks the beginning of our new Apprenticeship, which this year has six brave souls willing to submit to, among other things, more hours in the presence of Tim Lockie than was previously thought advisable. Dan and Katie Piché, Hannah Zazvorka, Lizbeth Guatemala, and Matt and Mary Toney have now completed Orientation Week, which included the telling of each apprentice's life story (long version) and the Second Annual Sojourner History Tour. The life stories were really intense and significant; it amazed me how much I learned even from those I already thought I knew pretty well. Matt Toney is in his second year as an apprentice, but not because he flunked—he got married!—and is repeating it as Super Apprentice so that he and Mary can do it together. Our other apprentices from last year, Jon and IvaJo Pedersen and Steven Braney, have moved on from being guinea pigs in the ap-

Continued on page 10



# Reba Place Fellowship News

*Eric Lawrence  
Reba Place Fellowship*

We're moving through the wake of a disaster. Well, a couple disasters. You have Hurricane Katrina, Hurricane Rita, the Iraq War, and on and on. How do we respond in times like these? What does it mean to be a "community of love and discipleship" when peoples' worlds are collapsing with their houses?

At church a member leading worship at Living Water Community Church read Philippians 2:9 which declares Jesus stronger than any other name, stronger than Rita, stronger than Katrina, stronger than Operation Iraqi Freedom. We have to believe that this is true in order to confront tragedies of this scale.

This strong belief has been driving discussion about housing Katrina "refugees," and the consequent action. Hilda Carper and Mary Thomson have spearheaded the housing project. Their efforts brought us Lloyd Batiste, eleven year-old



*Lisa and Doug Selph rest in the shade with Gus Roddy at the Camp Meeting*

daughter, and eleven-month old son. They moved into Dan and Emily Coyne's home for temporary housing and then moved into the 602 Mulford building that has temporary space before it gets converted by Reba Place Development Corp. into low-income affordable condominiums.

Death has visited us in recent weeks, some blessed and some cause us to wonder what God is doing. Allan Howe's mother recently died at the full age of ninety-three. Vera Stoehr's son Thomas had an unexpected heart attack at the age of fifty. His memorial was a true celebration of a life that resisted

the powers of schizophrenia since the age of fifteen. Everyone who spoke of Thomas in the memorial service mentioned his amazing faith. Ask him "How are you?" and his answer was, "Trusting in Jesus." Thomas chose to face his mysterious illness through persistent acts of kindness to the people around him, helping in humble tasks, living frugally and saving his money for good causes, asking forgiveness of those he might have offended, sustained by the faith that Jesus would ultimately take care of him.

The sudden death of Lisa Johnson, daughter of Elizabeth and David Johnson (Reba's accountant), was a tremendous shock to those who remembered the Johnsons, former Reba members. In her mid-thirties, with two children, she died in her sleep because of complications following a minor surgery. Several Reba members traveled down to Kansas to attend the memorial service and be with the Johnson family in a time of much needed support.

What is our response? Well a loving welcome is always a good starting point. We welcomed the family from New Orleans with clothes, furniture, and meals. Joseph Marshak was formally welcomed into membership on September 11<sup>th</sup> at our monthly Fellowship meeting. The



*The Cana house backyard during a Monday night potluck*

*Continued on page 14*



*A camera?... Where? -Sojo's in their element*

*SoJo News continued from page 8*

prenticeship's first year to pioneering our new "practicing member" category. Jon and IvaJo are also helping lead this year's apprenticeship, in addition to teaching a new class on the book "Colossians Remixed." (Those who aren't in that class will do a Bible study on Colossians, led by Tessa Richardson and myself.)

A number of people got to attend Matt and Mary Vitalis Toney's wedding in Minnesota in August and though I didn't get to be one of them I heard it was exactly what weddings are supposed to be about. We're honored they've chosen to spend their first year of married life amongst us.

Hannah Zazvorka returned to us after a year and a half in Waco and then a year in Mexico with SALT (Serving And Learning Together). The evening she spent telling stories and showing pictures from her SALT year was dominated by her sense that God had showered her with unexpected grace. She had a year in which everything—her work, her home, the people in her life, her spiritual life—was deeply satisfying and nourishing, and in which her gifts were needed and made excel-

lent use of. In a kind of symmetrical gesture, just as Hannah was arriving, Matt Creeger was leaving to embark on a year serving in inner-city Chicago with Mission Year (some of you Chicago-area people might get to hang out with him) and we sent him off with excitement at the certain adventure ahead of him as well as some sadness for the Matt-deficiency we'll have without him.

Judy Alexander was here for a brief visit; it was good to hear about the continued blessings she gives and receives as a teacher in Taiwan. Edith continues to visit an elderly Chinese lady in hospice care—perhaps it is Edith's tender care and prayers which have kept this woman alive much longer than had been expected. Hannah, Teri Creeger and Jose Guatemala went to the SMC conference and enjoyed connecting with everyone. Craig Litorja moved out and a little farther away than we'd hoped for—all the way across the city. We hope our paths keep criss-crossing with him and that our years of friendship will continue to bear good fruit.

Tim Otto has begun his first semester (and his 40<sup>th</sup> year) at Duke and has kept us updated with email tidbits. He writes, "I've been a little

worried about what it would mean to be going to a 'liberal' seminary (at least according to my Conservative Baptist friends) but so far I've witnessed professors loving the text, and digging into it as deeply as any fundamentalist I've ever witnessed. The method of interpretation here is referred to as a 'close reading.' ...We are to interpret scripture and the apostolic fathers with trust rather than suspicion. We are to do so without fearing death, but with a presumptuous trust in God. Amen! In this context, I already find myself enjoying scripture more."

Dan and Katie Piché, Steven Braney and I all spent three weeks this summer studying Spanish in Xela, Guatemala at the language school Celas Maya. Speaking Spanish is more than a luxury in this neighborhood and within our church, and it feels right to give time and energy to it. We all returned speaking much better Spanish and full of the amazing beauty and color and culture of Guatemala.

"Christian community is a faithful fellowship of the weak in which, through a repeated confession and forgiveness of sins, the strength of Jesus Christ is revealed and celebrated." Henri Nouwen said that in his book *Peacework*, and it seems a fitting capstone for this litany of comings and goings, which we hope is not a catalogue of our busyness but of our participation in the life God has given. □



# Isn't it odd that God should choose the Jews?

—Or, for that matter,  
the church?

David Janzen  
Reba Place Fellowship

*A Review of Gerhard Lohfink, Does God Need the Church? Toward a Theology of the People of God (Collegeville, MN: A Michael Glazier Book Published by The Liturgical Press, 1999), translated by Linda M. Maloney.*

## Scandalized by a chosen people:

Philosophers and theologians formed by the Enlightenment have been scandalized by the particularity of the Bible. Why doesn't a God of universal reason reveal God's self to the whole world rather than to a particular people? Why should the Deity condescend to the particular, to choose a tiny people (Israel) among all the empires of the world, act through a peculiar history of salvation, and finally in a particular place (Bethlehem of Judea) through a particular man (Jesus), to make known God's will and way for the whole world? For the same reason, universal reason (and most modern theologians) can find no purpose for the church with its history of conflicts, suffering and occasional sainthood. Why does God need the church?

Let me assert early in this review, that Lohfink's ground-breaking book has more on-target theological resources for contemporary practitioners of Christian community than anything I have read outside the Anabaptist tradition. The reason for

the book's limited impact in North America is its price (\$40) and the sustained attention it takes to appreciate the unifying structure of the author's work.

Lohfink gives us a panoramic view of the entire biblical drama, and to a lesser extent, an analysis of church history. The depth of Lohfink's insights come, not just from a lifetime of astute biblical scholarship and theological reflection, but because late in life he discovered and chose to live in Christian intentional community, giving him an intimate experience of the kingdom of God, not as a distant ideal but a social reality. For this reason I want to convey some of the themes, texture and surprises of this book through a few longer quotations.



## Why does God need the Church? What is Lohfink's main argument?

"God, like all revolutionaries, desires the overturning, the radical alteration of the whole society—for in this the revolutionaries are right: what is at stake is the whole world, and the change must be radical, for the misery of the world cries to heaven, and it begins deep within the human heart. But how can anyone change the world and society at its roots without taking away freedom?"

"It can only be that God begins in a small way, at one single place in the world. There must be a place, visible, tangible, where the salvation of the world can begin: that is, where

the world becomes what it is supposed to be according God's plan. Beginning at that place, the new thing can spread abroad, but not through persuasion, not through indoctrination, not through violence. Everyone must have the opportunity to come and see. All must have the chance to behold and test this new thing. Then, if they want to, they can allow themselves to be drawn into the history of salvation that God is creating. Only in that way can their freedom be preserved. What drives them to the new thing cannot be force, not even moral pressure, but only the fascination of a world that is changed."

Beginning with Abraham and his descendants, God has been creating a new kind of community who

would faithfully reflect God's love and justice to the world as a beloved and called-out people, a nation of priests without a state, which is what the Jews had been as a tribal society. "It is important for us to note that the association of communities discovered by Israel [in the network of synagogues in exile] became the formative principle of the early Church. Here appeared with full clarity what the people of God is: a network of communities spread over the whole earth and yet existing within non-Christian society so that each person can freely choose whether to be a Christian or not; it is genuine community and yet not con-

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structed on the model of pagan society, a true homeland and yet not a state.” But this way of living is vulnerable, only possible for a people who trust in God.

Jews and Christians also have lusted after the security and prestige of imperial power, to live by religion rather than by faith in Jahweh. So the Jews opted to be ruled by kings, and church embraced Constantine’s union of state and religion. In our day the nation of Israel and the United States are depending on armies, empires, domination and other structures of violence, which are alien to Jahweh’s vision and Jesus’ witness. God’s intention for the Jews and for the Christians has always been for those who know his love to live vulnerable lives of faithful witness.

**What is the proper form for the people of God?** The great experiment of history, in Lohfink’s eyes, is “the search for the proper form of the people of God. . . . From a theological point of view, it reveals God’s concern for the transformation of human society. This transformation can only occur in freedom. That is why it is such a difficult path through history, in fact a drama that extends throughout the entire history of Is-



*Other way, Ransom.*

rael and the Church.”

“Through ‘trial and error’ and through bitter experience, the people of God have come gradually to understand their proper form. The community church was not something born from the brains or created on the desks of theologians. Instead, from the time of Abraham, the people of God has been a gigantic field for experiment. Salvation was a construction site from the beginning. The question has always been: What brings life to human beings, and what brings death? What

causes society to succeed and what causes it to fail? What brings the world more freedom and redemption, and what casts it into misery?”

“The question about the ‘form’ of the people of God may seem strange but it is necessary. It would only be superfluous if faith was something purely internal or otherworldly. But Israel’s faith is always about ‘the world.’ Its desire is to transform the world entrusted to it by living the Torah, God’s social order, so that it will be clear to everyone how the will of God intends the world to be. Hence faith necessarily takes on a social dimension. But what form of society is adequate to it?”

We have been given the Sermon on the Mount by Jesus and the early church. What form of society is adequate to it? Here is a vision of history and an ethic that, if lived in community, would make it clear to seekers how God intends the world to be. Jesus’ mission cannot be reduced to saving souls without total distortion. This way of putting the question leaves most of the world in Satan’s hands. The purpose of God throughout the Bible was, and is, to produce a people who would trust God and by their social life, be such a scandal and fascination, that all would see the way of peace that God intends for the world.

What about the Jews? As a European Christian, Lohfink is rightly haunted by the failure of the modern church, with all its scholarship, institutional strength and culture, to resist war and to stand in solidarity with the Jews. Digging deeper into Scripture for answers, Lohfink greatly enhances my understanding of the continuities between Judaism and Jesus’ witness. That Jesus and his teaching were the fulfillment of the law (Matthew 5) is much more credible to me now than the Protestant heritage which has contrasted the law with faith (a la Luther), a move that already takes us half-way to anti-Semitism and rejects the Jews in favor of the Christians in the



*Young people from Camden and Reba UNITE!*

plan of God. Lohfink highlights Jesus' strategy to renew Israel by including those on its margins through forgiveness of sins, to prepare Israel for its role in welcoming those Gentiles with faith into the people of God. "Israel's task, given by God, is to show to all the nations how a just society would look."

As Christians lost touch with their Jewish roots and grew proud and vindictive against the Jews, they lost the Jewish understanding of salvation in this world, and Jesus' teachings were spiritualized and projected onto the heavenly realm beyond death.



*At the Campmeeting Boo Graham and Elizabeth Russell praised God for chocolate*

When will the kingdom come? Lohfink's bold insight into Jesus' eschatology comes from his experience of radical Christian community. In Jesus' faithful life and witness, the kingdom is fully present, now. "The only thing lacking, waiting for completion, is the human response to sell all and buy the treasure. . . . Discipleship and following Jesus correspond to the gospels only if they can be lived in close companionship . . . a companionship of apostles, disciples, and people."

Two decades ago Gerhard Lohfink produced a provocative book seeking a basis for church renewal, Jesus and Community (1984), whose

original German title was What Kind of Community Did Jesus Want?

From careful biblical scholarship Lohfink described the kind of community Jesus had in mind in founding the church, but alas, he could point to no contemporary examples.

In the introduction to Does God Need the Church? (1999), Lohfink reveals a new starting point.

"Because I have experienced—in a way I had not considered possible—that the stories of the Bible have come alive again and take us by the hand to lead us on the way that God wants to go with the Church, I am now writing my old book in a new

way."

**Come and See:** Lohfink discovered the Integrierte Gemeinde (Integrated Community), a network of Catholic intentional communities of religious and lay people living together, which inspired him to resign his professorship (1986) at Tübingen to live and work in the community. There he learned the inner dynamic of the Kingdom of God that Jesus still wants to give his followers, not in theological



propositions, but in the laid-down life.

"Jesus had to die so that his disciples could become church. Without his death the Twelve would have understood nothing and would have gone on arguing among themselves." The faithful church has always understood that "community is impossible without some people who have given their whole lives."

"To that extent, community is something dangerous. Where it exists it lives out of the death and resurrection of Jesus or not at all. Where it exists it has to share in the great history through which God leads God's people. Therefore it cannot be 'made' [according to some human model], but is created by God alone. Hence also the many disappointed people who came together to make something new for themselves, usually to meet their own needs, only to see the new thing slip through their fingers."

"I might have been one of those disappointed people if I had not encountered the Integrierte Gemeinde in 1982. . . . It was the answer to so many of the questions about the renewal of the Church that had occupied me for such a long time. After a period of getting acquainted, in 1986 I resigned my professorship in Tübingen, with the consent of my bishop, and taking my aged parents with me, I moved to Munich."

"In the end I found the thing that so many biblical texts speak about, the thing I had so long desired. At this point I must describe it . . . but I don't know how to go about it. Colors are hard to describe. And how can anyone explain a rose in words alone? It has to be seen." □



*A Chico Fajardo doodle of Eric Lawrence during our Recyclery meeting*

*Reba News continued from page 9*

Clearing household (where Joseph lives) organized a celebration including foot washing and snacks. Greg Clark's teaching reminded that we are a people shaped by Jesus and the sign of baptism, dying to self and rising to new life with him and his people. Also, a new band of interns has arrived along with some previous interns staying on, myself included. The intern group, both old and new, just completed a retreat at Plow Creek, facilitated by Rich Foss and David Janzen, where we agreed on a covenant amongst each other for the remaining eight months of our internship.

Greg Clark is bringing his North Park University students (fifteen of them) through Reba for Cana House Monday nights. He is teaching a course (actually taught by many different Fellowship folk) entitled, "Values and Practices of Intentional Christian Community." But the juicy part is the student's participation in



*Josie Winterfeld and Melissa DeLong:  
Discuss amongst yourselves...*

Reba life, especially the potluck and small-groups where we share our lives and pray for one another, learning to love each other better.

Another development worth mentioning is that Plain and Simple, our Amish furniture store has been reopened for a five month test run. The management of the store has changed some with Ronn and Nina Frantz becoming more involved with the store. The Frantz's, coming from our sub-community in Rogers Park, balance out the loss Evanston folks feel as Sally and Orwin Youngquist are moving from the Reba neighborhood to be with the Rogers Park community. We pray for a sustained and healthy relationship.

On the subject of business, The Recyclery, a non-profit

used bike shop and programs running out of a couple of garages, looks like it may have the potential to "lift off." Eric Lawrence and friends have collected a large number of free bikes and are getting good at repairs so they can bless people who need them. The number of people on the Recyclery team is growing, so things are looking up. The website is [www.therecyclery.org](http://www.therecyclery.org), if you want to check it out.

I'd like to end by telling everybody that Bill Castle received a \$10,000 gift, which he has added to the Shalom Mission Community fund to build new houses for the poorest families in Valle Nuevo. We look forward to the day when these homes are built and our solidarity becomes more real with our sister community in El Salvador. □



*Cooperation among Rebites, former and current, at Mennofolk in Michigan for a meal*

ful time at Plow Creek, but we wanted to see what was happening with this particular community.

The conference started on the night before with communion and then a foot washing and litany, led by Paul Rhode, a dear Reba friend. We arrived for the day of workshops and discussions. Some of the titles of the workshops were Anarchism and Christianity- A Primer, Capitalism as a Religion, Anarchism and Technology in Bolivia, Christian Economic Resistance, etc.

The conference attracted over one-hundred participants, dissatisfied youths looking for something more antagonistic towards alienating forms of hierarchies, perpetual state-sponsored violence and popular culture driven by the ideology of capitalism.

Attending the conference were even non-Christians, one speaking on behalf of the IWW, a largely defunct labor union that trumpeted the

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# Christianity and Anarchy Conference: Practically Speaking

*Eric Lawrence  
Reba Place Fellowship*

Many writhe at the thought that Christianity and Anarchism could be melded together, or that they could even sit down and talk peacefully. After all, it's comfortable in a more or less "Constantinian compromise" where the state and dominant culture are interested in upholding Christian beliefs.

Now, as that bond begins to dissolve in a post-modern pool of divergent interests and a questioning of truth, many are even more frightened by the idea of Christianity and Anarchy together. Maybe it is because it pushes the envelope of anything comfortable, or maybe because people are confused about what Anarchism is, or maybe for a good reason— I don't know. But the fact is that the core values of Anarchism have drawn a considerable following and continues to grow, even amongst Christians.

These core values (shared amongst the libertarian socialist type of Anarchist that tend to show up at conferences like this one) are a tension with hierarchies, freedom to determine one's own path, a deep sense of equality among all, and autonomous, participatory associations or direct democracy.

Anarchism has risen among the alienated and dissatisfied in this country, especially the youth, and across the western world. Academia is taking Anarchism much more seriously, and so are famous theologians, like Vernard Eller, the Ekklesia Project, and the late Jacques Ellul. Another manifestation of this surge in popularity is the community of the Jesusradicals, an on-line community aimed at discussion and archiving Christian/Anarchist ideas. Together, the Jesusradicals worked out the Christianity and Anarchy Conference.

This year the Christianity and Anarchy Conference landed at the International Conference Center in Chicago enabling some folks to attend it and most of the Shalom Missions Camp Meeting on the same weekend. The attendance has grown over the last three years that the conference has been held, and a bunch of us left the Shalom gathering Saturday morning for a day at the conference. It was a beautiful day, and hard to leave a potentially wonder-



*Plow Creek continues to bear good fruit... and vegetables*

cause of the proletariat from 1900-1915, but has lost most support. They continue on in name to carry the legacy and dream of One Big Union that so many fought and died for- a truly socialist anarchist organization that still fires hopes and dreams for many.

For this reason, the conference was a success. It demonstrated to the radical secular that Christians have not left them behind, but on the contrary, we're saying "we're right here with you, different, but with you."

Since we largely all agreed on what is wrong the questions and discussion veered towards appropriate action because Anarchism tends to be much less theoretical than it is action oriented. Many people want to know how far one can go without breaking the rules of Christianity. How much violence is too much, or how can we bring forth the kingdom seem to be on peoples' minds. Yet many stood for the sovereignty of

God and the importance of non-violence and love in the face of oppression.

One constructive conclusion was the creation of a new magazine that will track the thought of Christian Anarchists today. It will also serve to bring more people together in the name of God, not Caesar.

To finish off the night, The Psalters music group roused the crowds with a passionate hymn. "Ain't gonna let nobody turn me 'round." When we came back to the Shalom Camp Gathering we were truly feeling like the Camp Meeting milieu was our true home. Amidst the disas-

ters of modern life, we can gather and praise God for the beauty of coming together in Christian fellowship. You are our home and family now, there for us, and we for you. But we need to stay connected with the youth movement that inspires some to hope for a better world that the present system will never deliver. □



*At home with each other— Camp Meeting 2005*

SHALOM CONNECTIONS

PO BOX 6575

EVANSTON IL 60202-6575

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