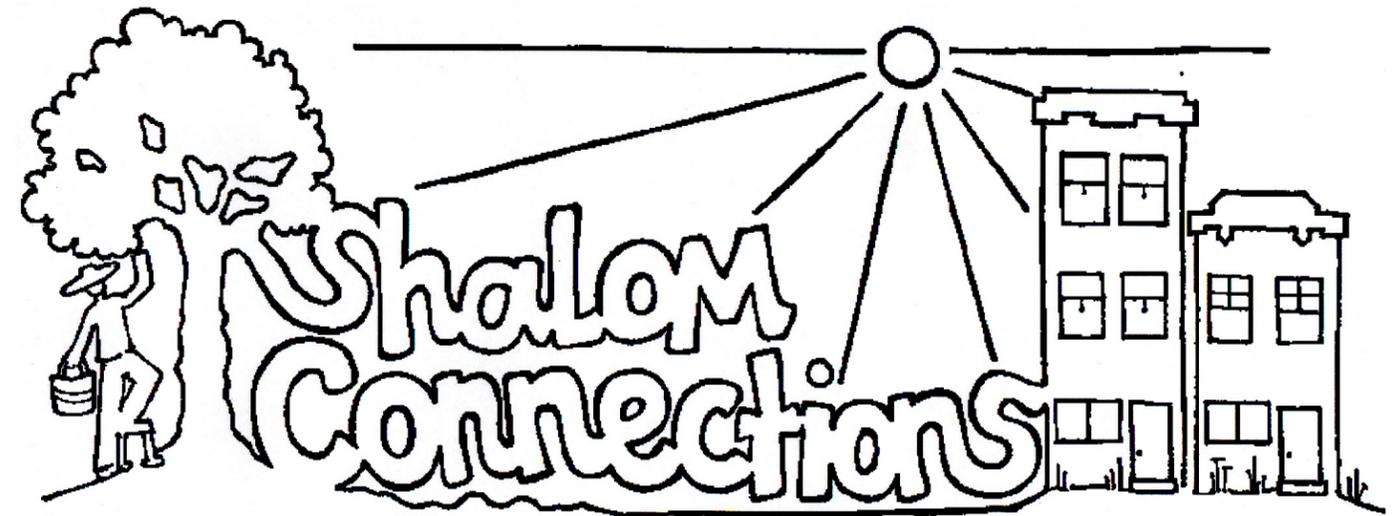


PAPA Fest 2006: People Against Poverty and Apathy

PAPA Fest 2006 is a convergence of communities and movements planned for June 23-25 of 2006 in the hills of East Tennessee. Morning sessions will be geared toward teaching, bible studies, and panel discussions, pondering things like community, theology, and peacemaking. In the afternoons, we will have workshops and "how to" sessions where folks can explore anything from knitting and bike repair to drumming and massage. In the evenings we will have inspiring music, circus festivities, and storytelling.

This is an event sponsored by the participants and will draw together people from the Community of Communities and new monasticism, the Christian Community Development Association, Emergent, Jesus Radicals, Shalom Mission Communities, the Relational Tithe, Ekklesia Project and who knows who else. It is being talked about as a mega-Family Reunion of sorts.

PAPA festival is "fee-free," but advanced registration is required. If you are interested in coming, Reba is setting up a caravan of folks from whom this would be the simplest and cheapest form of transportation. Contact David Janzen (dhjanzen2@juno.com) in regards to the caravan from Reba and The Simple Way or www.papafestival.com for further information on the festival. □



A Quarterly Newsletter of Shalom Mission communities

Shalomconnections.org

Volume X

Spring 2006

Number 1

One Anothering

**“. . . One Another”--
Privilege, Commandment,
and Power for Common
Witness**

An editorial by David Janzen

Where is the “One Another” Life? We are surprised by a persistent group of young people from area colleges who not only keep visiting Reba Sunday worship and Monday Night Fellowship potlucks, but who claim this as “our community.” These young people have read the Gospels and are getting excited about the life of Jesus with his disciples. For years they and their families have been “going to church,” often commuting for ninety minutes of highly-orchestrated theologically-correct user-friendly Sunday worship. Yet where, they ask, is the shared life that encourages them to practice all the “one another” exhortations of the New Testament church?



Julia and Greg admire the Bowling's baby at the Monday night potluck

With room mates, on the job, in the classroom, hanging-out with friends—these young people try to give themselves in love to others like Jesus commanded. But they are frustrated. The “others” keep thinking like individuals without any idea that this gesture is an effort to build bonds of “one anotherhood.” These young adults fear that no enduring fellowship will remain once they and their friends scatter from college.

And they wonder—can a professional salary ever afford all it will take to fill their hunger for belonging in a world of free-floating individualists?

“One Anothering” Continued on next page

“One Anothering” continued

Finding a spiritual family they can love and be faithful to is a more compelling quest than all the career opportunities the world dangles before them.

The theme of this Shalom Connections Newsletter is found in all the passages of the New Testament that exhort us to “. . . one another.” Each Christian community has been given a unique context of relationships where the love of Jesus becomes real as we share it with one another. Even when we live this calling poorly the savor of the messianic feast wafts out and awakens a hunger for more that cannot be denied.

Discerning the pattern of Jesus’ new commandment:

“Love one another. . . . Serve one another. . . . Wash one another’s feet. . . .” I count at least fifty-two “one another” passages in the New Testament—seven attributed to Jesus and the rest found in apostolic letters to the churches.

Some of these exhortations are repeated in a variety of forms, especially “Love one another” (at least fourteen times) and “Greet one another with a holy kiss” (four times.) About thirty-four of these sayings are unique—depending on how fine is your interpretive comb.

Jesus calls his disciples to “be at peace with one another” and to

“love one another.” After washing their feet, Jesus urges, “you also ought to wash one another’s feet.” Then, summarizing all his previous commandments he says this, “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, so you should love one another.” (John 13:34)

What is “new” about Jesus’ new commandment? He had by now given his followers scores of ethical sayings including the-one-to-remember-if-you-forget-everything-else: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” This “golden rule” contains within it a standard by which all laws can be judged for fairness—namely,



equal regard. It is already a step up from “looking out for number one” that characterizes cowboy capitalism and current U. S. foreign policy.

But Jesus’ new commandment goes beyond the golden rule in two ways: 1) Jesus’ self-sacrificing love and servanthood become our standard, and 2) this “one anotherness” creates a network of mutually accountable relationships, a community.

In Paul’s letters to the churches these “one another” exhortations are easy to find because they usually are found in the same places—in the middle and at the end. His letters take on a familiar form.

a) Beginning with salutations, they remind the reader (and hearers) of Paul’s calling, “a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ,” and of the church’s calling, “to belong to Jesus Christ.”

“One Anothering” cont. on next page

One Another

- Mk 9.50 be at peace with one another
- Jn 13.14 you . . . ought to wash one another’s feet
- 13.34 A new commandment . . . love one . . .
- 13.34 that you also love one another
- 13.35 if you have love one for another
- 15.12 love one another as I have loved you
- 15.17 This I command you, to love one . . .
- Rom 12.5 you are . . . individually members one . . .
- 12.10 love one another with mutual affection
- 12.16 Live in harmony with one another
- 13.8 Owe no one anything except to love . . .
- 14.13 no more pass judgment on one another
- 15.5 to live in such harmony with one . . .
- 15.7 Welcome one another, therefore
- 16.16 Greet one another with a holy kiss
- 1 Cor 11.33 wait for one another
- 12.25 have the same care for one another
- 16.20 Greet one another with a holy kiss
- 2 Cor 13.12 Greet one another with a holy kiss
- Gal 5.13 through love be servants of one . . .
- 6.2 Bear one another’s burdens
- Eph 4.2 with patience, forbearing one another
- 4.25 for we are members one of another
- 4.32 be kind to one another, tenderhearted forgiving one another as God in Christ has forgiven you.
- 5.19 addressing one another in psalms
- 5.21 Be subject to one another out of . . .
- Col 3.9 Do not lie to one another
- 3.16 teach and admonish one another
- 3.19 forbearing one another and . . .
- 1 Th 3.12 abound in love to one another
- 4.18 comfort one another with these words
- 5.11 build up one another
- 5.15 always seek to do good to one another
- 2 Th 1.3 love of every one of you for one . . .
- Heb 3.13 exhort one another every day
- 10.24 stir up one another to love and good . . .
- Jas 4.11 Do not speak evil against one another
- 5.9 Do not grumble . . . against one another
- 5.16 confess your sins to one another . . .
- 1 Pet 1.22 love one another earnestly . . .
- 4.8 hold unfailing your love for one . . .
- 4.9 Practice hospitality . . . to one another
- 4.10 serve one another with whatever gift with humility toward one another
- 5.5 Greet one another with the kiss of love
- 5.14 we have fellowship with one another
- 1 Jn 1.7 that we should love one another
- 3.11 Beloved, let us love one another
- 4.7 we also ought to love one another
- 4.12 if we love one another, God abides in . . .
- 2 Jn 1.5 commandment . . . that we love one another



helps Nancy and Barbara), yet we have little idea of how to help each other love and minister to neighbors in multiple, scattered communities. We have affirmed our relationship as neighbors with the people of Valle Nuevo, yet we still have not found the resources in time or money to get more than a small handful of us to visit the community there in El Salvador.

Loving our neighbors. Jesus said that it was practically one and the same as loving God. Paul wrote that it was the sum of the whole law (Galatians 5.14). James called it the royal law (James 2.8). John equated it with passing from death to life (1 John 3.14). Our annual theme is actually our prayer, for we realize that our human ingenuity is incapable of building God’s great economy of shalom. We are asking God this year to help us learn better how to be with our neighbors, how to love our neighbors. Our experience is that taking our focus off of our own problems, turning our efforts away from problem solving, and concentrating our desire on the calling that Jesus has given, is the way to clarity and wholeness.

So far, in this Year with our Neighbor, here are some of the things we are experiencing:

* Alan and Laura suffered a miscarriage. Last newsletter we shared about the joy of their pregnancy; now we have had the gift of grieving together.

* Joe’s father died in January; Joe and Nancy are now preparing for his mother to move into their house in early summer.

* As always, jobs are an issue. Robyn is still looking. J.B.’s discernment group has agreed that a change is probably in order for him. Kristi, who is currently in Haiti on a volunteer consult, is looking at a couple of different midwifery possibilities. David Heddy has joined the Habitat for Humanity Interna-

tional crew in Waco. Luis is a step or two closer to finishing his dissertation (that is not a job issue, but it seemed to fit in this category).

* We had a wonderful celebration send-off in January for Maria and Josh, who finished their year internship at the farm, and are starting a three-year term with MCC in Honduras, and for Anali who is studying in Spain for a semester.

* The women had a great retreat together, ³Come, Sit, and Listen.² They did exactly that, enjoying well-deserved time away, some welcomed silence, and rich sharing with one another.

* We just hosted the Mid-Texas Mennonite Hispanic Women’s Conference and are preparing to host the youth from Jubilee Partners. This spring the World Hunger Farm will be hosting both the Mid-Texas Mennonite Family Camp and then a few weeks later the Mid-Texas Children’s camp.

* Our Every Church a Peace Church meeting with Don Mosley in January has helped kick-off a new monthly peace meeting that is being attended by representatives from six different Waco churches.

* Cristina is leading and Carmen is hosting in her house a new weekly Bible study for Spanish-speaking neighbors.

We will keep you posted on where we are led. □

P.C. News continued from page 4

Lord is enriching our flavor for the new internship in communal living that Rick Reha and Erin Kindy are leading. We’ve had our first application, a family from Missouri.

Speaking of Erin Kindy, she’s currently in Kenora, Ontario, Canada, for a month with Christian Peacemaker Teams. When she returns she will join the Plow Creek farm team, raising a variety of new vegetables for the new Community Supported Agriculture (CSA). Kevin Behrens, our farm marketer, has been in conversation with folks from Reba Place Fellowship and a fellow in the western suburbs, making plans to provide fruits and vegetables to two Chicago metro areas.

Recently Andy Fitz was a winner in a photo contest and had a photo published in *Popular Photography and Imaging*. He is the photo editor of the Knox College student newspaper and did a photography internship with our local paper, the *Bureau County Republican* during December.

Also in December Charissa Graham had the starring role as Helen Keller in her school’s production of *Helen Keller*. □



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Hope Fellowship News

Nancy Gatlin
Hope Fellowship

If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation. 1 Corinthians 5:17-18

We have set our theme for 2006 as a Year With Our Neighbor. An annual theme is always a step in faith for us at Hope Fellowship.

Our life together has a miraculous origin. The faith of Jesus, which is our foundation, percolates up, is mixed and blended into our individual lives by the swirling, eddying gusts of the Spirit, and, *voilà!*, we have this new creation we call the body of Christ. On a daily and monthly basis, though, our common life begins to show some stress cracks. Some people pull one way, others push another. We find ourselves mired in conundrums of competing demands, important needs, shortages of resources, and the ubiquitous presence of sin in our lives. Eventually realizing that we have lost our orientation and a step in any direction would be the wrong direction, we stop and listen. And then when we hear the Spirit, we discover that what seemed like five or six distinct issues are really, from a divine perspective, one.

For some time we have struggled with the issue of growth. It's not unwelcome, and we believe that the people who have come our way have been led by God. We took one step this last year in creating cell groups where the joy and work of pastoring, discernment, support-

ing, and discipleship can be more practically experienced and undertaken. We have just taken another step, creating a church council, composed of representatives from each of the cell groups, the pastoral team, and other church-wide leaders, to serve as a distinct group for administration and church leadership. Our size and our diversity, though, still present challenges to us.

We are grateful for the gift of being bilingual, yet we ever are aware that we are lopsidedly bilingual. We are located and participate in a culture

that places a greater burden of accommodation on those of us who have come from Latin American families and societies. Our meeting-house is in a lower-income, highly diverse neighborhood, and we recognize that there are significant dividing walls of ethnicity, economics, and education that have yet to be broken down. We understand that we are no longer just a neighborhood church-community (Larry Egly gets the long-distance award, traveling 50 miles each way to join us for worship, cell group, and children's club in which he



Abba Sisoes said: Seek God,
and not where God lives.

Shalom Connections

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Laughing with one another at the Cana House during a Reba Monday Night Potluck

"One Another" continued

b) Paul, then, launches into a theological reflection on the mess humanity has made of the world and how God has been at work to redeem this mess, to bring about a new creation in which all things and all peoples have been reconciled to God through the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus, to whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen! Or something like that.

c) Then we reach a turning point often marked by the word "therefore." Who we already are in Christ informs and empowers how we will behave as the church. Being leads to doing, identity to action. "I appeal to you, therefore. . . . Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord." (Romans 12) Notice how the "one another's" embedded in the general exhortations gives all of them the character of mutuality. The word is not to isolated individuals but to persons in relationships in community.

d) Then Paul gives further pastoral instructions expressing his care for issues of disunity or misunderstanding within the local church.

Finally Paul concludes with e) warm personal greetings and f) a doxology.

The epistle to the church in Rome (chapter 16) singles out twenty-nine individuals and six groups for special mention along with the exhortation to "Greet one another with a holy kiss." This greeting comes not just from Paul, but from eight of his co-workers as well. In other words, the greetings from Paul and his friends are recycled and multiplied personally as the Christians in Rome all greet one another. So, in our day, when we hug and pass the "peace of Christ," we are passing on the "holy kiss" that Jesus himself began and that has come down to us by "apostolic succession."

In Jesus and the epistles of Paul, Peter and John we find the same pattern: Jesus addresses his friends saying, "Love one another as I have loved you." Paul and the other apostles likewise say, "As God has loved us in Christ, so we urge you to love one another."

Hearing ourselves addressed as "One another" calls into being a local ethical community: When the letters to the churches were read aloud in Rome, Corinth, Ephesus or Thessalonica with admonitions to "honor one another. . . . bear one another's burdens comfort one another stir up one another to love and good deeds," etc., the hearers become one body as they were addressed by the same Word.

"One Anothering" cont. on next page

“One Another” Continued from page 3

Hearing the Word together shapes not just common practices and expectations but it creates a people. We cease to live for ourselves as if we were individuals constantly evaluating our options. Before God’s Word we discover our place already prepared in a covenant, in a bond of mutuality initiated by Jesus and completed in the obedience of our life together.

Spiritual renewal in the church has power to gather a people. When we are touched by the Spirit, powerful longings are awakened for a more intense and gathered life with “one another,” as in Acts 2. Spiritual awakening can result in a growing love, frequent meetings and persons moving together as neighbors in intentional community. Sometimes tensions appear at this point between those who want to be done with church at 12:00 noon on Sunday, and those who feel called to a common life with thick relationships of mutual service and radical engagement with the poor.

Debates break out between those who feel included and those who do not. Are these “one another” commandments that beg for a life together meant for every church member or is this a special calling for the few to a more religious or consecrated life? For the sake of peace, is intentional community to be toned down or abandoned? Should those called to more community move elsewhere to reduce the tension? The Catholic church used to claim possession of a “treasury of merit” accumulated by the super-deeds of the saints by which ordinary sinful Christians could get a boost into heaven. Rejecting two-tiered Christianity, the Protestant Reformation also did away with religious orders and the support they offered for radical obedience to Jesus.

The New Testament leaves no room for a two-tiered Christianity. The

“One Another” continued on page 13

Plow Creek News

Rich Foss
Plow Creek Fellowship

Last October’s visitation stirred the pot of our life at Plow Creek. Greg Clark of Reba Place Fellowship and Lois Hochstetler of the Illinois Mennonite Conference spent a weekend with us helping us evaluate Plow Creek Mennonite Church and Plow Creek Fellowship life.

Actually the pot was quite stirred up even before Greg and Lois arrived, but they added to the flavor of life at Plow Creek by suggesting that the PCMC and PCF have separate leadership.

Since 1995 when we made PCMC and PCF two distinct organizations, our elders have served as the leadership team of both organizations. Currently that’s Louise Stahnke, Neil Horning and me.

After five days in the hospital with a bout of pneumonia at the end of No-

vember, I spent the month of December recovering. By the end of the month, after reflecting and praying about my life, health, workload, and Greg and Lois’s recommendation, I felt led to resign as PCMC elder effective June 30 in order to focus on being a PCF elder and my work with Evergreen Leaders.

Neil Horning, in the interim, is chairing elders meetings and PCMC meetings. Louise Stahnke, who has been reflecting on her gifts, is sensing that they best fit with continuing as a PCMC elder. In the mean time, some folks think separate leadership for the two groups is a good thing while others are dubious. Like a simmering stew the conversations continue. It’s interesting times at Plow Creek.

The pot has been stirring for a year in PCF. Last fall Lynn Reha and the Lord volunteered Lynn to guide PCF through retreats and meetings to assess the life of the Fellowship and see how we can change for the better.

The wonderful thing about the stirring pot at Plow Creek is that the

P.C. News continued on page 15



Erin Kindy in Colombia

“One Another” continued from page 4

church members in Corinth are addressed with the same call as were Jesus’ apostles. And yet the tension seems perennial—not something that can be resolved by structures or theologies. The only way through is in grace and humble relationships that focus on our own failings and call to obedience rather than on judgment of others.

At Reba, for the past twenty-five years, we have had an intentional community in the middle of a larger congregation. The differences are real, but the difference in category is not a difference in holiness. Intentional community is a support for goodly living, but not a guarantee of godliness.

My personal opinion on this matter is that the opportunity to live these “one another” words of the New Testament in the context of intentional community is many things at the same time: it is a privilege to be received with gratitude and humility, a sign of Jesus’ presence with enabling power, a commandment to be performed, a witness to the world that the kingdom of God is here and real, and an invitation to all that is good news.

Therefore . . . let us love, wash feet, live in harmony with, pass no judgment on, welcome, wait for, be servants of, bear burdens, forbear, forgive, submit to, admonish and teach, not lie to, comfort, build up, seek the good of, daily exhort, stir up to love and good deeds, speak no evil of, grumble not about, confess sins to, pray for, practice hospitality with, serve, have fellowship with, and (finally) greet one another with a holy kiss (whew). We do so because of Jesus, in the power of Jesus, and in the manner of Jesus. This “one another” is the body of Christ, the incarnation of God in the world, the inspired work of the Holy Spirit, the holy city come down from heaven, the purpose for which we have been given life and called to-

gether, an invitation to the world, a place of about which we can sometimes say, “Come and see.” □

Family Reunion in Camden

Melissa DeLong
Camden Community Houses

To the beloved who are living the church both near and far, May the peace of Christ be with you.

As many of us gathered in Philly and Camden this last weekend, we were energized by the presence of each other and the Spirit. For those who were unable to come, our gathering started out, as is the tradition, with a night of celebration at Atonement Lutheran Church in Philly. Folks from the Philly area gathered to share a meal and our lives with one another.

This year there was a shift in location for the rest of the gathering. On Saturday and Sunday we gathered at Fellowship House in Camden, a faith-based community center, located right next door to the Camden

House. Throughout the weekend we were led in worship by Psalters and Jessie from the Rutba House. In the morning, Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove started the day with a Biblical reflection regarding God creating, forming and sustaining a people group. Afterward, we talked about the PAPA (People Against Poverty and Apathy) Festival—a summer gathering in the hills of Tennessee June 22-25th to celebrate and converge various communities and movements.

In the afternoon, we split into smaller groups to discuss topics such as spiritual formation, marriage and family, and alternative economics. Discussion of PAPA Fest continued as we divided the planning work into “committees”. It was fun to see how God pieces our gifts and interests together to cover all the areas of work.

After a scrumptious dinner and clean-up we gathered to pray and worship. Sunday, we had a closing reflection and prayer time before attending Mass at Sacred Heart Church across the street.

It was such a joy to gather together and celebrate the various work God is doing around and through us. May our hearts continue to carry the strength and courage we received from this convergence. □



With all their being The Psalters sing at the Family Reunion

“Happens Amongst You” cont. from pg 8

Bob realized that he needed to reach out to his community members in a way he had not before. Hilda Carper persuaded Bob to send out a request for fellowship members to think of ways that they could be with Bob. Bob stated that “this is something I had wanted to do for a long time, but I didn’t have the initiative. I’m really happy that Hilda got me to send out the request.”

Hilda and Bob began to journal together in a unique way. Hilda is Bob’s scribe. Bob tells Hilda the things he is thankful for and then they go through the struggles as Hilda jots Bob’s thoughts down. “We start by identifying the good things because the difficulties are right in front of our face.” Hilda continued, “As we were journaling I realized I had the same problems as Bob, so now we go back and forth.” This is the “one anothering” of sharing burdens. It encourages self-reflection and honest relationships. If we see the pain in our brothers and sisters and then come to them openly to share in their grief, we have to struggle with their questions. In struggling through these questions with them, we see our own ineptitude and hidden questions. God has now given us each other as a resource to explore and to come to before Him in humility. When I asked how the journaling has been for Bob he first said, “it’s been useful”. Then, a moment later he looked over and said, “It’s been amazing.” Hilda confidently agreed.

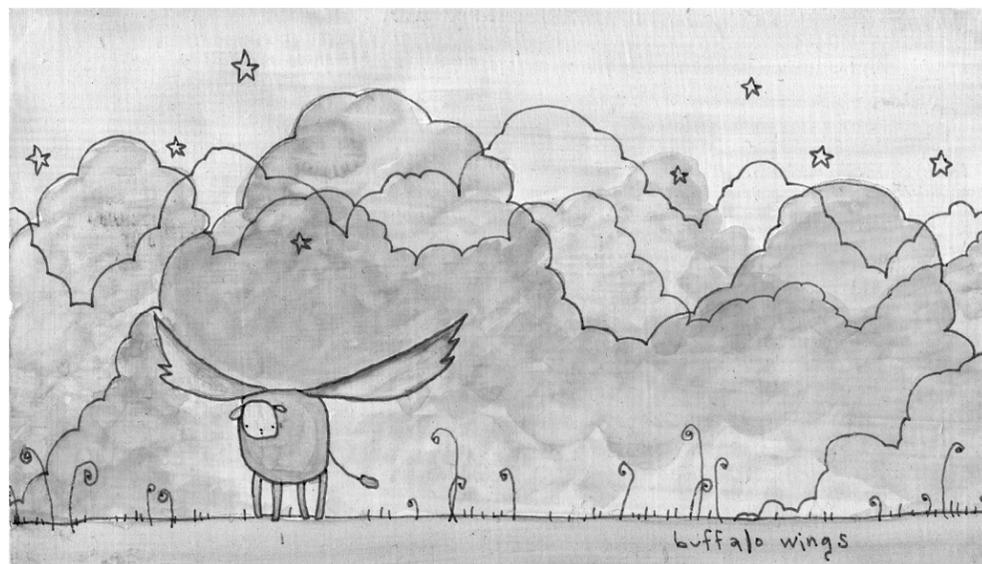
The rest of the community is now jumping in with books that they want to read and movies they want to watch with him, with jokes they want to share, and life they want to enjoy together. Hilda and Bob have started a humor file to be filled with cartoons, funny stories and jokes. The point is to fill Bob’s, and our life with humor that shakes the reality of limitations. It’s just “good medicine for the soul.”

A few dedicated people share their life with Bob day and day out- to those we say “God Blesses you.” □

Koinonia Farm’s School of the Americas Update

Snippets from the Koinonia website

A cause of peace that kept Koinonia busy recently was the annual vigil held at Fort Benning in Columbus, Georgia. Every year, on the Sunday before Thanksgiving, tens of thousands of peacemakers gather at the gates of WHINSEC (Western Hemispheric Institute of Security Cooperation, formerly known as the U.S. Army School of the Americas). They hold a vigil to protest that many SOA graduates from other parts of the world, especially Central and South America, go on to commit many human rights abuses. Participants in the vigil remember and call by name the many victims killed by alumni from the School of the Americas.



A piece of art from Chico Fajardo

Koinonia actually began this non-violent protest in June 1983, when several community members returned from service in El Salvador and Guatemala. Koinonians would travel weekly to stand outside the gates, light candles and pray silently. The cause was later picked up by Father Roy Bourgeois and has grown into a major movement encouraging change through education and non-violent civil disobedience.

This year, Koinonia welcomed nearly 200 people into our home who planned to attend the prayer vigil at the School of the Americas. Folks slept in the museum, library, outreach center, various houses, even in tents out in the orchards. We hosted groups from Berea College (KY), Mennonite Church of Eastern Canada, Fellowship of Reconciliation Youth Task Force, American University (DC), University of Michigan, Oberlin College (OH), Campus Ministries of Creighton University (NE), Concerned Patriots of Tallahassee FL, the John Paul Newman Center of the University of Chicago, St Aquinas College, and more. The morning of the event, Koinonians Ellie Castle and Jo Knox served a warm breakfast for those headed to Fort Benning. □

Church of the Sojourners News

*Zoe Mullery
Church of the Sojourners*

As I write this, Hannah is bringing up the last load of laundry after our annual “Nature and Purpose of the Church” mega-weekend hosting the Mission Year Oakland teams. (Mission Year, if you don’t already know, is a one-year mission and service program with the motto “Love God/Love People/Nothing Else Matters” and is where Matt Creeger is serving this year in Chicago... see missionyear.org). This year we hosted 22 people amidst 30 Sojourners for a weekend of lectures, discussions, meals, prayers, and hang-out time (including an after-dark dumpster-dive expedition to Sloat Nursery where a few divers rescued some condemned herbs and flowers from becoming compost). Talks included such titles as *Get Your Own Order of Fries* and *Church as Family*; we had some new angles on topics this year as well as some tried and true standbys such as *The One Others*—a



The family reunion outside in Camden, New Jersey

study on all the various exhortations to selfgiving love in scripture which can be found by doing a Bible word search on the words “one another.” Last week, we did a similar version of the same weekend of talks, with 8 people—4 of whom came down from Lamoille, Nevada, with Kelly Zazvorka from the Presbyterian church where our own Dan Z. is now the pastor. Both Dan and Kelly have been encouraging their congregation to deepen their sense of

church as a living organism of the body of Christ. (They are even now preparing their home to share with a woman recently widowed; my understanding is that home-sharing amongst people not related to each other is a rather uncommon phenomenon in the state of Nevada...)

Though there is a big outlay of energy to put these weekends together, it always feels that we receive much encouragement from those who come, and we are always sparked by the good questions and genuine interest in Christian community and lived discipleship. As is often the case, our kids were among our best ambassadors of hospitality, consistent in their delight in meeting new people.

Katie Piche and I traveled to Winnipeg in January to join the rest of the SMC crew for our annual leaders meeting, hosted by Grain of Wheat. The discussions with GoW folks, as they try to discern what kind of relationship they want to have with SMC, were rich and full of interesting issues and perspectives. Grain of Wheat’s long history of shared life and interest in economic justice, food justice and other social issues enriched many conversations; the



Josh & Kelly Otto and IvaJo & John Pederson from Sojo’s in Uganda with a friend

Sojos continued on next page



More of the Sojos in Uganda

Sojos continued from page 5

Saturday night party and talent show with its multi-generational crowd and impressive lineup of poets, musicians, and dramatic readers revealed a church family that knows how to genuinely enjoy each other. A bonus highlight was getting to see Kendra Goertzen, who did a Summer Sojourn here in something like 1998.

Also in January, Jon and IvaJo O. Pedersen traveled to Uganda to visit IvaJo's aunt and uncle (Tim Otto's parents) Dick and Ivy Otto, who have been missionaries there for three decades or so and are retiring this year. There they were able to meet first hand many of the Ugandans who have been discipled, saved, or otherwise blessed by Dick and Ivy's lifetime of ministry to the Ugandan people. They also spent a week working on the Kampala Baptist Church.

Jadie Mollier moved in to the Monastery household on Valentine's Day. Coming to us from Church of the Servant King in Eugene, Jadie grew up in Christian community and is trying out a different flavor of that here in San Francisco.

Edith celebrates her 60th birthday on February 28. We plan to festivate with a backyard gardening party—that means a party where you pull weeds, dig holes, and plant flowers—followed by a fine-china high tea in our overalls. In true Edith

fashion, we had to move the time of the party so she wouldn't miss the next appointment for her new hospice assignment. The elderly Chinese lady for whom she had been caring for nearly an entire year—since Edith's 59th birthday—died in early February.

Louise is excitedly making preparations for her daughter Yvonne's wedding in Belize in May. Teri will accompany her for the first week, and Anne-Marie will fly out for the second week, to share in the general merrymaking.

Tessa will be running the Boston Marathon on April 17 to raise money for Jalle United (jalleunited.org), an organization started by a group of Lost Boys from Sudan to raise money to help the situation there. Tessa's friend Michael Kuany helped create Jalle United and is passionate about finding ways to help the many who are suffering in Sudan. If you'd like to sponsor Tessa in the marathon, you can email her at tessajanerich@hotmail.com.

Tim Otto continues to thrive at Duke, as well as at Rutba House. His absence is felt here in many ways; it was very strange to put together a Nature and Purpose of the Church weekend without Tim, Mr. Nature and Purpose himself. I was gratified to read in his latest TimO Times update that he is keeping a Sabbath practice in the midst of all

the intensity of studies. He writes, "Here taking a Sabbath truly does seem to be an act of faith. Anytime a pack of Greek cards becomes a standard pocket item (along with wallet and keys), in case you get an idle 50 seconds while microwaving your lunch, you know you're busy. But the interaction between Sabbath and work is an interesting one. I seem to be able to work harder knowing that I will get a day of rest, and I seem to rest better knowing that I will work hard."

Tim's experiments in counter-intuitive Sabbath-keeping are timely as we recently completed a 5-week teaching time on "Entering God's Rest," led by Laura and myself; whether or not we managed to communicate it to anyone else, Laura and I got wildly engaged with the topic and its centrality to our life as disciples of Jesus. Moving from the seven days of creation, through the deliverance from slavery, the manna in the desert, the giving of the Sabbath commandment, into Jesus' easy yoke and instructions to not worry or be anxious, and his revealing of himself as the Bread of Heaven, we could only conclude that there is a state of permanent restfulness, easy yoke that Jesus is calling us to, and that we enter that state when we give ourselves over to complete trusting dependence in God.

That seems like a good place to stop. □



Reba Place News

Eric Lawrence
Reba Place Fellowship

This report of Reba Place Fellowship happenings is illuminated by the Family Reunion that took place in Philadelphia and Camden, New Jersey, from February 17-19. The Family Reunion is a coming-together of a smattering of North American communities, with one fellow from the Northumbria community in the U.K. They generally embrace the moniker, "The New Monasticism."

We celebrated our shared vision of life together and shared our lives together for a couple of beautiful days that were coordinated by the Camden Community Houses and The Simple Way.

I can say that these communities renewed my commitment to being church as intentional Christian community. They have certainly renewed my faith in one-anothering, the communal ethic that distinguishes the Christian life. So, be warned, a hearty optimism may pervade the news on which I report.

Of course, it's hard not to notice

God's spirit moving in our culture guiding people towards intentional "one anothering" within community. Signs of this are especially present here with the excitement and attendance of our Monday night seminar/potlucks, not to mention the recent surge in interest that church communities have in moving towards more fully committed lifestyles. Queries of Reba Fellowship concerning Christian community have increased markedly within the past couple months and various church representatives have even traveled here to seek guidance on how to fulfill the many visions God is giving them.

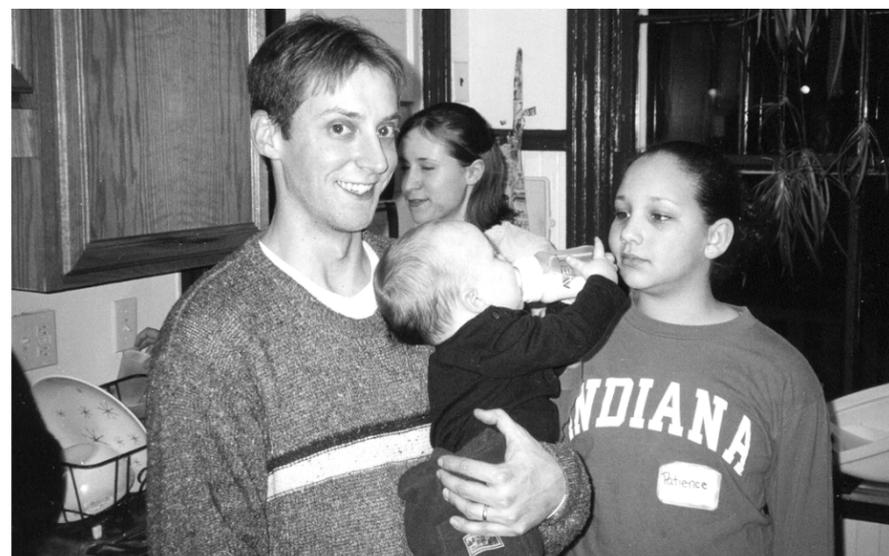
Our Monday night potluck is snowballing in interest and Reba is gratefully seeing this as a new era in the community's life, as well as in the culture at large. Therefore Chico Fajardo and David Janzen, who currently lead the seminars after the meal, have chosen to center our attention upon the book, *12 Marks of the New Monasticism*. We choose this prescient book because it discerns a spiritual movement that we desire to understand more fully. As some of our members say, "It's like the 70's again with all these young people aching for authentic relationships!" Each night focuses upon one of the marks with a lecture and discussion led by a community

member from the older generation complemented by a community member from the new generation. Attendance has been high even though Greg Clark's students are no longer obliged to come.

Along the same lines of community interest and growth, the Hopwood Christian Church in Milligan College, Tennessee, and Englewood Christian Church in Indianapolis have been searching out intentional community with us. Allan & Jeanne Howe and Grete & Aaron Scott will be leading a congregational retreat about moving towards intentional community with the Milligan Church in mid-March. It looks like Milligan's exploration is very similar to that of the Englewood Church, which recently sent representatives to meet with us and investigate communal life. Concerning how these congregations are moving towards community life, Allan Howe said "Historically this is the opposite of what Reba has done, but sociologically it's the same direction as where we want to go."

Our own community is growing with recent seekers: C.J. Wagener and Amy Ziefert, intentional neighbors from Milwaukee, who used to live at the Daystar community in the 60's and 70's; and Tim Baer and Joanna Wiebe from Canada, who have been strong contributors to the Cana Household. This is a sign that the older generation, too, wants to return to community.

But no matter how long a Christian community has been around, it still needs accountability from partners along the way. Therefore Nancy Gatlin, Rich Foss, and Mike Buren formed a visitation team to test Reba's health and help us see our own ailments and robustness that we insiders would otherwise be oblivious to. Our leaders, GHLAD, did quite a bit of preparation for this event and it proved to be very helpful and joyful for both the fellowship and our visitation team. Peace to you. □



Joe Bowling with his friend Patience and baby visiting at the Monday night potluck

SMC Leaders Retreat to Mid-Winter Winnipeg and Make Plans for 2006

David Janzen
Reba Place Fellowship

The weather in Winnipeg, January 13-16, was surprisingly mild and the welcome was unseasonably warm for the SMC leaders who arrived for a mid-winter retreat from San Francisco (Zoe Mullery and Katie Piche), Evanston (Joseph Marshak, Heather Clark, David Janzen), Chicago (Doug Selph), and Plow Creek (Plow Creek). Joe Gatlin, who planned to come from Waco had to stay home because of his father's sudden death. For most of the sessions we were joined by Grain of Wheat community leaders, Scott Gerbrandt, Irene Wiens, Paul Langgel, Beth Sawatsky, and Marcus Rempel. The joy that pervaded our meetings came from the shared experiences of following Jesus in community, where we discover despite the miles, that we are spiritually at

ease and at home with one another in a world so broken and in need of peace.

We reviewed the visions and struggles of our various communities and made plans for SMC events in the coming years. But even better than that, we ate soup and bread around lots of tables, laughed at improvisational songs and stories, visited various ministries, worshipped, and ate cinnamon rolls of historic proportions at the Tall Grass Bakery

We were together long enough to coin some insider jokes and metaphors—like on-the-spot fellowship that is “quick, deep and gone.” Finally, the mild winter obliged us with one beautiful snow the last morning before we said goodbye.

Oh, and we made a few important decisions together we think worth sharing:

No Camp Meeting in 2006: There will be no SMC camp meeting in 2006, but rather each of our communities will invite the others to send a few visitors to key events that are open to the whole SMC family. Because of the distances between our communities, we want to plan ahead and save up to bring all our members (or as many as possible) to an every-other-year



SMC delegation visits Salome's family and new house site in Valle Nuevo

gathering. But visits between our communities at any time are welcome. See the calendar below:

June 23-25, 2006, PAPA Fest: We also agreed to be “co-conspirators” (that translates as “sponsors” if your mother tongue is Bourgeoisie) of the PAPA Fest—a camp meeting hosted by The Simple Way and other communities of the Family Reunion, gathering in Eastern Tennessee. What, you might ask does the “PAPA” stand for? The first publicity draft was “People Against Poverty and Apathy,” but it could also mean “Pentecostal Anabaptist Punks Assembled,” or “Postmodern Angelic Psalters Amplified.” Apparently you can make up your own acronym and just come. But beware—you may discover that “PAPA” expresses just how close we can come to the One Jesus dared to call “Abba.”

SMC Leaders Conference Calls: April 22nd, 10am Central time, July 22nd, same time, October 21st, same time, too.

Valle Nuevo Trip March 11-20.

Plow Creek Harvest Festival Sept. 4th – friends and family come out for displays and games, pony cart rides, farm tours, talent show, recap of the year

Reba Place Fellowship invites all to barbeques and lazy days of hanging out at Emmanuel Lodge in Wisconsin on Memorial Day, 4th of July, and Labor Day

Ekklesia Project Conference July 17-19: Come to DePaul University in Chicago, but stay as a guest at Reba. The conference this year is on how art helps us imagine the coming kingdom of Jesus.

Yes, to a summer 2007 SMC Conference: SMC is planning a summer 2007 conference in Evanston IL in conjunction with Reba Place Fellowship's 50th Anniversary bash on the theme of “Jubilee.” Dates have not yet been set.

May the Shalom of Jesus be with you all year and wherever. □

“One Anothering” Happens Amongst You

Eric Lawrence
Reba Place Fellowship

Not long ago Bob Lembke, a long-time a Reba Fellowship member crippled with advanced muscular dystrophy received devastating news from the doctor; he would have to further limit the use of his arms.

Recently Bob noticed that his hands would quickly lose feeling and turn blue in the cold. Frustrated by the loss of feeling, he visited the doctor. Unfortunately the doctor's orders were to elevate his arms to heart level to encourage circulation. It was a 4” adjustment, but in Bob's case this is quite significant. “Those four inches change everything,” Bob said. “I can no longer sit comfortably or get close to anything.” But Bob is not unfamiliar with these changes. That doesn't make it less real, less painful, less frustrating, or even less confusing.

By the seventh grade it was starkly

clear to Bob and those around him that he had challenges keeping up with the others. He had a tough time running or even throwing a ball. Gym class was a particular struggle because it showcased his weakness. While the other children ran and did push-ups and played basketball, Bob would struggle with what the others could execute with ease. “I dreaded going to gym because I would get a lot of guff from the teacher and the kids would laugh at me.” Bob reflected. You may be saying to yourself, “Kids can be so cruel!” as if it is some sort of innate characteristic of children. But I doubt that to be true. They engage in that kind of behavior because of beliefs and stories they have inherited.

These stories are ubiquitous in our culture. One such story says that if you can't produce, if you're not productive, then it's perhaps better if you don't complain and compliantly move to the side. Furthermore, to demand that we take care of the weak is weak in itself and a detri-



ment to the entire society. Inevitably it will pull us further down until we are all weak, slavish people. Thus, managers are held up, because they know how to manipulate people in order to most efficiently produce the most goods and wealth.

Alongside our love for bureaucratic efficiency and managerial expertise we seem equally enamored with the concept that pain and suffering are the most hideous of things and that they should be minimized at all cost. We like to talk nice about less-abled people with all sorts of Politically Correct rhetoric, but it's just equivocating. Deep down there is the sense that they're just a burden. Abortion, then, is a good idea in the case of a child with disabilities or if they may have a hard life without all the amenities a middle-class lifestyle could afford. We can't seem to distance ourselves from the idea that a life with pain is a life not worth living. In fact we created an ethic out of it called “utilitarianism.”

Now you may be saying, “What's with the tangent, Eric?! Keep your



Heather from The Psalters and Mellisa from the Camden Community at the Family Reunion

“Happens Amongst You” cont. next page

"Happens Amongst You" continued

opinions to yourself and just tell us Bob's story." But this is part of Bob's story because Bob's story is part of the story of the Christian body. What I'm talking about is intimately tied to "one anothering". I decided to write about this because children and adults don't learn this cruel behavior from true Christian faith. They weren't formed by an ethic of "one anothering".

We have a different story to tell and it runs counter to the story of capitalism. Our story says that physical weakness is not the last word. Our story actually highlights that the meek inherit the earth and that those mourning will be comforted. Yes, and this story demands an ethic of "one anothering" that assumes a community of believers practicing it. You can't "one-another" yourself! We need others to make this happen, and in so doing we are conformed to the ways of Christ. We might even say that when the poor and crippled are sitting down to eat with you that the kingdom of God has arrived. Conversely, that if we don't make special effort to love those who are limited due to emotional, mental, or physical illness, then the kingdom is not yet with us.

In this manner, all the laughter and

confusion that Bob received as a result of his affliction in seventh and eighth grade could be pointed as rebellion against God's kingdom and a celebration of the capitalist kingdom. This was also before the medical world understood muscular dystrophy. It wasn't until Bob was a freshman in high school that he was finally diagnosed with the disease and could begin to understand why he was different.

Bob's engagement with muscular dystrophy has been resilient. Hilda Carper reflected upon Bob's early years at Reba as a man who knew how to courageously and confidently live. When he first came to Reba Place as a freshman in college, he was still walking—and walking up to his room on the third floor! Impressively, he was able to maintain a job at the Evanston High School library for twenty years—a loyalty and commitment through struggle that probably only the Japanese know of in the industrialized world.

Bob's disease continued to debilitate him further until he was confined to an electric wheel chair guided by a joystick at the end of his



Bob Lembke and Char Oda at the last Reba Retreat

armrest. He eats with the assistance of a gadget that balances his right arm at about mid-chest level on a smooth pivoting fulcrum so he can direct his hands from plate to mouth without the use of much strength. But the recent doctor recommendation to elevate his arms higher changed even those limited liberties.

After Bob received the news from his doctor he began to question everything; himself, others, God. "How could God let suffering persist?" "Why should I have to suffer this lot?" The stress built up from years of an immobilized body directed the frustrations inward and the tears flowed out. The emotions were turbulent, and it took a friend to begin to direct those questions towards a process of healing and re-incorporation into the larger community.

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A Kingdom Storybook

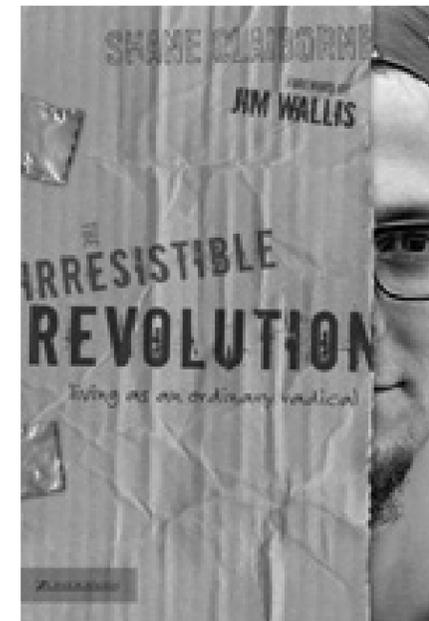
Tim Otto

Church of the Sojournes / Rutba House

If those of us connected with Shalom Mission Communities were ever to hand out tracts, I'd recommend that we hand out Shane Claiborne's new book, *The Irresistible Revolution: Living as an Ordinary Radical*. To our evangelical friends who don't understand our commitments to peace, community, and simple living, Shane's book might be the most winsome introduction available. And interestingly, to our non-Christian friends who plaster "If I can't dance it's not my revolution" bumper stickers on their bikes, *Irresistible Revolution* might also be our best bet in explaining what we are about.

Reading the book feels like what it might be like to drink a good brew with a prophet. The book is conversational in tone and Shane gets off some good lines like, "If you haven't seen Mel Gibson's movie *The Passion*, I recommend that you just read the book." Like a prophet, Shane doesn't shirk from speaking truth about God's people. He laments the Jabez's Prayer phenomenon, Willow Creek's building program, and St. Edward's church kicking out the homeless. Often, like the Old Testament prophets of Israel, Shane finds symbolic acts to reveal the injustice and oppression that all our rationalizations seek to hide.

But if Shane is a prophet, he is a gentle one. He is after all, wearing pants that have holsters sewn in them for bubbles and side-



walk chalk. It is obvious that Shane is speaking truth in hopes of healing. In the end, as Geez Magazine says, *Irresistible Revolution* is a "love rant."

It is also a Kingdom of God storybook. Shane tells stories about appearances of fire-fighter angels, throwing away \$20,000 on Wall Street, gifts from the mafia, a phone call with Mother Teresa, the miracle of the Pepto-Bismol bottle, shock and awe at the hospitality he received in Bagdad while it was being

bombed, the culinary adventures of "freegans," and friendship with leprous doctors. And to stories like these, Shane adds others stories from saints, and church history, and scripture.

Like Shane says, "...stories disarm us. They make us laugh and cry. It's hard to disagree with a story, much less split a church or kill people over one." Shane weaves a world of words and that leaves no room to put words together in ways that make sense of things like our war in Iraq, or our lack of compassion for the poor. Shane does not argue us into understanding those things, he stories us into them. And in the end, one leaves the stories of Shane feeling a little tipsy not from the brew, but from the holy guilt, and the courage, and the creativity, and the commitment to church, and the desire to learn from elders and saints, and the compassion for the poor, and the yearning for kingdom adventure and worthy hardship—all inspired by the conversation.

If the Bible is the handbook of *The Revolution*, then *Irresistible Revolution* is a good tract. Pick one up, and when you're done, pass it on. □



The Family Reunion: sneak preview of "Another World is Possible" Part 3