

Reba's Jubilee and Shalom Mission Communities Gathering!

Next year, Reba Place Fellowship will be 50 years old. So far as we know, this makes Reba the oldest urban intentional Christian community in the U.S. If you've been part of this story, or want to learn from this history, come help us celebrate God's grace through the years. Jubilee will be our theme as we focus on the R's of Reflection, Repentance, Releasing, Redistribution, Reconciliation, and Renewal.

Imagine a few tents in a local park, a rolling block party, music and worship from 50 years of community life, a Shalom Mission Communities reunion, inspiring teachings and workshops, and visitors from scores of newer communities mixing the energy of youthful initiatives and the wisdom of experience. We will be welcoming Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove (from the New Monasticism network of communities) to address our SMC gathering.

Reba Place Fellowship, Reba Place Church, and the Shalom Mission Communities are jointly hosting this 50th anniversary celebration and communities conference, August 3-7, 2007. The first two days will be about Reba's history and the last two days on what God is doing now within the Shalom Mission Communities and the wider Christian community movement. Registration will be available for either or both halves of this four-day event.

In the coming months, look for more information on Reba's website — www.rebaplacefellowship.org.

Save the dates:

*Reba Jubilee—August 3-5
SMC Gathering—August 5-7*

Shalom Connections
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We believe Jesus' announcement of the kingdom of God is an invitation to come and follow — to learn a whole new way of living. School for Conversion is a collaborative effort of new monastic communities to introduce students to the theology and practice of Christianity as a way of life.

Reba Place Fellowship — December 8-10
Church of the Sojourners — February 2-4

For more information, visit
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Volume X

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Number 3

Fall 2006: Rejoicing at the Birth of Prophetic Communities

SMC's Call to Support Formation of New Communities

Dale Gish
Church of the Sojourners

Something is happening in American Christianity. Something is happening in the Christian community movement. There seems to be a renewed interest in Christian community, especially among the generation of young people finishing college, mostly in their early 20s.

Our SMC communities have been doing community for a long time, long enough to recognize that community doesn't just happen, that forming a community and sustaining it well takes a lot love, wisdom, grace and a whole lot of both God's work as well as our own. We have seen and experienced some of the mistakes and failures of community as well as the faith and practices that give life to people in community. I believe God is preparing us to be a resource for those who are trying to start new communities and a support to those young communities that have already begun. I'm saying this generally of Shalom Mission Communities and also particularly of Church of the Sojourners.

Many of us have read and been encouraged by Shane Claiborne's vision for prophetic discipleship community in his book, *The Irresistible Revolution*. Shane is a speaker in much demand these days on college cam-

puses. Many of the young people who are visiting our communities have heard Shane speak and feel called, not just to hear speeches and read books, but to seek out the reality of the kingdom of God and offer their lives to its coming. **These are exciting times.**

Here at Sojourners in San Francisco, we recently had a visit with Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove. Jonathan is preparing John Alexander's last book for publication, a book still unfinished when John, Sojourner's spiritual leader, died in 2001. In this visit we also got to know Jonathan much better as a leader in the New Monasticism movement. We found him to be a humble guy who thinks reflectively about church history, and as a founder of Rutba House in Durham NC, has a real concern for building and sustaining community. He also has a heart for the poor and for racial reconciliation. Like John Alexander, he is a talented writer who is able to pull all of these themes together. Jonathan's interest in connecting with us is significant, not just for Sojourners, but for SMC as well.

Sojourners member, Tim Otto, is now living in the Rutba House community while studying at Duke Divinity School, and his presence there is forging a significant connection between us. I suspect that Tim's connection with Rutba House, one of the hubs of the New Monasticism Movement, will bring some renewal to us, a more established community. I am looking forward to seeing how we are challenged by their fresh enthusiasm, ability to experiment with different ways of doing things, their environmental concerns and simplicity of life. As you can see, I believe the benefit of connec-

Continued, next page.

Rejoicing at the Birth of Prophetic Communities

tion with the New Monasticism communities will flow both ways.

Church of the Sojourners has agreed to host and teach a three-day "School of Conversion" February 2-4, 2007, under New Monasticism auspices. Reba Place Fellowship is planning to host a similar community retreat/ seminar the second week of December 2006. This is another way for people awakened by the New Monasticism movement, some of them interested in starting new communities, to connect with us.

Whenever new communities are launched, a significant percentage of them do not survive. Those who try this counter-cultural path need a lot of encouragement, support and connection to the wisdom and experience of older communities. If there is a way for us to help a few more of these communities make it through their infancy, I believe we should serve in this role.

Some of our elder members, like Virgil Vogt at Reba, have had an apostolic ministry over the years, visiting and advising communities that are starting up. This may be a time for more of us in Shalom Communities to become apostolic, making ourselves available to speak at community retreats, help out groups who are starting communities, or to offer community visitations (checkups) where needed.

Here at Church of the Sojourners we've always had the idea that as people join us, as we grow in leadership gifts, we are not just recruiting for ourselves. We mostly want

to encourage people toward God's kingdom and toward community wherever they are. This may mean sending people to another church to help, encourage, or perhaps join them. Church of the Sojourners has been both a recipient of such help and have at times been able to offer such help.

Years ago Church of the Sojourners benefited greatly by the example of Church of the Servant King who freely sent their leaders to help other communities for weeks or even months at a time. That is how John and Judy Alexander came to Church of the Servant King in Gardena, CA. Some years later John and Judy Alexander came for a retreat to help Church of the Sojourners write a covenant. Then they moved down permanently to join our church. Much later, when community dynamics turned sour at Church of the Servant King, we sent John and Judy Alexander, and Jack and Edith Bernard, to mediate difficulties and give people there support.

Church of the Sojourners has also been blessed and held together by others at crucial times. The Shalom Mission Communities were really "there for us" when community leaders, John and Jack died, loving us, encouraging us, helping us to regain our footing. Having received so much from other communities, we want to be free with the resources we have been given to help others, as God leads, through their hard times. We do this recognizing that all we have been given to us from God and that it is our Father's good pleasure to give us the Kingdom.

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Fellowship of Rogers Park News

Lisa Selph

As I sit to write about what God is doing in Rogers Park I wonder how much of "our" news will also be reported as "your" news. Rather than feel constrained by the potential overlap, I decided to celebrate how the lives of our communities and its members are so blessedly connected.

The CSA – two years ago Doug (Selph, my husband) was reading books and articles full of doom, discouraged by our irresponsible American lifestyle and the impact it has on planet earth. Now he is composting for three families, and experiencing the wonder of first-time vegetable gardening. Even more significant, he has helped bring a commitment to supporting local farmers together with our love for the folks at Plow Creek. Every Wednesday our little back porch is lined with boxes of Plow Creek tomatoes, green beans, melon, berries, onions and other fresh produce. The activity has also led to some memorable (and providential) conversations with the volunteer assigned to sort vegetables that week. One Wednesday it was a summer intern. Somehow the conversation turned to me telling the story of my broken first marriage, which brought her to tears as she shared of the current brokenness in her own parents' relationship. Another time RPF apprentice alum Luke Hingtgen happened to be volunteering (a guy I like a lot and hardly ever see down here in Rogers Park). Somehow the conversation turned to a pair of valuable sandals I'd borrowed from a church friend that had been missing since February. It just so happened he had seen such a pair of sandals in Tatiana's car trunk. (Turned out I had forgotten we'd traded cars for a few days so folks could travel in our van to *the simple way*.) Owner and Chacos happily reunited. One of the little everyday gifts of sharing life.

Rogers Park – Evanston comings and goings – Ronn and Nina Frantz are deeply involved in developing RPF's Plain and Simple store, creat-

ing common work there as well as with Reunion Property Management and the Living Water Community Church meetinghouse project (which is really, really, really close to being done!). Spending so much time in Evanston is a big change, but seems a good thing in this season. Meanwhile, I have ended my participation in the leadership circle of RPF after six years, in order to devote more time to my role as elder at Living Water. I have learned much from the very wise, experienced leaders of the Fellowship, and pray God has grown me up enough to have something to offer our growing church/community here in Rogers Park.

Practicing members – in addition to the Dahlaws move to be more a part of the Rogers Park community, we recently welcomed Tim Doran and Sharon Moriarty as new RPF practicing members. They, along with their two young daughters, are members of Living Water, live in the neighborhood, and are eager to go deeper with us here. Tim and Patty Peebles have also taken the step of becoming practicing members. This brings our Fellowship of Rogers Park group to 12 (along with Frantzes, Selphs and Youngquists). We covet your prayers as we enter this time of growth and discernment of what God wants us to be about in Rogers Park.



Katie and Eric's post-wedding tandem bicycle, decorated by Camille Hobbs.

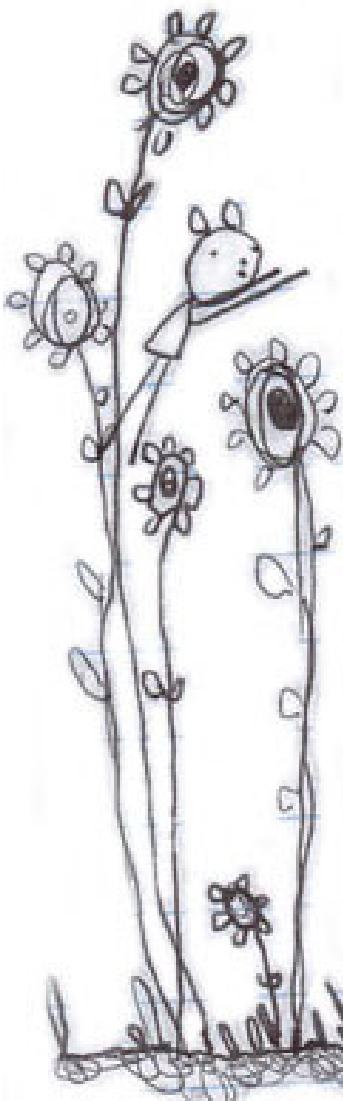
Rejoicing at the Birth of Prophetic Communities

lief and are looking forward to working in agricultural development in the future.

Summer break is over and the children have started a new year of Kids Club. I'm not sure what Nancy and Barbara have up their sleeves for this year, but I'm sure the kids will be ready to negotiate peace agreements for a large nations by the end of the school year!

Jim and Ria celebrated their 50th anniversary. God continues to enrich our lives by their presence and faithful commitment to each other and our community.

After spending many years of schooling at home and local co-ops, the Bridge-water children, Hanna and Claire, started attending public school this year. This is a big time of transition for them as well as their parents. Please pray for wisdom and patience for all of them during this time.



For those of you that are new to SMC or that are still learning about Hope Fellowship, we are a bi-cultural community located in the heart of Waco. Our desire is to see the Kingdom of God lived out with people from diverse cultures by worshipping together, promoting peace in our own lives and our city and by loving our neighbors that live around us. Being so close to Mexico, immigration issues are very real to us and affect our lives. Many of us have participated and will continue to organize and participate in peaceful gatherings raising awareness of the situations that our immigrant brothers and sisters face. We see the immigration issue as a spiritual one of how we will treat those seeking refuge. Please pray for us as we seek to understand how we can better live out this vision at Hope Fellowship and that our lives and voices would be prophetic to those around us. Below is a song written by Hope Fellowship member Luis R. Matias-Cruz with translation help from his wife Ramona. They are a bi-cultural couple that has experienced these issues first-hand.

No te llamo extranjero

(A Song by Luis R. Matías-Cruz)

*Ya no te llamo extranjero
una palabra fría y distante
una palabra que separa
solitaria e indiferente

**Ya no te llamo extranjero
tus manos son como mis manos:
las tuyas, manos curtidas,
tus niños, como mis niños

I no longer call you "alien"
your hunger is like mine,
your hunger eases my hunger
your dreams seem to be mine

I no longer call you foreigner
your songs are the songs of my soul
your tiredness is food and rest to me
your prayers draw me in
prayer born
of disempowerment and pain

***Te llamo ahora hermano
te llamo ahora hermana
miro a tus ojos
más allá de estar defensivo
más allá del odio y el miedo
resisto a la palabra "extranjero"
resisto a la palabra "problema"
quiero decir "perdón",
quiero decir "justicia"
y "reconciliación"

*I no longer call you foreigner
A word that divides
A cold and distant word
Alone and indifferent

**I no longer call you foreigner
Your hands are like my hands
Yours are calloused
Your sons are like my daughters

***I call you now brother
I call you now sister
I look into your eyes
Beyond being defensive
Beyond hate and fear
I resist the word "foreigner"
I resist the word "problem"
I want to say "forgiveness"
I want to say "justice"
and "reconciliation"

Shalom Connections

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Rejoicing at the Birth of Prophetic Communities

"Mary set out at that time and went as quickly as she could to a town in the hill country of Judah. She went to Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth. Now as soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit." Luke 1:39-40

The Child Leaped in Her Womb:

Rejoicing at the Birth of New Prophetic Communities

An Editorial by David Janzen

On Labor-Day weekend Reba hosted seven young adults with three children, all from the Salvation Army church, who are interested in forming an intentional Christian community—possibly in the inner city of Hammond, Indiana.

These budding church leaders have been encouraged by some of their denominational elders and inspired by their own sense of calling, to pioneer a radically shared way of life. The call is not just to run traditional Salvation Army ministries for the benefit of the poor, but by living in the midst of poverty with doors open to volunteers and their neighbors, they want to practice the teachings of Jesus with each other in a life worth inviting others into.

These young families and singles have been further infected by reading Shane Claiborne's book, The Irresistible Revolution, and now have been visiting other Christian communities to get ideas on how to do this radical-discipleship-community-in-the-inner-city thing. At Reba they got the usual local tour and fell into some excited conversations with us at our Labor Day barbecue and hang-out event at Camp Lake, Wisconsin. We quickly felt the Spirit bonding us together, rejoicing in friendship and common vision. They have many more questions to ask of us. We



parted saying "We'll see you again soon."

I tell this story not because it is unusual, but because it keeps happening every week—with another group, or with individual seekers passing through who are part of new community ventures, with new Fellowship apprentices, and visitors to our Monday night potluck and seminars. We are also getting phone calls from young people who have begun to live in close ministering community and are running into problems that are over their heads—they are asking for help. At the same time older ministries, like Koinonia Partners, are rediscovering their prophetic voice and regrouping as intentional communities of reconciled followers of Jesus.

Fellow Shalom Mission Communities are reporting similar waves of young people eager to risk living the life of Jesus in intimate and prophetic community.

What is behind this flood of radicalized young people eager to join a "revolution" that so much reminds us older folks of the 70's and 80's when community was the rage? Is this a generational fad? A prophetic movement of the Spirit in response to developments of our age? I have

not conducted any systematic social analysis, but conversations with the young people coming through and staying around at Reba often mention the following tributaries to the flood:

--**The dead-end Iraq War**, making more terrorists as it goes, is exposing the arrogant lies and moral confusion at the heart of American imperialism and the "Christian" civil religion that supports it. The war isn't working. Uncritical support of evangelicals is crumbling and their children are asking, "Doesn't Jesus tell us to love our enemies? What kind of world would that look like?"

--**Shane Claiborne and friends:** Into this void strides the quirky prophet, Shane Claiborne (The Irresistible Revolution) who, amazingly, keeps getting invited to Christian colleges, mega-churches and youth conventions, telling stories of Jesus and his passionate enemy-loving followers today in places like Iraq and the neglected inner-cities of our land. He tells of newly forming Christian communities and their resemblance to the deeper traditions of the monastic movement. Hundreds want to follow this Pied-Piper to the tiny Simple Way community in Philadelphia, The Simple Way refers most of them to a widen-

"God and I" by Fanny Tsai

A girl was a slave, a slave of sins. She was one of the slaves in Egypt. There, she had a lot of pains, and did not have freedom. The chain of sin controlled her the whole day. She treated women in the wrong way, and could not treat men in the right way. She was very blue, and in much pain.

One day, a prince went to Egypt. He was the son of the king of kings. He was so powerful that he beat the lord of sins in Egypt. He also saved all the slaves there, including the girl. All the slaves got free at that moment. The powerful prince not only gave them freedom, but also a new life. He led these people to his glorious kingdom. When the exodus happened, the girl was nineteen years old.

Judy also met with Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove from Rutba House who came to visit us to discuss his

editing of the book John Alexander left unfinished when he died in 2001.

We continue to move forward with all the little details and proofreads and nitpicky finalizations that are going into the publication of the book Jack Bernard wrote a couple of years before he died. It's called *How to Become A Saint: A Beginner's Guide*, and will be published by Brazos Press; it should be out in early 2007. Jack writes: "Humble confidence in God, and not a psychological state of certainty, is the key to faith. Until I grasped this, I was always at sea in my search for faith. We trust God on the basis of his love for us as revealed in Jesus. At times, believing that you have an all-powerful loving father who is looking out for you will be very difficult. In those times, faith will be expressed as a determined effort to have confidence that God loves you and is present in your situation for your ultimate good."



Two good friends: Naomi Hare and Antonia Guatemala at Matt and Krista's wedding

looks upon us and says the same thing as we struggle to walk uprightly and love our neighbor as ourselves. Thanks again to our visitors that were selfless and served us during the visitation.

About a year ago, in addition to our Sunday worship and discussion time, we began to meet in cell groups on a weekly basis. Meeting in small groups became a necessity for going deeper into our discussions, growing in relationships and learning to become better disciples of Christ. Of course there have been some struggles, as we are fairly new at this, but overall we have benefited from the groups greatly. A high point from the cell group that I've been involved with (there are four in all) has been the sharing our spiritual autobiographies. What we thought would take a few weeks turned into six months of sharing as we laughed, cried and encouraged each other. Many cells have also enjoyed the practice of praying together. Nothing builds community more than when we invite the Spirit of Jesus into the cracks and crevasses of our lives and are vulnerable with each other...then we truly have a common-unity of the Spirit. After hearing from our recent visitors, we are going to take a fresh look at our cell

groups and discuss how we can improve on this area of our life together.

There have been a lot of exciting events and new things happening in the last few months here at Hope, but here are a few that my small brain can remember right now:

Zach and Amy Griffin, along with their new baby, Laith, have returned to Waco after spending some time in Austin. They are former World Hunger Relief interns and we are thankful to have them with us again.

Justin and Susanna Clark's baby has arrived. Isabella joined us at worship for the first time this week and she stood up and danced around. Well... not really, she is only a few weeks old. The Clark family has finished their new member orientation classes, and they are in the process of becoming Hope Fellowship members.

David and Hanna Heddy have become members and are excited about taking on some new roles in the community. They met and were married while interning together at World Hunger Re-

Rejoicing at the Birth of Prophetic Communities

Church of the Sojourners News

Zoe Mullery

Let's start this news update with celebration: Matt Creeger and Krista Rea were just married on September 17 in a grassy clearing up in the Berkeley hills, on a beautiful sunny day. As it should be, family, friends, and food abounded. The occasion also provided us with an opportunity to get a quick look at Tim Otto, who took a break from his Duke studies to preach at the wedding.

Our new Apprenticeship year has kicked off, with five Apprentices participating this year: our own Ryan Ferrier, now officially off his sabbatical year with us; Jadie Mollier, on loan to us from Church of the Servant King in Eugene, Oregon; Steven Braney's younger brother Ben; Michelle Somers, who lived with us for several years as an adolescent and has warmed our hearts by returning as an adult (21 next month!); and Kelly Fitzgerald, a young woman from Colorado who came to our "Nature and Purpose of the Church" seminar last year. They are sharing a flat in the Blue House and seem ready for whatever adventure the year holds.

Dale Gish will be facilitating the Apprenticeship again this year, and has gone to part-time at his job in



"How can the bridegroom's attendants mourn, when the bridegroom is with them?" Matthew 9:15

order to be able to work for the church, beyond all the hours he was already giving.

Darren Prince from Inner-Change, a community of missionaries reaching out to the homeless youth and gangs in our city, spoke to us this year at our annual All Church Retreat on the subject of mentoring, walking us through Jesus' exhortation to "feed my sheep" as an expression of our love for Jesus and one another.

Tim, Jenny, Alexina, and John David Lockie spent a month in Guatemala in August. The trip wasn't as delightful as they had hoped it would be; a bout with head lice and the lack of parks for the kids to play in, among other things, contributed to a challenging time for the family. But Tim did absorb some Spanish and they returned grateful for the life they have here in San Francisco.

Jeff Hare had eye surgery (got the eye jello sucked out from behind the back of his eyeball) and expects to have much improved vision soon.

Debbie and Dale Gish continue to actively pursue adoption, and welcome leads. They have an adoption website at daledebbiegish.com.



Krista and Matt Creeger, Sept. 17, 2006.

Hilda Frantz moved in with us in July from Reba / Rogers Park to do a six-month internship at Noe Valley Bakery and prevent any of us from joining the Army.

Jon and IvaJo Pedersen completed the California portion of the Pacific Crest Trail and ventured into Oregon as far as Crater Lake—a mere 1,830 miles hiked from mid-May to August—and plan to wipe up the measly 800 remaining miles to Canada in a near-future summer. They will continue their adventure with a few weeks in Guatemala studying Spanish, followed by nursing school for Jon, location yet to be determined (but San Francisco not ruled out).

Judy Alexander visited us this summer, bringing stories of how her ESL creative writing students inspired her with the ways they were seeing God in literature and metaphor, and seeing new connections with their own lives. Here is a sample Judy brought:

ing network of local communities of radical discipleship. This network of friends, about 600 of them, met for a four-day PAPA-Fest (People Against Poverty and Apathy) camp meeting in Eastern Tennessee in late July. (See photo essay in this issue.)

--A Radical Discipleship Theology: For a generation now, seminary professors, college teachers and pastors have been shaped by John Howard Yoder, Stanley Hauerwas, Richard Hays, N. T. Wright, and other such writers. They promote an "Anabaptist" vision of the church as coherent ethical communities of radical discipleship, following the Jesus who gave his life to reconcile enemies to God and to one another. The Ekklesia Project is a network of friendships that keeps multiplying this vision—and some of their students are eager to move beyond the classroom to form households and extended families in disciplined lives of service. The seed has been sown and is taking root in demonstration plots across the land.

--John Perkins and CCDA: John Perkins, the spiritual inheritor of the non-violent Civil Rights movement and the father of the Christian Community Development Association, keeps on preaching racial reconciliation and community organization, transforming blacks and whites in partnerships for community renewal. Neither the Republicans nor the Democrats have figured out how to co-opt CCDA, with its Bible-rooted critique of both houses. Many young people, black and white, see the spirit of Jesus in CCDA, a way of social renewal that might be worthy of a life's devotion.

--Individualism at a dead end: Individualistic consumerism—the best that modern capitalism has to offer—has been tried and found empty by a younger generation. They see ecological disaster looming and seek a sane, simple way to live respectfully with the earth. They want to grow their own food or be in relation with the people who do. They feel deeply wounded by the failures of their parents' generation

to sustain faithful commitments. These young people may be naïve about how deeply they still are infected by the individualism they reject, but they are hungry for relationships of accountability. They want support to live common practices that sustain faithful relationships and spiritual growth. They listen to the wisdom of elders who have weathered a life-time of faithful commitments in community. They keep asking to hear Reba's story, teasing out of us the explanations and traditions that have grown up here through years of mistakes, struggles for unity, and the fierce love that grows from shared suffering.

Perhaps it does not matter if we have properly diagnosed current social trends because they are only the contemporary manifestation of the way the Powers That Be have always worked and of the perennial subversive power of Jesus' teachings amplified by the work of the Holy Spirit.

We need to take each person's journey and each community's journey

seriously, connecting in friendship and prayer with their present journey.

Reba Place Fellowship's mission statement includes the call "to nurture other . . . communities [of love and discipleship] as God gives us grace." Reba and the other Shalom communities are to do all we can, empowered by the Spirit. We don't have to do more than that. Often we refer people to other communities in their area. A network is coming together in service to one another and the history-renewing kingdom of God.

The gospel of Luke tells how Elizabeth, pregnant in her old age, greeted Mary and recognized the holy child within her as the work of the Holy Spirit. That is like the elder community's role, pregnant in our old age, recognizing the holy pregnancy of these new community ventures, inspired by the Holy Spirit. God's work is never a sure thing. It calls for the greatest care, the mystery of Immanuel, God with us—helpless and still the hope of the world.



Rejoicing at the Birth of Prophetic Communities

PAPA FEST 2006—In Pictures

Photos by Brian Lewis, Common Ground Community
Text by Tatiana Heflin, Reba Place Fellowship



PAPA fest took place on June 23-25 in Greenback, TN. Shane Claiborne's parents (the LaFons) were our gracious hosts... they didn't even seem to flinch when piles and piles of young radicals and seekers took over their home for the whole weekend! By mid-day on Friday, the LaFon compound had been transformed into a tent village. Community blossomed as people talked, shared, and ate around their campsites and the campsites of friends new and old. Doug Selph said, "Although it was a bit chaotic at times, I liked us all eating and hanging out together in a huddle of tents."



A “common kitchen” embodied the spirit of community that PAPA fest hoped to express. All day long, delicious meals were cooked up by volunteers and fed to whoever ran out of food or just didn't have time to cook themselves before running off to seminars or stage events. Much of the food was donated or scavenged from dumpsters. Mmm... good.



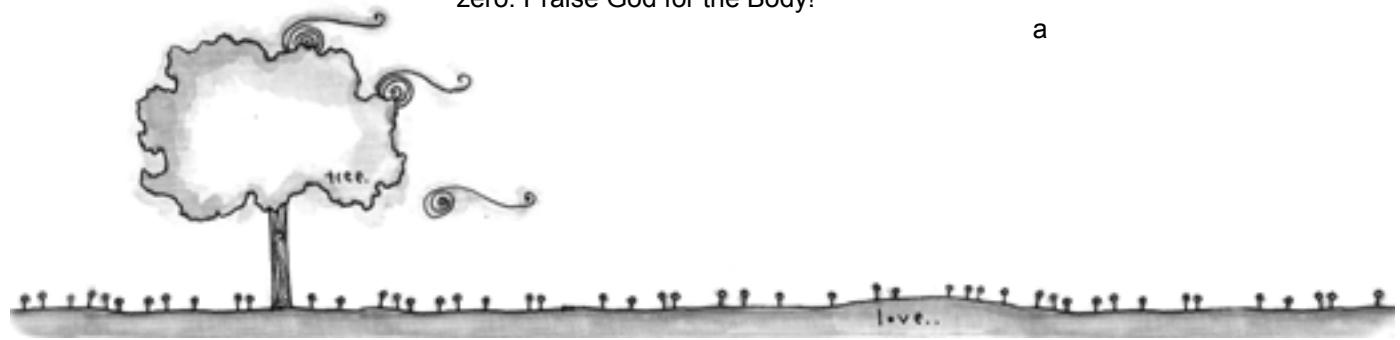
The LaFons' barn became a bartering village for the duration of the festival. Here people set up tables of whatever goods or services they had to offer for trade or for sale. We used a form of alternative currency called PAPA (hours) which could be earned for hours of volunteer work and redeemed at most tables in the bartering village. As you can see from the sign... most people were happy to share and give freely.

looking forward to a new retreat space which will be friendlier to those with physical handicaps and/or severe allergies.

Community life has been tested a bit in recent months with several of our members in the hospital for various reasons. It is these times like these that community really happens, and extra grace and care have been shown to Hilda Carper, Bob Lembke, and David Janzen in their recoveries. Linas and Virginia Brown have also been at the center

of our prayers after Linas was diagnosed with lung cancer in June. He has begun hospice care, but remains active in community activities, small group, and Sunday morning worship.

Lastly, as I reflect on birth and age and the age differences within our body, I can't forget to note that we have some significant birthdays to mark. Our youngest communal member, Joseph Marshak, turned 30 and our second-oldest member, Virginia Brown, turned 90! Reba Place Fellowship herself is nestled right in the middle, waiting ten months to celebrate the big five-zero. Praise God for the Body!



GRAIN OF WHEAT NEWS

Marcus Rempel

We celebrated 25 years together with a Grain of Wheat reunion this summer. It was a blessed, rich weekend of reminiscing, worshipping and fellowshipping together. We were honoured by the presence of many former members. There were visitors from as far away as Norway, Chicago, B.C. and Toronto. Virgil Vogt noted God's serendipitous timing of arranging the floor tiles in our brand new worship space in the basement of St. Matthew's to be laid just in time for the Saturday evening Nostalgia Night and the Sunday morning worship. It was good to catch up with old friends, and there was significant healing in some relationships. The clowns did a wonderful job of wordlessly articulating the bittersweet truth of how some relationships change and gift us forever, even if the relationship doesn't last.

If any of you are interested in a Grain of Wheat history that boils down each year of our life from 1981 to 2006 into a paragraph (what a feat!), contact Irene Wiens at im-wiens@mts.net.

This summer, Tall Grass Prairie Bread Co. (the bakery owned by mostly Grain of Wheaters) and Ploughshares Community Farm (formed by mostly Grain of Wheaters) began what they each hope will be a lasting relationship. Ploughshares will produce pumpkins, zucchinis and carrots for Tall Grass pies, cakes, and muffins.

Now that fall is here, we are grateful to be settling into the newly-renovated basement area. Our Sunday worship begins at 10:30 a.m., a welcome change for many from the 9 a.m. start that we had for as long as we shared the large sanctuary with the Anglicans. Decisions and revisions regarding Sunday School, the youth program, and other parts of our church life are underway.

For a week in the summer, a Northwestern University student and Reba Place Church member, Rosalind Yang, documented the life of Reba Place in photographs. She has now published a website that showcases lots of these beautiful images for all to see! You can visit the site at www.rozyang.com/reba.

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This year marks five years since transitioning from fellowship and accountability-oriented small groups to more action and specific interest-oriented “seed groups.” The current collection of seed groups is as follows: two “discipleship” groups (Topical Bible Study and Transforming Bible Study), four “support” groups (Marriage Enrichment, Healthy Balance, Contemplative Prayer, and Wellspring Healthcare), a group linked to a medical centre in the neighborhood formed by Grain of Wheaters (this centre offers intensive Theophostic prayer alongside of the usual physician's practice), and two “mission” groups (Ploughshares Rural Community, which purchased 145 acres of land about an hour from the city, and the Housing Initiatives Seed Group, which sponsored the purchase of a house to provide affordable housing and has now rented the space to newcomers to Canada from Gambia and Zimbabwe).

In all our endeavours we recognize the faithfulness of God as we desire to open ourselves to the love of God

Rejoicing at the Birth of Prophetic Communities

Reba Place News—

Evanston

Tatiana Heflin

As a twenty-three year old post-college community seeker, rejoicing at the birth of new and young communities resonates with me deeply. I came to Reba Place Fellowship two years ago, schooled by *the simple way* and Camden House, with eyes wide and a fire in my heart. On a search for like-minded “community kids,” I found what I was looking for. Never mind that most of the “kids” here were born well before 1983! While this pocket of Mennonites looks a little bit different from the young, hip, movers and shakers on the East Coast, Reba’s strength and wisdom have proven invaluable for six of us young people who have been part of the intern program for the past year or two. We like Reba so much that we’ve decided to move into a big house together (at 720 Reba Place, home of many households throughout the decades) and stay around for another year! It’s exciting to share in the history of Reba and also the newness of Reba. The newness is close to home as we start our life as a new household – “The Patch.”

A brief explanation of our name (from the vision statement we wrote up for the house) – “Jesse, Camille, Luke and Adam all patch tires at The Recyclery. Tatiana, Chico and Luke grow food at a garden patch. Most of us patch our clothes. It’s the idea of taking something old and transforming it into something new. It’s the idea of embracing simplicity and creativity in resistance to the consumerism and materialism of the Empire. It’s also the idea that we are all broken, but by being sewn and patched together we are healed.”

Reba Place also has a new crop of young people beginning to settle into the neighborhood. For the first time in two years, the apprenticeship (formerly “intern program”) is beginning with all new members. Julia Guyer, Ruth Johnson, and Christine Buettgen are all North

Park University graduates sharing an apartment together with another friend, Heidi Johnson. Celina Varela, a recent graduate from Truett Seminary in Waco, TX, and Peter Velthuizen, a Calvin College graduate, are both living at The Clearing. It will be exciting to see how Reba’s communal life will shape a new season of seekers.

Along with people coming and going (as seems to be the typical rhythm around Reba these days), our leadership and structure are being shuffled a bit. Lisa Selph recently stepped down from her place on the leadership team after serving since 2000. GHLAD (our clever acronym made up of the first names of leaders) was a bit SAD to see her go... but spirits are high because Barb Grimsley has agreed to be an interim leader while a new team is being formulated. Allan Howe has recently been re-elected for another term as the Fellowship’s spiritual leader. After a week retreat, he will be working to help pull together new leadership and look toward the future of Reba Place Fellowship.

With the addition of practicing members Dana and Andrew Phelan (recently married in August), Stephanie Leep, and Adam Vaughn (engaged to be married in December) to the Reba orbit, some new small groups have been forming.



Katie Jean and Eric enjoy a swing before their wedding ceremony, held August 12 at the Reba Place Meetinghouse.



Julius and Peggy Belser, Joseph Marshak, Linas Brown have left the Clearing small group and, along with Grete and Aaron Scott, will be joining these folks in sharing and discernment. The Patch household has also formed a small group for the guidance of practicing and novice members and other housemates.

The Cana household is preparing for some changes, as Tim Baer and Joanna Wiebe will be moving into their own apartment with their son Zach. Zach recently moved from Canada to share life with them at 737 Reba Place, the former intern apartment.

After a long process, the sale of 705 Reba Place has been finalized, giving us the go-ahead to begin work on rebuilding Emmanuel Lodge, the Fellowship’s retreat house on Camp Lake in Wisconsin. Work days will begin in October, with demolition intended for November, and construction slated for spring of 2007. Many of us in the community are

PAPA FEST 2006— In Pictures



Mornings at PAPA Fest began with liturgy, a time for the community to come together to be quiet and meditate on the goodness of God and the movement of the Spirit. Catherine Clasen led the Sunday morning communion service where hundreds of barefoot, sun-soaked children and adults broke bread together in remembrance of the True King,

Jesus.



Each morning and afternoon, festival attendees gathered for seminars on theology, community, trades, and art. Morning sessions focused more on “head knowledge” and afternoon sessions focused on creativity and practice. Here, David Janzen from Reba Place Fellowship (Evanston, IL) and Maria Kenney from Communality (Lexington, KY) share with a group of listeners about “Why community?” Other SMC community members who presented seminars were Tim Otto (Church of the Sojourners), Katie Jean, Chico Fajardo, and Doug Selph (all from Reba Place Fellowship).



Over the three day festival, over a dozen different musical acts performed on the main stage. The music varied from Latin to folk to screamy-rock, with everything in between. While the melodies and instruments covered a wide-range of sounds, all the musicians expressed great support for the spirit of PAPA fest and the social, political, and theological ideas being brought forth. Here, Aimee Wilson led the opening musical session (shown with Jon and Charity from the Psalters).

PAPA FEST 2006—In Pictures



Parents from all over the country enjoyed the opportunity that the Children's Village brought them. Here, parents could leave their children to engage in **art projects, games, nature walks, and other fun activities** during the "adult" seminar sessions. Elissa Laslo from the Camden Community Houses co-ordinated the children's village, supported by dozens of festival volunteers. Over eighty kids registered for the festival! Here Becky Erck (a community-seeker with Plow Creek Fellowship), along with Azel and Elijah, enjoys a makeshift drum session in the Children's Village tent.

What a blessing—this beautiful dock, available to all of the PAPA fest attendees! It offered respite from the heat and sweat that filled the days. Camille Hobbs shared why the dock was definitely her favorite place at PAPA... "So many of the talks were so heavy and really sat heavily on my soul knowing that things had to change, must change—and I must be accountable to my own actions. So the dock... all these people just being, understanding the weight of the things we were talking about but still being like, **'it is important to play.'**"



One of the most notable (and quirkiest) features of the PAPA Fest grounds was the aptly-named "Poo Town"—a grouping of three makeshift sawdust toilet stalls. Volunteers worked hard in the days before and during the festival to construct the toilets and maintain the compost bins in order to support the **ecologically-friendly goals of the festival**. The toilets were also quite a conversation piece! And a fond memory for festival goers. When asked what his favorite part of the PAPA Fest was, Doug Selph didn't hesitate—"the composting toilets!"

Plow Creek News

Rich Foss

Over Labor Day weekend, Plow Creek hosted Greg Clark from Reba Place and eight students from his North Park University "Intentional Christian Community" class. On Saturday morning I joined the class to give a brief presentation on why I joined PCF 29 years ago and how that's played out. Then I opened it up for questions.

"What's been the most challenging part of community for you?" asked one of the young women in the class.

"Making decisions together," I said. I went on to describe how we are often not at our best in decision-making meetings. We do consensus decision-making, and it's not easy to all agree upon a decision. At the same time, I said, some of my most memorable moments of God at work in Plow Creek have come during members meeting.

Greg supplemented my response with a story. When he had first joined Reba, and in the process become a Mennonite, he struggled with the lack of sacraments. To him sacraments were deeply im-

portant, and he missed them at Reba. Then one day he was at a conference and fell into a conversation with a monk. He shared his struggles with the lack of sacraments at Reba.

"Is there a time you regularly experience God's presence at Reba?" asked the monk.

"Yes," said Greg, "in decision-making meetings."

"That's a sacrament," the monk said.

I've been living with the young woman's question and Greg's story, letting them shape my life at Plow Creek. Recently, after a particularly difficult PCF members meeting, my wife, Sarah said, "We are not at our best at Plow Creek in decision-making meetings."

That's true. When we come to a members meeting, we bring the best and worst of ourselves. I live with this raw fact of community life in two ways. First, a community is not simply a decision-making body. I've never heard a married couple say, "The best part of our marriage is making decisions together."

Second, our decision-making meetings are sacred. We bring the best of ourselves and the worst of ourselves and God transforms our

great and pitiful contributions into decisions for the good of the community and his vast kingdom.

Now on to other news. On July 1 PCF launched its first internship in communal living with David from Iowa and Elaine from Texas. Rick Reha and Erin Kindy, who are heading up the internship, have been putting in lots of creative hours since last fall.

Leadership changes at Plow Creek roll on. After my resignation effective June 30, Neil Horning and Louise Stahnke are now the Plow Creek Mennonite Church elders. Effective August 31 Louise resigned as a Plow Creek Fellowship elder leaving me singing solo in that role. Although PCF has started the process of calling another elder to serve with me, a couple of folks have raised the question of whether we need more than one elder. The sacred conversations continue.

Lynn Reha and Erin Kindy have begun holding parties for small groups of folks at Plow Creek and asking three wonderful questions: What are your talents? What are your passions? What's broken at Plow Creek that you'd like to fix? I'm eager to see how their conversations help us reshape our life together.

Boo Graham and her daughter Charisa have moved to Centerville, Ohio for the school year to allow Boo to pursue a long delayed dream: studying for and taking the Medical College Admission Test and applying for medical school. Steve and the rest of the still-at-home children are living at Plow Creek.

In August Mark Stahnke had a total knee replacement on one of his knees.

Jim Fitz is currently in Colombia serving on the Christian Peace-maker team this fall. In the beginning of November, Erin Kindy plans to head to Colombia to serve on the same team.

Adios, amigos.



From Plow Creek—Community members, and two summer interns work together getting onions ready for winter storage in the backyard. L to R: Lyn Fitz, Kora Behrens, Elaine W. (intern), Katie Davis, Meg Foxvog, David O'Brian (intern), Lorie Behrens.

Rejoicing at the Birth of Prophetic Communities

How I Found God in a Cop and an Old Jaded Man

Katie Piché
Church of the Sojourners

In the face of our neighborhood's gentrification, we as a church find ourselves asking, "How can we live out our faith and share the gospel... with our middle-class white neighbors?"

In recent neighborhood discussion the topic has been drugs and alcohol versus safety. Right off, this sounds like a good topic to tackle. But why does it also mean the Latino neighbors versus the white middle class neighbors and the homeless versus the homeowners?

The "alcohol problem" is a group of Latino guys who hang out in front of a building that used to be their home — or their friend's home. They drink beer, play loud music, and let their general presence be a well-known part of the block. This same group of guys has been together for probably 30 years. The "drug problem" is a group of people who are all at rock bottom. They argue about who owes who five dollars, and none of them can make enough at this business to have a cell phone. These groups of people have not really seemed dangerous to us, but rather sad.

The divisions in race and class have made us very uncomfortable, and I became guilty of believing that the answer to the question, "Lord, who is my neighbor?" was the poor people only. As a church, though, we decided that we must engage in relationship with *all* of our neighbors about daily life, and when it comes up, talk about who we are as Christians and as a church and why we live the way we do. And with that, hope that somehow God will show up in us and in this neighborhood and that others will see Him, too.

One of the concrete decisions we made was to attend neighborhood meetings organized by our middle class neighbors. We wanted to listen to them and to their concerns, and

perhaps try to advocate for others in the neighborhood when appropriate or necessary.

And so this is how it came to be that Debbie Gish and I found ourselves in a spontaneous neighborhood meeting with three other home-owning neighbors and one Latino police officer who has lived his whole life in this neighborhood and loves it.

The meeting started with some basics about when to call 911 and how the police prioritize these calls. But about midway through the meeting, Peter starts making a speech. Peter is an older man who sees everything that happens on the block, is jaded to the possibility that people with addictions can change, and is tired of painting over the graffiti on the large white walls of his house on the corner. He turns to Debbie and me, and addresses us as "you people" (meaning all of Sojourners). He starts with something like, "I know we're all Jesus' children, but we have to take measures against the problems, and we don't have time to wait around." He continues as if he is telling on us to this police officer about how we have homeless people come into our house, or that we talk with the beer-drinking crowd across the street.

The officer interrupts Peter and much to our surprise blurts out, "You mean these people are telling them about the Lord?" The officer then continues on that this is a good way to address the problems of our neighborhood, and that what people need is to be listened to and to receive the hope of Jesus.

Peter counters; he is afraid that we are attracting problems instead of trying to fix them, and he brings up the time that we had a bench out in front of one of our houses for homeless people to sit on (this bench has now been gone for three or four years). But to that Debbie replies, "But, Peter, we got rid of the bench because you guys are our neighbors and we care about you, too." They were plain words, but all of a sudden I understood who my neighbors are. They

are Peter as well as the addicts on the corner.

The "Jesus Cop," as he is now referred to amongst Sojourners, brought up the "not in my back yard" syndrome and the issue of displacement. He told us about how, if the problems are moved out of our block, they would only pop up again five blocks away where they would become that neighborhood's trouble.

By the end of the meeting even Peter was admitting that he would put up with an annoying barking dog if it meant that he would be loving his neighbor. Ironically, Peter and the officer were the ones who spoke the name of Jesus the most. My vision had been changed into perhaps what has been Sojourners' vision all along: That we love *all* our neighbors, and in doing, that we create an environment in which God can work.

Here is a selection from Judy Alexander's creative writing ESL students at Christ College in Taiwan.

If Love

If love is around you
that will be mine

If love is around me
that will be yours

If love is around us
that will be God's
definitely

---Iris Huang

Lessons From an Encounter with Nazi Skinheads

Bill Newhouse
Plow Creek Fellowship

Note: Bill journeyed from being homeless at 14, to being a social activist, to being a Christian, to moving to Plow Creek two years ago with his wife, Kate. Recently Bill applied to go on a Christian Peace-maker Team delegation. Here's an excerpt from his application.

In 1995, after spending a good deal of time living at the 'Warner Creek' road-blockade (a logging-road blockade in the Cascade Mountain Range), I found my way to Eugene, Oregon. I had passed through Eugene the previous summer traveling with a circus group called, "The Nomadic Festival." We performed at a collective anarchist tea house / venue / lending-library called Icky's Teahouse. I remembered how much I enjoyed Icky's during my brief visit, so when I went back to Eugene, I went straight there.

I eventually joined the collective and started volunteering and living there. One night I was on shift during a punk show, and a few Nazi skinheads were out in the front parking lot setting fire to a garbage can. I went out and asked them to stop, since the police were looking for any excuse to shut the place down. They then spit on me, and I made the mistake of smiling and asking them to leave the property. The anarchist community has had a long history of conflict with the neo-Nazi movement, and my approach with them in the parking lot was subtly smug on my behalf (error #1).

Later that night they came back and said that they were sorry and that they wanted to take me out for a beer to make up for it. I told them that I did not drink, and they insisted that I at least join them for a walk around the block so we could "talk about ways to reduce the ongoing tensions felt between the anarchists

and skins". They were making eye-contact the entire time, and I actually perceived some notions of sincerity on their behalf. The optimist in me could hardly turn down a chance at making some kind of progress with this group. So, off I went with them. (error #2).

As soon as we turned the first corner out of view of the teahouse and into a darker area, I was hit on my head from behind by something very hard which nearly knocked me unconscious. The next thing I can recall is being on the ground curled up in a fetal position, hands over head while being kicked over and over again by steel-toed boots all over my body, head, and face. The quick thought entered my mind that I might be killed.

A friend of mine named Pepeh back at the teahouse had noticed me walking off with the skinheads and had enough sense (unlike myself at that time in my life) to follow behind slowly. By the time he got around the corner the beating, or "boot-party" as skinheads call it, had been going on for 45 seconds to a minute.

Like a gift from God, I heard the voice of my friend yelling, "Stop it guys please stop!" This provided a distraction and brief window of opportunity long enough for me to jump up like a flash of electricity, and run like a man whose life depended on it. That is FAST. Once I got going, I knew that they would never catch me in those big boots.

I suffered a broken jaw, a broken nose, two broken ribs, a concussion, severe bruises on my abdomen, and an assortment of lumps and bruises on my head and face. If this dear comrade had not stopped them, I might have been killed that night. Pepeh told me later that he had to run away too.

This event produced a few beautiful outcomes and one priceless piece of wisdom.

The beauty: As a direct and immediate result of this attack, the local community banded together to con-

front this problem. The ripple effect is that this brought some important people and groups together who previously were at odds with each other at a time in the neighborhood's development when it was crucial for these very people and groups to work together (this neighborhood was facing a gentrification program). The attack was serious enough that these people and groups instantly felt a common urgency to work together. By doing so it provided an instant relationship rooted in a common moral impulse, where before there was none. The issue itself was confronted by the community in a very direct, effective yet non-violent manner that did not involve the police.

Three of the skinheads left town. The leader of this group repented in front of a neighborhood meeting (which took place in the park, not the town hall). While I was healing, his girlfriend brought me flowers. He met with me personally and apologized while holding my hand. Later he denounced the tenants of ultra-violence and became an active volunteer at Icky's Teahouse. I believe that he had found the sense of belonging in which he may have been looking for in his previous endeavors.

Continued, next page.



Rejoicing at the Birth of Prophetic Communities

The wisdom: I learned that I could have prevented the entire situation; not just by refusing to walk off with them, but more importantly by communicating differently in the first place.

The troubled spirit which is attracted to any ultra-violent philosophy is a spirit that is incredibly sensitive to being mocked or not "taken seriously." I learned that it is most unproductive and potentially life-threatening to communicate with a

person who is ensnared by fear in a manner which may be perceived as smug, or even remotely condescending.

Even more relevant, it is how one truly views a person that influences how one communicates to a person. One's true view of a person will be perceived by said person on a base awareness level despite one's attempt to cover up true feelings with words. This can influence a person's response, which paints the tone of

any following discourse. In turn this can shape the course of events and the end result of the exchange in a profound way. Which is why "loving our enemy" can be the most effective way of neutralizing the very charge that defines one as an "enemy" in the first place. This lesson proved hard to learn, but it has stuck, and I have not forgotten it, though I relearn it in less extreme ways from time to time.



This beautiful garden managed by Erin Kindy is an addition to the Plow Creek farm operation in 2006. It helped to fill the Reba Place CSA orders. Each week, someone from Reba comes in a truck to pick up their orders. It has been good and fun to have this time to connect with people from Reba and to have this extra sales outlet for the farm. It is also good to get some locally grown produce directly to the consumer. In the house on the right live the Davis family, the Foxvogs, and the Fites.

Luz Divina

Luz Divina
Que me ilumina
Cuando ando
En la profunda obscuridad

Luz que abre mis ojos
Y me hace ver
Lo mas hermoso
En mi diario caminar.

Luz que quema mi alma,
Mi Corazon y mi mente,
Y me hace meditar
Que no soy nadie en este
Mundo, sino solo un alfiler
En medio de un pajar.

Esa luz eres tu Jesus
Sin ti no puedo vivir
Quita la venda de mis ojos
Para que yo pueda caminar
Y en tus brazos encontrar
Amor, Consuelo y paz.

Light Divine
That shines on me
When I walk
In the deepest darkness

Light that opens my eyes
And gives me sight
The most beautiful thing
In my walk

Light that calms my soul,
My heart and my mind,
And causes me to realize
That I am nothing in this
World, nothing more than a needle
Lost in a haystack.

You are this light, Jesus.
Without you I could not live.
Take the blindfold off my eyes
So that I might walk
And in your arms encounter
Love, consolation and peace.

Lizbeth Guatemala
Church of the Sojourners

Koinonia Returns to Community

(A Letter from Ann Karp)

Dear David,

You may be interested to know that Koinonia has returned to the community model of organization. We knew we had to move back toward community for both spiritual and financial reasons. It simply cost too much to maintain a traditional payroll. And the Koinonia spirit has just not fit into the corporate structure over time. A visioning team was established to figure out how we'd make the change. It's not exactly like it was in 1942, or 1968, but rather our own 2006 version of living the way of Jesus.



There are about twenty-three of us here now, plus interns, visitors and groups coming in and out. We have gone through a year-long process of discernment and growth which concluded in May with the selection of nine "stewards"—that is, those of us with the most history and dedication to the community, who will take responsibility and tend to the long-range vision of Koinonia. Others who have not been here as long can study, grow, discern, continue to serve and eventually become stewards as well, if the match is good for the individual and the community. People seeking to become involved with Koinonia usually follow one of two paths. Most non-locals begin with a community internship, then proceed to deeper levels of involvement. Our neighbors generally show their interest through involvement in Koinonia activities like product season work and various ministries.

Many people ask about the "diversity" of our community, given our historical involvement with civil rights and integration. Our community is about 1/3 black and 2/3 white; three of the nine stewards are African-American; and we're also diverse geographically, educationally, generationally, and in many other ways. We still have non-profit status and a board of directors, but the number of Koinonia members on our 12-member board has increased from 2 to 5. We also hope to ask more people from faith communities to join the board—people who understand why we choose to live this way. We no longer have "staff" and "volunteers"—we are all community members.

As for community life, we still share the noon meal every weekday, plus potluck on Sundays. We have group devotions each weekday. We take turns leading them, sharing a reading, a reflection, a verse or a joke, and mostly they are very ecumenical. Our full chapel service is Wednesday mornings, leaning toward a African Methodist Episcopalian format because Norris Harris, our chaplain/farmer, is an AME preacher. On weekends people attend their home churches in the area—this tradition, plus involvement in local groups like theater, the Ministerial Association, and other service organizations, connects us to the wider community.

Our ministries currently are the Heart to Heart home repair ministry, our ever-present ministry of hospitality, education, and the activities at the outreach center: the elders' group, Circle of Friends, the youth summer camp and after-school space, plus helping out with projects of our sister and daughter organizations and in our wider community. We continue to have weekly classes, which are open to the public, studying Clarence Jordan's teachings, Christian discipleship, and world issues. Many of us have "spiritual companions" with whom we meet weekly or every few weeks, to share the journey, listen, and ask good questions.

What we would love the most is to welcome more people, families and groups to visit us and join in our life of work, prayer, study, service and play. We are always especially looking for folks to join in all aspects of the work of our small pecan business, as well as in our Heart to Heart home repair ministry. We also have a three month intern program, and have enjoyed welcoming people of all ages who want a deeper experience of Koinonia. If friends are interested, refer them to www.koinoniapartners.org.

I am really interested to see what will evolve here in the next few years. I hope we keep listening to the Spirit. I trust that we will.

In peace,

Ann Karp, Koinonia Farm