



Volume XI

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Fall 2007: Harvest

Harvest Time

An Editorial by David Janzen

When I was six years old, I witnessed the last year of harvest the “old fashioned” way in our rural Kansas community. Work and prayer went together as we learned about hail storms, scorching winds and other things that could go wrong between seed sowing in the fall and harvest in the summer.

By threshing time, all the fields of wheat and oats had been cut with a binder and the twine-bound sheaves were hand-stacked into shocks that dotted the straw-colored landscape. A dozen farmers joined together in a threshing circle. On threshing day the farmers and their boys all showed up with horse-drawn hayracks and began pitching the sheaves into the racks as the horses walked forward under voice commands.

The center of the drama was my Uncle Johnny’s huge threshing machine with its hundreds of clattering, roaring, and shaking parts driven by his big Case tractor with a long flapping traction belt. The noise was so deafening that everyone around had to shout to be heard. The fully-loaded hayracks pulled up on each side of the machine’s “mouth” and the bundles were pitched in to the hungry, devouring machine. Wheat poured out of a side auger into the waiting wagon while the chaff and straw was blown out the long rear spout onto a growing golden mountain on the Plains. My job, since I was too little to be trusted around horses or with a pitchfork, was to level the mound of wheat with a shovel as it poured into the grain wagon. Fascinated by numbers, I kept checking a little odometer at the base of the grain spout that counted the bushels, and tried to estimate how many bushels to the acre the wheat was making. I’ve been estimating ever since.

At noon time the threshing machine stopped and everyone made their way to our house where tubs of cistern water, soap and a wash line of towels were waiting for the threshers who might strip to the waist to wash up muscular



bodies streaked with chaff, dust and sweat. Suddenly someone would start a good-natured water-fight that would stop and break out again until the call went out that lunch was ready. Then everyone suddenly subdued, marched in to the fully extended dining table groaning under the food that the women and girls had been butchering, cooking and baking all morning to prepare. A solemn prayer thanked God for allowing the wheat to grow and asked blessing on the hands that had provided this food--and then with elbows spread, hungry threshers dug into mashed potatoes, fried chicken, gravy, roasting ears, sliced tomatoes, and succotash fresh from the barn-yard and garden. The meal usually ended with apple pie—and complaints to the hostess that “I can’t possibly eat any more. Well, maybe one more piece.”

While the meal was a high point, and the end of a day with its bath in the stock tank (before you were allowed into the house) was memorable, the climax of the harvest

Continued, next page.

Harvest

season was still to come—an ice cream social hosted by Uncle Johnny and Aunt Helen, home of the threshing machine. The ostensible reason for the event was for the farmers to pull check books from their bibbed overalls and settle up each one's share of the threshing costs. I don't know what the mothers and fathers did the rest of the evening, but the event was a riot of fun for us kids who had to outdo each other in games of tag, silo climbing, calf-chasing, and more ice cream eating. Cousin Herman suggested we all try to pull farm implements, and there were enough of us kids to do what a team of horses normally would do—roll the hayracks around the yard and into the barn. Finally the little ones circled back to their mothers' laps, and fathers decreed it was time to go home--the grand finale to a glorious summer.

I think that if I had experienced more such community on the farm, I might still be there. But in a few years farmers each bought their own combines that did the work of binders, threshing machines, horses and hayracks. They could harvest wheat on their own schedule, independent of neighbors they no longer needed. My experience of the farm as a teenager was long days driving alone on a tractor, back and forth across the field, and longing for some place where common work and community might characterize life. Soon there were fewer and larger farms with bigger equipment; small towns died out, and almost all the farm kids moved to the cities. This was called Progress in the system of mammon.

Every summer, wherever we've gone, Joanne and I have tilled a garden to remember our roots, and to feed our souls. We joined Christian intentional community and have become part of a different kind of harvest. Just as Jesus promised fisherman Peter that he'd be fishing for people, our harvest has been to grow the virtues of Jesus in our common life and to make disciples in all the ways that he has taught us.

If Jesus claimed that the kingdom of



Some of the fruit of the (Plow Creek) harvest at Reba—lacinato kale, ground cherries, and a leek in a Wednesday CSA delivery box.

God is like a great banquet, I would amend that to say that the kingdom of God is like a threshing circle's ice cream social or like a SMC Gathering, or a community potluck. As communities we suffer together, labor together, eat together, and are also given times of riotous enjoyment of all the gifts that God has entrusted to God's people, with no one left out.

And like the wheat growing in the field night and day (we know not how), so interns and visitors show up, eager to share the life of Jesus in community. Many of the young people are already formed by college ecology classes and Wendell Berry's essays to see the interrelatedness of all things. They see how the systems of mammon grind down the poor, abuse the earth, and alienate us from one another as consumers in the individual pursuit of wealth. These young people are eager to work with their hands and see their own food grow from a piece of the earth that they love and care for. The earth, with its seasons and mysterious fertility, teaches them about commitment. They

sweat in common work to lay up salsa for the winter, to can beans and tomatoes. Integrity and peace-making can't be theoretical—they must be reflected in the food we eat and the things we buy, or refuse to buy. Even if the scale of urban farming is small, these are seeds for a harvest of righteousness.

In communities of love and discipleship, we teach, commend, correct, counsel through crises, make appalling mistakes, and ask for forgiveness—but none of this assures a harvest. We are a mystery where growth happens, lives are transformed and friends are bonded together in deep love, more people are welcomed and others sent out in mission in obedience to the Spirit's call. This relationship between the farmer and harvest Jesus likens to the kingdom of God. It is not a relationship of cause and effect, but of preparation and grace, of death to self and resurrection of Jesus' life among us. God, please give us the grace to become good soil for the harvest of justice and peace with joy in community. □

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Shalom Connections

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Sabbath

Whatever is foreseen in joy
Must be lived out from day to day.
Vision held open in the dark
By our ten thousand days of work.
Harvest will fill the barns; for that
The hand must ache, the face must sweat.

And yet no leaf or grain is filled
By work of ours; the field is tilled
And left to grace. That we may reap,
Great work is done while we're asleep.

When we work well, a Sabbath mood
Rests on our day and finds it good.

-Wendell Berry

From *A Timbered Choir: The Sabbath Poems*
1979-1997, p. 18.

and grace



Pondering: Food. Faith. Farming.

By Tatiana Fajardo-Heflin

God made me for a garden.
So that I could be still and eat and know that he is good.

Now I see no mirror of God in my food. Because the ingredient list is something like this:

Modified food starch, apples from China, sugar, corn syrup, high fructose corn syrup, low-wage migrant workers, petroleum, Monsanto, and several computer keyboards, clicking away.

Oh, we are a far cry from the garden.

Why did it take me twenty-one years to see God in his creation? To think that my spirit and my economy are not two separate little compartments, but more like threads overlapping in a tapestry?

The food I eat is part of my Christianity. And since I call myself a pacifist, it is also part of my pacifism. Every economic exchange I participate in is part of my pacifism, and food is the economic unit that controls the whole world. Yes, even more than oil.

Now, how to eat like a pacifist? What a question.

Sometimes I stand in front of six shelves of oil reading the back of each bottle and agonizing over whether I should buy the organic one from Spain or the non-GMO but "conventional" one from Canada. Neither is a particularly hopeful option. And the truth is... I don't have a ton of hopeful options.

Most of the food I purchase and consume is still tainted by the blood of empire in some form or another, whether it is the oil used to transport it to me or the corporate system used to sell it. I shop at Whole Foods, but I don't feel excited to tell other Christians about it.

Even the best economic systems of the world are not the Kingdom of God.

They are not bringing the reign of a new Emperor. It is in this new community being birthed (that is, the Church – the people of God) that the reign will come. Because we are the people of God called together as a witness to the world, we must seek new ways to cultivate the earth and economy in order to resist the powers of a sinful world.

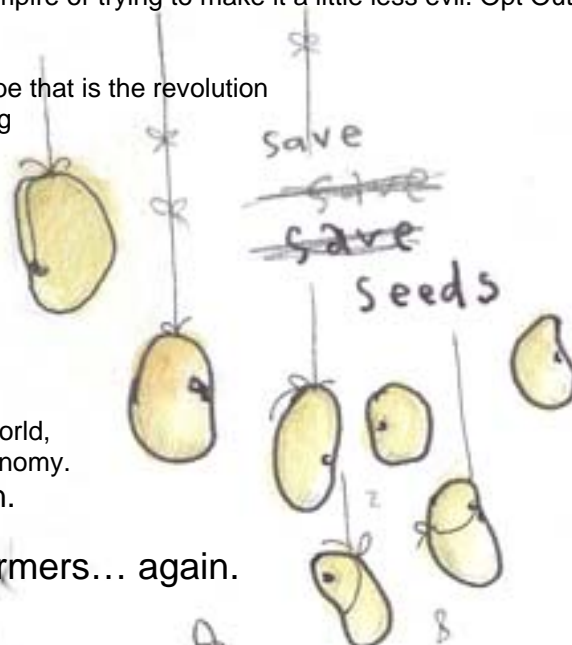
Farmer Fred Bahnson said, "Don't waste time fighting the empire or trying to make it a little less evil. Opt Out. Step around the system. Grow your own food, for instance."

So maybe that's it. Maybe it's Christians growing food, maybe that is the revolution right there. Eating from the earth our Creator gave us. Eating the way our Creator made us.

- Grow your own food.
- Grow your friends' food.
- Grow your community's food.
- Know where your food comes from.
- Farm, field, or dumpster.

The people of God are called together as a witness to the world,
so we seek new ways to cultivate the earth and economy.
Resist the powers. Practice resurrection.

Maybe some day we'll all be farmers... again.



SMC 2007 Gathering: Who Came and What Happened

The Shalom Mission Communities Gathering at Reba Place (August 5-7) hosted about 150 representatives from nineteen communities. We were immensely blessed by getting to know each other in sharing and prayer, workshops on a variety of topics, loud worship and a gut-splitting lack of talent show. The Spirit built us together into a family of faith and longing for the new world that Jesus brings. Here are hints of what each of the participating communities are about and how we might continue to carry each other in prayer:

ACCOREMA is a network of Christian rehabilitation communities for marginalized and addicted persons with homes and workshops in Spain and Morocco, and now with a new venture opening in Albania.

CHURCH OF THE SERVANT KING (Eugene, OR) is taking this year to look outward, visiting other communities and so strengthening their own communal life. They have recently exchanged visits with the newly-communal Koinonia Partners, and have celebrated two weddings this summer! Many of the members are involved in common work through the Wipf and Stock publishing house.

CHURCH OF THE SERVANT KING (Portland, OR) is a little over an hour and a



The Bridgewater Family dazzles us with their musical talent (and wit) singing about "the day the monsters came to my house to play"

half from their sister community in Eugene, and are "always in each other's homes so that is a great gift." They are figuring out how to share community with a dozen young people at various stages of interest – which usually means making lots of chips and salsa.

CHURCH OF THE SOJOURNERS are celebrating their 20th year as a live-together community in San Francisco, CA. Their Sunday worship begins with breaking of the bread, and ends with a meal finishing with sharing the communion cup – handmade by their lately-deceased member, Jack Bernard.

ENGLEWOOD CHRISTIAN CHURCH has resided in Indianapolis for over one hundred years, and now has a neighborhood cluster evolving new forms of community.

Englewood has begun a development corporation to better serve the housing needs the people of their neighborhood, as well as the Doulos Christou publishing company which distributes radical theological books among the congregation and to friends and co-workers in the faith.

GRAIN OF WHEAT is an Anabaptist congregation in Winnipeg, Manitoba (Canada) which is all about loving, helping, supporting and exhorting each other on a daily basis. Many members of the congregation work in a couple of bakeries, which make amazing cinnamon rolls (especially when they're fresh).

HOPE FELLOWSHIP is located in Waco, Texas. They are committed to peacemaking and find resurrection in the difficult work of cross-culture mission and bilingual community.

JUBILEE PARTNERS is a service community in rural Comer, GA with a mission of hospitality to refugees, the big news is that, "After years of discussion between the anti-bovine party and the bovine party, Jubilee now has a cow!" They grow a lot of food, share the vision with interns and visitors, and now get to eat all the butter and ice cream their hearts desire.

JUNIA HOUSE is a community made up of young families in Toronto. They began out of a bond between roommates at Calvin College, live around the corner from a Catholic Worker house, and have a very messy kid-friendly living room.

KOINONIA FARM is 65 years old in history, but two years old in their reborn commitment to Christian intentional community. Through their many decades, their most consistent ministry is one of inter-racial hospitality, welcoming hundreds of people each year. Koinonia has an unorthodox agricultural identity - "Well, we grow peanuts and



Al Lawler, Andy Ross, and Rick Reha dry dishes while comparing beards and making pirate faces. Ah, the joys of common work in community!

Harvest

pecans and blueberries and grapes, but most importantly we grow people.”

NEW COVENANT FELLOWSHIP is made up of Art and Peggy Gish and a few other people who share farming and life with them. Both Art and Peggy are committed members of the Christian Peacemaker Teams.

PLOUGHSHARES FARM is in its beginning stages of becoming a full, working farm. Some of its members come from the Grain of Wheat community in Winnipeg, Manitoba (Canada), and all of them are concerned with cultivating a new food economy that is compassionate toward people and the earth.

PLOW CREEK FELLOWSHIP is a rural farm community in Tiskilwa, IL. The Plow Creek farmers are responsible for much of the nutrition of Evanston and Rogers Park folks through community supported agriculture. They grow their own grapes and preserve juice to use in communion services all year round. Pruning grape vines reminds them of the work God is continually doing on them as individuals and as a body.

REBA PLACE FELLOWSHIP (Evanston) is an ever-changing group of around 50 members, novices practicing members, and interns/apprentices in a racially diverse neighborhood in south Evans-



Marcus Rempel gave us a taste of “Tante Tina” during the Lack of Talent Show. It’s almost scary how well he can pull off an old Russian Mennonite woman.



Everyone smile and say, “we love melon!” Lots of melons from Plow Creek Farm brought smiles to all of our faces. In fact, all the fresh vegetables for our Sunday and Monday night meals came from the hard workers at Plow Creek. August-fresh garden vegetable chili was some of the best we’ve ever tasted.

ton, IL. They are still recovering from “post-fiftieth anniversary celebration stress disorder” and trying to imagine what the next fifty years will behold.

FELLOWSHIP OF ROGERS PARK is six Reba Place Fellowship members and several practicing members in a north-Chicago neighborhood, engaging with the community around them in order to be a witness for peace and the love of God. It seems like they have been having a lot of babies lately.

RUTBA HOUSE started in 2003 and currently has five core members and several other housemates living in the Walltown neighborhood of Durham, North Carolina. They spend time praying, preaching, playing, and protesting, and have recently welcomed their first baby-in-residence.

TWIN OAKS is a rural intentional community in Virginia, made up of members of varying faiths and traditions. They make hammocks and tofu and seek to live out values of cooperation, sharing, nonviolence, equality, and ecology.

VALLE NUEVO/ SANTA MARTA is a sister community of the Shalom Mission Communities, located in El Salvador, made up of repatriated refugees. Several former Valle Nuevo residents currently live in Virginia and have formed an international development corporation. They seek to be a support group for their wider community still in Valle Nuevo, and put lots of energy into development and fundraising activities to develop community institutions back home.

WOODCREST (member of Church Communities International, formerly the Bruderhof) is a community of several hundred in New York State. They are represented by the image of a linden tree with an open ring around it – expressing their desire for openness to the love of God, to each other, and to all those they encounter. □



Doug Selph led a group of meercats, er, SMC kids in sharing about their day-trip to the zoo (these talented folks were also part of the Lack of Talent Show).

Words of Wisdom

From Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove
(Transcribed by Annie Spiro from
Jonathan's sessions during SMC
Gathering 2007)

"At St. Benedict's monastery they were celebrating their sesquicentennial. That's three Jubilees back to back. 150 years. Benedictines make a three-fold promise when they join their communities: to obedience, and to the way of life of the community, and to stability. That is, to stay in the place where they are."

From one sister, about to celebrate 50 years at St. B's, on how to stay so long:
"You don't leave. That's the secret."

"In whatever place you live, do not easily leave it. That I take to be the instruction to stability that has inspired so much of the great monastic tradition in the church, and that I think is really at the heart of a number of the gifts that Reba Place has received and shared with all of us. And so to celebrate a Jubilee is to celebrate perseverance in a particular place."

"There are lots of people... who have a deep, deep desire to find community in America today. I think

this has a lot to do with the fact that lots of people feel like they don't have a place. They don't feel like they have a people to belong to, a place they can go home to. And so they feel a longing, deeply, for community. And yet at the same time, in my work with young communities, it seems like this place-lessness is one of the greatest challenges we face. That is, the number one challenge in young communities is that nobody wants to commit. Because we're not sure *this* is the place. We're not sure this is a place where we can stay, we're not sure God has called us to this place. How in the world can you commit to a place for 50 years or more? I feel this tension myself. I come straight out of the culture I'm describing."

"St. Anselm said it like this: just as any young tree, if often transplanted or often disturbed by being torn up, will never be able to take root; similarly an unhappy monk, if he moves from place to place at his own whim, or remaining in one place, is frequently agitated by his hatred of it, never achieves stability with roots of love. Instead, let this monk rejoice at having at last found the place where he can stay, not unwillingly but voluntarily for the rest of his life. And having put away all anxiety about moving from one place to another

and having peace, let him resolve to devote himself to pursuing the single-minded exercise of a holy life."

"To quote David Janzen, the periodic practice of Jubilee has been turned into a perpetual Jubilee by those who follow Jesus in the way of peace. This is what times of renewal in the church have always looked like. Every paycheck turned over to the common treasury is a Jubilee. Sins forgiven keep restoring us into the communion of saints."

"To pay a little attention to what it says in Leviticus 25, the first thing it says is to stop what you're doing. Stop. That's the first instruction of Jubilee. It's part of the Sabbath cycle, and Sabbath is about rest. It's an intentional act of remembering how God, in God's creative process, stopped on the seventh day and rested. Even God, who is infinite in power and resources, rested. And God calls the people of Israel to stop and rest, also. Jubilee comes after the 49th year, which is a Sabbath year. So Jubilee is a call to rest after you have already been resting for a year. I think the call to stop and rest is really at the heart of the Jubilee year." □

Fire at The Simple Way

On June 20, 2007, an abandoned factory in North Philadelphia caught fire, destroying eight surrounding houses and a number of cars. One of these houses belonged to The Simple Way community, and possessions belonging to two community members as well as tutoring, art, and screen-printing supplies are now gone. Here is an excerpt from a piece written by Robb Hoover, printed in their Summer 2007 newsletter.

I thought of war and how any given bombing in an urban area makes fires like this, and that the places bombed don't have well-outfitted fire departments to keep the whole neighborhood from destruction. We made some jokes about simplifying the simple way and becoming more sustainable, but they were left unlaughed because the whole scene was overwhelmed by the fire's absolute power. At 6pm, 15 hours in, there were still flames being shot with water. The house was bare and black. The roof was burned off and the windows were gaping and smoldering. Jesse's room was clearly visible with the spire burned away—not even the internal structure remained.

The Simple Way and their neighborhood remain in need of the grace of the Church. For more information, updates, and ways to help... visit The Simple Way website—www.thesimpleway.org.



“Joining the American melting pot was never their dream”

Community Organizing from El Norte to Santa Marta

By David Janzen

Francisco Ramirez is an impressive young man—not in physical appearance, since he still looks like a Salvadoran peasant out of place in a cosmopolitan world. But the longer I talked with him, the more I was amazed at his humble gifts as a community organizer.

Francisco and his friend Arturo Rivas came from Virginia to attend Reba’s 50th anniversary and the Shalom Missions Community Gathering, where they were slated to lead a workshop. They came to tell about their group of Salvadoran expatriates from the municipality of Santa Marta which includes Valle Nuevo—our sister community in El Salvador. Yvonne Dilling, our mutual friend, had made arrangements for Francisco and Arturo to be with us for the Shalom Mission Communities Gathering, and she served as translator for the workshop that they led.

At the SMC Gathering, Francisco and Arturo told their riveting personal stories to a group of twenty-five workshop participants, stories of perilous years growing up during El Salvador’s civil war, coming of age in a refugee camp, and then having to leave for the U.S. where they eventually won political asylum. But joining the American melting pot and making their own pot of gold was never the goal. Bonds of family love and solidarity with their people back home have caused these guys to live simply and to go the second mile for others.

Actually, meeting Francisco was a reunion with someone I’d already heard about by reputation in El Salvador. I remember the gracious welcome Francisco’s mother gave our SMC delegation. As we sat down to relax with coffee in hand, a small earthquake, of which El Sal-



Arturo Rivas and Francisco Ramirez share, along with Yvonne Dilling, in a Valle Nuevo workshop during the August SMC Gathering.

vador has many each year, rattled the tiles. But our host just laughed, feeling secure in her new and well-built cement-block home. In fact, her house was the only one in the village with a second-floor balcony, a monument to the love of her sons in the “States” who chose to honor their mother with generous remittances.

But she is even more proud that her son Francisco, along with seven other partners, have banded together to help the whole municipality. They have incorporated a non-profit international development and solidarity organization called **Con Santa Marta**. With their own donations, contributions from the wider Salvadoran expatriate community, and matching funds from other agencies, they have sponsored annual projects to benefit their community back home. So far they have raised more than \$100,000 for the following:

2003—a new fenced-in soccer field and uniforms for men and women’s teams.

2004--a 4X4 “ambulance” for the health team.

2005--packets of food, shoes, and school supplies for children of the 55 neediest families.

2006—a science lab built and

equipped for the Santa Marta high school.

2007—new computers for the high school computer center

Furthermore, Con Santa Marta has coached other Salvadoran and Guatemalan expatriates how to get organized and create international development corporations in a similar manner. “We want to keep our culture alive in America,” Francisco said, “and do something for our people back home.”

I asked Francisco how he manages to do all this organizing work and still send home the money on which his extended family survives. “In the daytime I work in construction, installing water service lines to new houses, and at night I have a part-time job cleaning office buildings. On the weekends I organize!”

Francisco and Arturo were deeply moved by the spiritual companionship they felt with SMC and with other intentional communities in the U.S. who practice radical sharing and solidarity with the poor. They commended SMC’s efforts, with Habitat for Humanity, to build twenty more houses with the poorest families of Valle Nuevo. “We are partners,” Francisco said. “Next time you have one of these conferences, let us know. We want to come and bring more friends.” □

Reba Place 50th Anniversary Jubilee Celebration

By Linda Hoff-Hagensick
(Reprinted from *The Evanston RoundTable*)

Reba Place Fellowship and Church gathered to celebrate its 50th anniversary August 4-6, with multi-media presentations, a photo gallery, art-work, quilts, and a music and dance spectacular featuring a performance of Jim Croegaert's "Creation!"

More than 500 current and former Reba Place Church and Fellowship members attended, some of whom had not seen one another for years.

On Saturday, decade-by-decade presentations by former leaders, many of whom are no longer members of the community told the group's unique story.

Founder John Miller and early leader Julius Belser reflected on the turbulent of 1957-1967, when seminarians from Goshen College had a vision to start an urban community based on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Acting out of this vision, church members were arrested when they joined the Southern Freedom Movement and later, the anti-war movement.

"During the decade 1967-1977, Reba Place was the largest urban Christian community in the United States" said Dave and Neta Jackson, authors of the first book about Reba Place Church and presenters with Jim and Janalee Croegaert. The decade witnessed the growth of the community from 38 to 152 adult members (plus children and guests) living in 15 extended-family households.

The charismatic renewal in the Christian church, as well as the counter-cultural tone of the community, attracted many people. Members of Reba Place Fellowship held all things in common, even sharing from a common purse.

If the 60's and 70's at Reba Place Church were a time of connection within households, the following decade brought differentiation, as some members sought a more individualized spiritual journey. Bob and Lois Shuford, now members of St. Nicholas Roman Catholic Church, reflected on the trend away from household living. Many Reba Place families relocated to single family homes in a neighborhood not far from the fellowship's original location. Although there remained a core group committed to the intentional communal lifestyle, congregational membership emerged as an alternative. Members shared the vision of radical discipleship but lived outside the communal structures.

Reba Place was no longer a "commune" but two separate entities – the church and the fellowship.

Sally Youngquist, now pastor of Living Water Community Church in Rogers Park, talked about the ministries that emerged from Reba during those years. Two, the Cambodian Ministry and the Overground Railroad, worked to resettle refugees. The Sunshine Group offered a social outlet for residents from the halfway house now known as Albany House.

Allan Howe and Anne Stewart characterized the decade 1987-1997,

when racial reconciliation was a major vision of the church. "We tried to become a convincingly interracial congregation," said Mr. Howe. "A lot of energy went into it; results were mixed." Also during this decade Reba Place started Ten Thousand Villages fair trade shop, planted Living Water Community Church in Rogers Park with fifty members from Reba Place Church, and founded the Evanston Shelter for the Homeless, now called Hilda's Place.

The current pastor, Ric Hudgens, music minister Helen Hudgens, and a panel of recently arrived members represented Reba 1997 to the present. Northwestern University professor Ric Ashley talked about how reading the Jacksons' book helped lead him and his family to Reba. "Words mean little," he said. "It is the church living its life that lets people know that the message of Christ is real."

A song written by Jim Croegaert to celebrate the wedding of Judy and Nevin Belser 30 years ago put it another way. Although the lyrics refer to marriage, they also seemed to the celebrants to reflect the history of the Reba Place community. While the Belsers danced, the song rang out: "We are touching a great mystery." □



All of creation dances around the sun during Jim Croegaert's "Creation!"

Five Communities, Five Questions

Compiled by all of the Shalom Mission Communities

This month, in lieu of a request for community news, we sent out five questions to each of the five communities in the Shalom Mission Communities. Each community's report includes something about a recent community meal, the oldest and youngest members of their community, small group/discipleship structure, "community cross-pollination", and their local harvest (we were talking mostly food here).

Five Q's: Hope Fellowship

Community Meal

Most of the cell groups that meet weekly enjoy a meal together. As an entire community, we generally meet the first Wednesday of each month for a common meal. Our most recent meal was prepared by several of us, and it consisted of baked potatoes with lots of fixin's (we keep it simple here in Waco). Two things stand out about the preparers: the one that provided the potatoes wasn't able to be present to share in the meal because she was attending a class and the one that was assigned to bring the dessert was not able to – we accepted his presence as more important than his dessert. The meal and fellowship meeting afterwards was noisy and full of conversations with young and old. Two new people were among us, and we taught them

our usual blessing song "Demos Gracias Al Señor".

Oldest/Youngest Members

Oldest: Jim Snyder coming in at 72 years old; Youngest: Isabela Clark at 14 mos. Jim spends a lot of time in his home, sometimes at the computer. We enjoy listening to his life stories, although we now have to make the effort to go out to see him, as he rarely leaves home. Isabela entertains us all as we play "pass the baby" when we are together. During worship time she thinks we are singing or waving hello to her and is constantly smiling and waving back to us.

Small Groups/Discipleship

We formed cell groups of 6-10 people, which meet weekly. This past January we took a month to allow people to talk with the other cell groups and make a change if they desired to do so. This has helped to bring some new focus, and the groups are beginning to be



Photo from World Hunger Relief, Inc.

more settled and have consistent meeting times. Although most of the groups share a meal and spend time in worship and prayer, all of these groups do different things when they are together. Some are sharing spiritual autobiographies and some are sharing about areas of their lives in which they want to see growth. Other ways we practice discipleship: being together throughout the week in each other's homes, walking down the street together, and working together on a daily basis.

Cross-Pollination

We recently sent Anali Gatlin to Reba Place Fellowship for a year internship. We look forward to being more connected to people at Reba through the relationships that she is building.

Harvest

Many of us at Hope Fellowship are involved with the World Hunger Relief Farm. The Farm manages a good size CSA garden and provides vegetables on pretty much a yearly basis (Eat your hearts out, wintry Reba and Plow Creek!). There are also many of us that have backyard gardens sizable enough to provide for our families and share with everyone else. Hanna Heddy has been gardening on a nearby vacant lot and has been able to make a small business out of selling the harvest. We are grateful to have a plethora of locally produced and organic produce here in Waco!



Hope Fellowship harvest—Hanna Heddy's market garden.

Five Q's—Church of the Sojourners

Community Meal

Louise and Lizbeth whopped up our latest community meal at our worship service yesterday. Delicious spicy polenta, chicken or beef with noodles, bread and butter, mango and watermelon. As is usual at Sojourners, there was a variety of different-sized serving dishes with vegetarian and wheat/dairy-free options. We rotate a cooking schedule so that a pair of cooks makes dinner each week for our worship service. We consider our meal as part of our service, which begins with the breaking of the bread and ends with taking the cup, a love feast which also includes doing dishes and socializing with your dinner-neighbor as elements of worship. It's held in our biggest living room, which holds 35 comfortably and 65 uncomfortably, without tables. I have always thought it would be nice to have tables—balancing a plate of food on your knee in a crowded space is a difficult act, and there is something about the term "table fellowship" which I wish we could practice more literally. But given our space limitations, we manage, and having a chance to



J.D. Lockie, youngest member at Sojourners, gazes lovingly at our oldest member, Rick DiMicco, even though Rick doesn't have any more candy.

catch up with people from other households (or even the same household) whom I haven't seen all week, or to meet and talk with visitors, is a part of our worship/mealtime that I look forward to each week.

Oldest/Youngest Members

Our youngest member, John David Lockie (age 2), and our oldest, Rick DiMicco (age 65), have bridged their 63-year age gap admirably. They have a strong affection for one another, with Rick's being the preferred lap to sit in (after Mom's or Dad's) in any gathering. There is some suspicion that this bond was initially forged by the use of candy, but at this point it is clear that the friendship is beyond sugar and mutually delightful. Rick is currently working part-time (graveyard shift) in a drug program, while John David spends a lot of time asking the question "Why?" The enjoyment they have in each other is a good picture of kingdom friendship.

Small Groups/Discipleship

We have *just* started up small groups again at Sojourners, after a several-year hiatus, and there is some good anticipation of how these will grow us in intimacy, faith, and mutual love and accountability. In the meanwhile, we have used the structures of mentorship and households for pastoring one another. The discipleship practices we intentionally seek to nurture among ourselves are worship, prayer, hospitality, loving one another, Sabbath, outreach, sharing common resources and common life, study, and celebration. As a title of one of Eugene Peterson's books expressed, this life is a long obedience in the same direction, and we are trying to take a long-haul view on matters of discipleship rather than thinking of it as a matter of achievement.

Cross-Pollination

By the time this issue is printed, a wedding between Jadie Mollier and Ian Creeger will have taken place in Eugene, Oregon, at Church of the Servant King. Jadie is a second-



A beachside pose from Sojo's recent "Kids Week".

generation community kid from Eugene and Ian is a second-generation community kid from Sojourners. The joy of this partnership is made all the more sweet by reconciliation which took place recently between the two churches (see last issue for details). We have also recently been cross-pollinated by the arrival of Nate Pequette from South Dakota, and Dawn Langston and her twin 7-year-old boys Rubén and Mateo, lately from Costa Rica. They have come to join Matt and Krista Creeger (who were already here) to do this year's apprenticeship. Also, Tim Otto has been drinking the nectar of Rutba House for the past two years, and having him back amongst us now is giving us opportunity to benefit from that richness.

(Continued, Bottom of Page 13)



Urban gardener Rebecca Gish (age 3) pulls carrots from her backyard garden box.

Harvest

Five Q's: Plow Creek Fellowship

Community Meal

On the Sunday of Labor Day weekend, we had our annual Harvest Festival starting with displays in the Common Building at 2:00 p.m. and meandering through the afternoon with conversations, watermelon seed-spitting contest and a capture-the-flag game. Then we enjoyed an evening that featured a great pot-luck and lack-of-talent show.

Sixteen North Park University students joined us for the weekend and the Harvest Festival as part of Professor Greg Clark's Intentional Christian Community class.

Several acts during the lack of talent show had us rocking with laughter. Apparently working on the farm at Plow Creek creates an intense urge to write song lyrics. To the tune of "Softly and Tenderly," Kevin and Lorie Behrens were inspired to write about Kevin cutting up melon samples for market at 11:00 p.m on Friday night: "Softly and tenderly Kevin is slicing, slicing for you and for me." Later Kevin crooned a song about Katie Piche from Church of the Sojourners yearning to return to the city by the bay after all her summer of hot days in the garden.

And who will ever forget Jim and



Hay-rides for all at the fall Harvest Festival!

Meg Foxvog singing about weeding the strawberry patch, "Weeds, Weeds, Endless Weeds" to the tune of "How Great Thou Art"?

with Donna, and they married at the end of Jim's years in alternative service.

Oldest/Youngest Members

Jim Harnish, 83, is the oldest member of Plow Creek. Recently he shared in two consecutive Fellowship meetings about his five years of experience in alternative service during World War II. In one of his stories he told about loaning a devotional book to one of the fellows in his unit. The fellow brought it home over Christmas and returned without the book because his sister, Donna, wanted to read it. Jim began corresponding

Owen Mark Behrens is the youngest member of our community, born on August 18, a home birth in the upstairs of the Alpha House. He teaches us that you don't have to perform to be loved.

Small Groups/Discipleship

Each fall at Plow Creek we review our sharing groups and make changes in the make-up of the groups to better serve the interests and needs of everyone in the church. We are just beginning that process.

Cross-Pollination

Dan and Katie Piche arrived from Church of the Sojourners in late February and will be at Plow Creek until late October. Katie is experiencing and learning about plant life by working with Erin Kindy in the Valley Garden through an entire growing season.

One if the changes Katie sparked is that a few of us early birds meet at the Common Building for 20 minutes of morning prayers between 5:00 a.m. and 6:00 a.m. using the *Celtic Daily Prayers* from the North-



Junior High youth from Living Water Community Church (Rogers Park) helped with weeding in the fields!

(Continued, bottom of next page)

Five Q's: Fellowship of Rogers Park

Community Meal

Not counting various "sub-group" meals shared, our most recent common meal was when the whole "Fellowship of Rogers Park" group (including kids) ate together on August 21. It was the end of our cell group cycle (which runs fall-summer). We celebrated four July birthdays, rather belatedly, and heard from the practicing members among us (Tim and Patty Peebles, Eric and Katie Dahlaw, Nieta Jones) about their year as practicing members. Memorable moments from the meal time include: (1) the menu, lentil spaghetti sauce and soul food (ribs and greens), which symbolizes some of the diversity of our group and (2) our two group babies (Delaney, 3 mos. and Kylie, 1 mos.) lying together on a blanket.

Oldest/Youngest Members

Kylie Doran, at one month, is the youngest. So young we haven't

had time to learn a lot from her yet. (I'm sure her parents have.) But she was the occasion for a recent work day together. Instead of a more traditional baby shower, Tim and Sharon requested we come help clean their apartment in preparation for her arrival. It was fun! (*and mentioned in the last issue*)

Orwin Youngquist, 62, is the oldest. He's a civil engineer. He has a visible passion for God, expressed through prayer, dance, and love of nature, among other things. He encourages us to share these, but is patient when we're more reluctant to do so (some of us aren't dancers).

Small Groups/Discipleship

Our cell group met each Tuesday night (once a month with the Evanston end of RPF), and those who were available shared lunch on Mondays at Selphs. We also sponsored a church-wide potluck and teaching time each Wednesday evening, and of course participate in Sunday worship with Living Water. For the coming year we are talking about adding more regular meals together and a

weekly prayer time.

Cross-Pollination

Nothing too long-term at this point, but we loved hosting folks from Sojourners and Hope Fellowship for the Anniversary and SMC gathering in August!

Harvest

Doug Selph, Katie Dahlaw and Elissa Laslo have been gardening in the Frantzes' back yard. Katie and Elissa also share a plot in Evanston. Tomatoes and volunteer pumpkins are the most prolific in the Rogers Park garden. Katie's been canning stuff with the Evanston folks, and Lisa uses this season as justification for her annual bacon purchase so she can eat BLTs with real tomatoes. Sally Youngquist says she's making "feeble attempts" at growing things on their 3rd floor back porch - pots of happy colorful moss roses grown from seed, basil and aloe vera. Her indoor hibiscus, which summers outdoors and gets much more sun, is now happily putting forth exotic salmon-colored blossoms which lift her spirits. □

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umbria Community in Ireland.

Harvest

Over the course of the season the Plow Creek farm team harvests an almost endless variety of crops. To answer this question I went to <http://www.plowcreek.org/farm> and discovered that we are currently har-

vesting beans, cooking greens, garlic, herbs, watermelon, onions, peppers, potatoes, red raspberries, root crops, sweet corn, and tomatoes.

Not to offend the vegetarians among us, many times during the summer at Plow Creek I find myself thinking of a saying from my childhood, "We're eating high off the hog." □

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Harvest

After taking a poll of our four households and their yards, I can tell you that here in the middle of concrete San Francisco we are harvesting strawberries, apples, carrots, lemons, plums, bay, mint, sage, and oregano, as well as many types of flowers for joy (including Edith's dahlias which are as big as your head). Our food harvest is being put to use mostly in the obvious way—eating—although I might add that over at Potrero, the strawberries are so plump and beautiful, and so few, that it's apparent that Potreroites are also growing in practicing patience and generosity in relation to their precious crop.

Another crop worth mentioning is that of Jack Bernard's book, *How to Become a Saint*. Much of the sowing and cultivating that Jack did in his own heart and life which resulted in that book took place among us, and now the book has gone out into the world like a dandelion puff, scattered to the winds. We don't know where it will take root or what fruit it will bear, but we are hoping it is helping produce a harvest of righteousness somewhere at this very moment. □



Plow Creek Harvest: Cherry tomatoes, onions, and garlic (and much more).

Harvest

Five Q's: Reba Place Evanston

Community Meal

This miracle of joyous fellowship around the table keeps happening. One recent Friday, on our way home from the most recent Reba Place Fellowship pot luck dinner, my wife Joan and I were reflecting on how much we appreciate the people who sat at table with us and what a good time we had. We had gathered with about forty other people in the Reba Ministry Center on Custer Avenue, a pleasant four block walk from our home. These dinners are currently scheduled once a month.

A sign of the times: Someone noted gleefully as we converged with empty plates on several tables loaded with food, that this dinner was completely vegetarian. There were a number of delicious choices, including two versions of quinoa. No one had told us to bring only vegetarian options. It simply reflects a growing trend in that direction at RPF.

Conversation around our table focused on recent vacations, since several of us had just returned from such travels. We also had opportunity to hear about the adult children of Fellowship members. After a few prayers, we all stood in a big circle,

held hands and sang our thanks to God.

Oldest/Youngest Member

Ransom Clark (youngest) - Ransom and his older brother Micah ride their bikes 2.3 miles from their temporary home in Tiskilwa to Plow Creek. According to his father Greg, Ransom is very thrilled to get out to the farm regularly.

The Clarks have just started home-schooling, and as part of that, Ransom is taking guitar lessons. For science he's studying chokecherry trees, and he's making a walking stick out of maple. They're reading the age of exploration for history. He and other area home-schoolers are also planning a madrigal, or medieval feast. Ransom is also taking a cooking class and has learned to make Vermont pancakes, which although Greg has not yet tried, he hears are "very good."

When Ransom is not riding bikes to PCF or cooking, he's responsible for taking the Clarks' rambunctious terrier mix Scocci out for walks.

Dorothy Konsterlie (oldest) - Dorothy remains a very active Fellowship participant well into her 80s. She attends every Monday night potluck and often delights younger members as well as members of Greg Clark's North Park University class on Intentional Community by remembering



Look out ,SMCers, Ransom Clark is on the mike (and summer intern Kevin Parker laughs in the background.)

their names and details from the last discussion she had with them.

Dorothy is also present at all of the monthly Fellowship meetings, and RPF-Evanston Tuesday evening worship times. Her cheerful nature and attention to detail are very appreciated by all of us.

Small Groups/Discipleship

Almost every member of Reba Place Fellowship is in a small group. These half dozen small groups typically meet either weekly or twice a month for sharing, support, discernment and prayer. Much of the pastoral support and care in RPF happens in this small-group structure. Discipleship also happens through one-to-one friendships or oversight relationships, household life, counseling, and assorted informal or regular conversations. Everyone is expected to be able to name a person or group that functions in a pastoral role for them. Discipleship practices in our community include regular worship and fellowship together, testing our major decisions with others, sharing our incomes and other resources, helping one another in many ways, showing hospitality to visitors and



Photo from World Hunger Relief, Inc.

seekers as we are able, and more.

We have declared 2007 our “year of formation.” Changes on the near horizon at Reba Place Fellowship include a more comprehensive approach to encouraging mentor-mentee relationships, a possible “clustering” of small groups by geography, and more deliberate dialogue with novice members (about 7) and practicing members (about 15) as groups. These dialogues may include some training and discussion on topics like how to balance individual and group needs and how to relate with natural families.

Cross-Pollination

Anali Gatlin arrived on Sept. 1 from Hope Fellowship in Waco, TX, to live at the Clearing household as an RPF apprentice. Anali brings joyfulness, many skills, a life of experience in Christian community, and whole-hearted participation in everything she does. We are blessed.

Greg and Heather Clark and their children Micah and Ransom moved to Plow Creek Fellowship for Greg’s one-year sabbatical. We miss them, but are glad their family is enjoying the good life there. Greg comes to Evanston on Mondays to teach his class on “intentional Christian community”.

Stephanie and Adam Vaughan took a short tour of Christian communities during their summer vacation. They visited Gideon and Meghan Clement, whom they hosted at the Reba 50th anniversary, and the Wood-



Last fall’s “harvest” of applesauce (and pear sauce, and tomatoes) at The Patch.

crest Bruderhof Community in Rifton, NY. The Vaughns reported that the Bruderhof would like to have more connection with the Shalom Mission Communities and to help PCF with their farm work.

David Hovde has connected with Voices for Creative Non-Violence and Catholic Worker communities as part of his involvement with Christian Peacemaker Teams in the Chicago area. David is a member of the Clearing household and leads the Clearing small group. He is also one of the Apprentice Program leaders.

Harvest

Reba-ites seem to be confusing themselves for rural community, with at least a dozen putting in serious hours at the Evanston community gardens this year. Barb Grim-

sley, Aaron and Grete Scott, and Kristen Kirkvliet raised the prize tomatoes of the community gardens (seriously, they were huge) and Julia Guyer’s spiral ground layout was a feast for all the gardeners’ eyes. Chico and Tatiana Fajardo-Heflin were back for the second year, growing dozens of new varieties of vegetables and herbs from last year (including Royal Burgundy bush beans which have been producing for going on 2 ½ months straight). Summer intern Mandy Wilkin and friends inherited an untended plot and have been harvesting fall goodness (beets, turnips, etc.) and lots of volunteer tomatoes and tomatillos. And from Gavin at The Patch: *“We have had our hands full lately, whether out at the garden trying to keep up with the weeds or at home storing up produce for the winter. Tomatoes came in at full swing and every few days we gathered enough to start canning again. But we have more than just tomatoes coming from our garden. Peppers, radishes, turnips, bush beans, onions, and more of our fall vegetables are ripening daily. We’ve haven’t had much success with our carrots or collards but other vegetable like beets and cabbage seem to be coming along very nicely. All in all, by first frost we should have a received decent harvest. As for myself...I have enjoyed learning from the numerous gardeners in this community and look forward to preparing my garden for winter and subsequent spring.”* □



A summer potluck in the Cana backyard. Pictured, L to R: Orwin’s head, Jessica Iverson, Sally



November
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Evanston, Illinois

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Valle Nuevo Updates

Valle Nuevo Delegation to help build 20 new homes: The people of Valle Nuevo along with Habitat El Salvador are making plans to build twenty new homes over the next two years for the neediest families of the community. SMC has raised the funds for seven of these homes at \$4,000 each for materials. Your donations to complete the project are welcome, as is your participation in the March, 2008, delegation.

March or June, 2008? SMC is invited to send a delegation to join in a commemoration of God's deliverance for 5,000 refugees from a Salvadoran army massacre on March 18, 1981. Now, each year, the repatriated refugee community remembers Jesus' passion and the suffering of the Salvadoran people in a March 18 stations-of-the-cross pilgrimage. Next year (2008) this celebration falls within Holy Week, from Palm Sunday to Easter. For those who want to visit Valle Nuevo but can not come in March, we are also considering a June delegation.

Please let David Janzen (dhjanzen2@juno.com) know of your interest in either of these times as the steering committee of Nancy Gatlin, Yvonne Dilling, Jim Fitz and David Janzen makes plans with the Valle Nuevo Directiva.

Rural **Wooden Bridge Community** of Monroe, Wisconsin has started a "Sabbath House" ministry for missionary singles, couples, or families on furlough. Available is a 3-bedroom house in a refurbished barn. Anyone interested may contact A.J. Nicholson at (608) 328-1077.

Shalom Connections
P.O. Box 6575
Evanston, IL 60202-6575

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