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March 2007: Jubilee

The Year of the Lord's Favor: A Jubilee Now and Always

An Editorial by David Janzen

This year, on August 3-7, Reba Place Fellowship along with its offspring (Plow Creek Fellowship, Reba Place Church and Living Water Community Church), its "alumni," fellow travelers in Shalom Mission Communities, and many friends are preparing to celebrate fifty years of God's favor going back to our communal beginnings at 727 Reba Place, in Evanston in the year 1957. This anticipated anniversary drives us to reflect more deeply on the meaning of the Jubilee Year and its call upon our life together. How shall we celebrate the repentance, reconciliation and restoration of the of the Jubilee year?

A Periodic Jubilee: Every seventh year the Law of Moses called on Israel to observe a Sabbath for the land—an ecological, economic and spiritual practice of letting the land lie fallow for a year while trusting in God's provision. And every 50th year, following a cycle of seven Sabbatical years, on the Day of Atonement, not only were sins forgiven, but a trumpet sounded throughout the land announcing the Year of Jubilee. It was a time of social renewal when all debts were forgiven, slaves were set free, and every dispossessed family returned to their ancestral lands that may have been sold or lost over the decades. (Leviticus 25) People may lose their land, their freedom, their stake in civil society for many reasons—whether by natural calamity, parental mismanagement, oppressive government, or moral failure—it does not matter. A new generation gets a stake in life. All is graciously restored in the year of Jubilee.



The Jubilee Year was rooted in a memory of Israel's bondage and liberation by God from slavery in Egypt. It institutionalized the recognition that the land belongs to God and is only lent to God's people on the condition that they practice justice. The Jubilee was a God-given way to reverse the economic law of gravity where wealth and power become concentrated over the years in the hands of fewer and fewer families, resulting in alienation, desperation, and civil war. The Jubilee vision recognizes that charity alone will not suffice to heal a society's ills, but that capital and the means of production (which land

Continued, next page.

Jubilee

represents) must periodically be equalized to restore shalom.

Some Biblical scholars argue that the Jubilee Year was never carried out in practice, suggesting that God has ceased to care about economic justice, that mounting inequalities do not lead to violence, and that we are off the hook. The Old Testament prophets repeatedly denounced those who devoured widows and orphans, taking over lands and houses until there were no (free) people left in the land. When the Children of Israel lost their land and were living in Babylonian exile they pondered their calamity and, with the help of prophets like Jeremiah and Isaiah, they understood that idolatry and injustice were the cause of their disaster.

There is a lesson here for all societies to ponder—that growing inequalities can only be defended by violence, and no society can last without mechanisms of redistribution. Free public education, progressive income and inheritance taxes, and universal health insurance are examples of what is needed to prevent social collapse. But the wealthy and powerful tend to enact social justice only if and when violent breakdown of society threatens, not because of a deeper principle of God’s word and human solidarity.

Perpetual Jubilee begins now: At the beginning of his ministry, in the Synagogue of Nazareth, Jesus published his “movement manifesto” by reading from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me for he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s Favor.

“... Then he began to speak to them, ‘This text is being fulfilled today even as you listen.’” (Luke 4:18-19).

In *The Politics of Jesus* John How-

ard Yoder quotes a word study by Andre Trocme that identified Jesus’ announced “Year of the Lord’s Favor” with the Jubilee Year. This has become the consensus of an increasing number of New Testament interpreters. In fact, once this connection is made, it is hard to find anything in the Gospels that does not illustrate an ongoing enactment of the Jubilee.

In Jesus’ coming, Jubilee was no longer a periodic and oft’ neglected part of Israel’s history, but the Messiah and his traveling community practiced an ongoing Jubilee celebration. Jesus went about forgiving sins, bypassing the temple sacrifice system. He taught his disciples to pray, “Forgive us our debts as we have forgiven those who are indebted to us,” a moral and economic initiative of grace. Every healing was at the same time a restoration to full participation in the community of Israel. The feeding of the 5,000 and the 4,000 illustrated the plenty that comes from a radical sharing that is blessed by God.

The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost triggered a Jubilee avalanche of, sin forgiveness, economic restoration, healing, and baptism into communion of the saints. 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. Jesus came, as he said, not to abolish the law but to fulfill it.

Every paycheck turned over to the common treasury is a Jubilee. Sins

forgiven keep restoring us into the communion of saints. Every guest welcomed, every potluck shared, every coat that covers a homeless brother are ripples spreading out from the Jubilee that Jesus launched. Our partnership with Valle Nuevo and other oppressed members of the world family are a foretaste of the healing of the nations implied in Jubilee. The Holy Spirit keeps planting new communities that explore new forms of sharing and ministry in the Spirit of Jesus. Young people visit our communities and are inspired these days to believe that another world is not just possible, it already exists. Repentance, reconciliation, and acts of restitution keep the celebration going for another generation.

We must also acknowledge that our histories as communities include many times of failure. Structures and traditions of sharing, as necessary as the skeleton is to the body, have not always kept us from hardening our hearts and betraying the Jesus who has called us together. Our Jubilee celebration is also a time to remember the unfinished work of reconciliation, where God is waiting for our hearts to turn and offer grace. Repentance, reconciliation and restoration are the Jubilee way to begin again.

Everlasting Jubilee: The Revelation of St. John offers a glimpse of the everlasting Jubilee celebration that has already begun. We are privileged to live in such a time with Jesus in communities around the world who are called to announce and practice an everlasting Jubilee. Come join the feast! □

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Shalom Connections

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SMC Leaders Retreat: Hopes and Plans for 2007

By David Janzen

Shalom Mission Community Coordinators have a tradition of meeting each January for a long weekend hosted by one community group we want to know better. Two years ago we met at The Simple Way in Philly. After freezing in the winter wonderland of Grain of Wheat Community in Winnipeg in 2006, this year we headed south to Waco, Texas, to enjoy the hospitality at Hope Fellowship (January 18-21).

These retreats have evolved into multi-layered events that mix together old-timers and younger leaders learning the ropes. We review the past year with each community, troubleshooting some difficult agenda and giving thanks for God's blessings in 2006. We also confirmed plans for a delegation going to our Salvadoran sister community in March to join in the construction of houses there the seven neediest families in Valle Nuevo. (Look for a trip and construction report in our next issue.)

Plans for the August 5-7 SMC

Gathering: We gave particular attention to plans for the Shalom Mission Community Gathering in Evanston, August 5-7 following the Reba Place Fellowship/Church's 50th Anniversary Celebration. The Reba Jubilee cele-

bration is a "Y'All Come" kind of event August 3-5. Persons eager to relive and learn from 50 years of communal history are encouraged to visit the web site at www.rebaplace.org/ Reba_Place_Jubilee for registration information.

The SMC gathering will be a more modest-sized "family reunion" kind of event. Jonathan Wilson Hartgrove (Rutba House) will be our guest speaker and the Biblical Jubilee our theme. Invitations and registration forms will be sent to communities with whom SMC has had significant recent connections. If you have not gotten an invitation by the end of March and want to participate in the SMC gathering, write David Janzen or send an e-mail to dhjanzen2@juno.com.

At Waco we stayed in several homes, ate meals at different tables getting to know our hosts and be known a variety of settings. Dale Gish and I carry a radiant memory from our time with the Mathias-Ryan family. Following a day of meetings and agenda, we were regaled with a late evening recital by our hosts where teenage daughters, a rambunctious son and their parents blessed us with a series of Spanish and English songs--the most skillfully sung and soulfully rendered family music imaginable, with several guitars and a viola accompanying. The singing ended in a circle of prayer for Ramona (mother of the family) who has only recently learned of the cancer in her body and about the battle ahead. Once



Luis and Gwendolyn Matias-Ryan, making beautiful music.

again we felt the incredible riches God has poured out on his people, along with the struggles we are asked to bear intimately with one another in the assurance of Jesus' presence. What a family, what a welcome, and what a wonderful God who has called us together!

Crawford Peace House

Let us see what love can do



By David Janzen

Nancy Gatlin introduced us to her friend Kay Lucas, a raspy-voiced white-haired 64-year-old grandmother, who runs the Crawford, Peace Center. We were a car-load of renegades from the SMC Leaders' Retreat, welcomed to hot cinnamon rolls, rooms of anti-war literature, and stories about the Center's peace witness. The town of Crawford, Texas, is famous, of course, because President George W. Bush's ranch is just down the road. Crawford has also been a magnet for protests and vigils that peace activist Cindy Sheehan and others have staged as close as they can get to the Bush ranch entrance. Kay Lucas runs the Crawford Peace

Center as a home base for anti-war groups and peace-minded visitors who drop in, like us.

The Crawford Peace Center was founded in August, 2003, with help from the Dallas Peace Center. It is in an aging frame house with clapboard siding and an upgraded kitchen for serving meals to hundreds if need be, those who gather to protest the U.S. military occupation of Iraq. Every time there is a Presidential press conference at the Bush Ranch, Kay Lucas tells us, the Peace Center holds an alternative press conference that often gets the last word on the network news.

Kay tells us that more than 10,000 persons came through the Peace Center in August of 2005 when Cindy Sheehan held her fast and vigil at the Bush Ranch entrance. The media swarmed around the story of the President's refusal to talk with this mother whose son was killed while serving with the U.S. military in Iraq. "When hundreds and

thousands of persons came through the Peace Center needing food and support," Kay said, "It was a miracle how folks got organized and cared for each other. If everyone does what they can it all works together."

Even though West Texas is Bush country and pro-war, there is also a persistent peace witness. Nancy Gatlin recalled August 2005 when Hope Fellowship opened its meeting house in Waco (twelve miles away) as a center for non-violence training of those who would take part in the protests. Hope Fellowship has expanded its own peace witness by helping convene "Every Church a Peace Church" meetings with other Waco congregations.

Meanwhile, Kay Lucas has been making friends in Crawford with neighbors who once saw advocates of peace as traitors. But as the war drags on, neighbors are beginning to talk, and even make donations. However, the future of the Peace Center as a support base for protesters at the Bush ranch may be limited because the Bushes have announced they will retire from the White House to Dallas, not the farm. But whether in Crawford, Waco or the world, peace has a future. □



ST. FRANCIS

Some Important SMC Dates 2007

March 10-19:	Valle Nuevo trip
April 6-8:	Easter retreat (Hope Fellowship)
May 14:	SMC newsletter contributions deadline
May 24-26 (tentative):	Community retreat (Reba)
June TBA	Strawberry Festival (Plow Creek)
June 22-24:	Sojos Nature and Purpose of the Church Semi
July 4:	Celebration of Jahweh's kingdomship (Sojos)
August 3-5:	Reba 50 th Anniversary
August 5-7:	SMC Gathering
August 20:	SMC newsletter contributions deadline
October TBA	Plow Creek Harvest Festival
October 30 - Nov 4:	Celebration of the Faithful (Sojos)
November 12:	SMC newsletter contributions deadline
Jan. 17-20, 2008	SMC Leader's Retreat (Proposed at Sojos)

School For Conversion - Sojourners Style

by Dale Gish

Take thirteen people who are interested in learning what God might have for them in the New Monasticism movement, add a dash of Jonathan and Leah Wilson-Hartgrove, combine that with a church community who is asking the same question, and what do you get? A very encouraging, Kingdom-provoking weekend for all involved.

The students clearly came to this School for Conversion (SFC) to learn. They were attentive, asked great questions, and were wrestling with how to apply all that they learned. Each of the four Sojourner households hosted at least 3 students, sharing community life in the form of meals, living space, bathrooms, Sabbath, ice cream, and quite a few late-night conversations.

The sessions were lively, with talks, sermons, testimonies, songs, a skit, and dialogue about the kind of life that Church of the Sojourners is trying to live out. We had testimonies from Zoe Mullery who talked about two moments of conversion: one in a Bible study with 80 year olds, the other as folks at Sojourners helped her step towards Jesus and away from false loves. Rick DiMicco shared about his journey from life on the streets to a life of love in church community.

I started the weekend with a talk which pointed to John the Baptist as the first Monastic, seeing his call to repentance and new life as fresh and alive for us today. Tim Otto traced God's desire to redeem humanity by forming a people, starting in Genesis and ending with the New Jerusalem that God brings to reality at the end of the book of Revelation. Tim Lockie talked about how to overcome our individualistic tendencies and actually live lives as part of a people. Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove discussed the importance of resisting the principalities and



School(s) for Conversion participants reflect and digest the experiences of their weekend at Sojourners.

powers by living lives of discipleship and witness. Debbie Gish presented "Celebration of Yahweh's Kingship," Sojourners' July 4th celebration, as a way of giving our allegiance and worship to God and not to our nation. We had a session discussing communal practices: Edith Bernard talked about the practice of hospitality, Laura Hare presented Sabbath and prayer, Debbie Gish presented common life, and I talked about shared finances. In the final session Tim Otto underlined the centrality of Love and Grace in our life together.

Two SFC participants came from Billings, Montana, part of a newly formed Christian community there. Just one month earlier, two families with young children and a single man had moved together into a large house, trying to be a place of God's love and presence in the poorest neighborhood of Billings. They were eager to learn and be encouraged by a more established community. We look forward to more contact and encouragement with them as they live into their adventurous calling.

Other participants included an Episcopal priest, a youth pastor, a student, three people from Boise, Idaho, who are considering community living, a leader in the cooperative movement, and a member of the "Mustard Seed House" (Washington state) that Tom Sine is part of.

We concluded the weekend with our gathered worship service which included a Belizean feast prepared by Louise Harris. Worship together was lively, joyful, and a real demonstration of how good and pleasant it is for brothers and sisters to dwell together in unity. Our guests expressed their thankfulness for the weekend, for the encouragement and inspiration of participation in the life God has given us. We at Church of the Sojourners left the weekend encouraged by the good work God is doing in people across the country. God is good! □

Upcoming Schools for Conversion

- March 24-26, Lexington, KY (hosted by Commuality)
- April 13-15, Americus, GA (hosted by Koinonia Farm)
- May 17-20, Philadelphia/Camden, NJ (hosted by The Simple Way and Camden Community Houses)
- June 1-2, Indianapolis, IN (New Monasticism conference hosted by Englewood Christian Church)
- July 6-10, Collegeville, MN (New Monasticism conference hosted by St. Johns University)

Visit www.newmonasticism.org for more details on any of the upcoming schools.

This One Will Grow, for the Harvest

By Zoe Mullery, *Church of the Sojourners*



Minutes after landing! In center, R to L: Zoe, Tessa, Bishop Philip (behind Michael) and Michael in the village of Padak (our plane is in the background).

The Lost Boys of Sudan: As many as 30,000 children in Southern Sudan endured a years-long nightmare together in the 1980s and 90s when government militias attacked their villages, killing and scattering their families. The children walked hundreds of miles through the scorching African savannah, losing many thousands of their number to lions, crocodiles, hyenas, drowning, starvation, thirst, infection, illness, and madness, not to mention being pursued and shot at by soldiers and hostile tribes whose territory they entered. The Northern Sudan Muslim government was on an aggressive offensive lasting twenty-one years to terrorize and destroy the mostly Christian and animist South. After three years in a refugee camp in Ethiopia, war broke out there, forcing these “Lost Boys” to set out again on foot to walk over a thousand miles to Kakuma refugee camp in northern Kenya, where they lived out the rest of their childhood. Many still live there.

Michael Ayuen Kuany, now 26, was one of over 3000 chosen from Kakuma to come to the United States in 2001, and ended up at Wooden Bridge Christian community in Wisconsin, where he met

Tessa Richardson, who has since migrated to Sojourners. (Michael will be moving here in May.) Michael managed in five years’ time to get his GED, enter college, graduate, and get American citizenship. During those years, he also learned that he was not, in fact, an orphan—miraculously, both his parents, as well as his two brothers and two sisters, survived the war which had taken over two and a half million lives. (His younger sister, however, was soon to die in a refugee camp from diarrhea.)

A peace accord signed in 2005 has opened up Southern Sudan to a stream of returning refugees. Sojourners got involved in helping Michael make his reunion journey, accompanied by Tessa and me. We left Nairobi for the tiny village of Padak, near Bor Town, on January 2, 2007.

For those of you who have visited or been connected with Valle Nuevo, there are many similarities in the two histories of El Salvador and Sudan: how an oppressive government uses its power and political maneuvering against its own people, the obscene numbers of people tortured and murdered (in Sudan, the estimate is two million killed), the hope that is placed in rebel fighters who defend the op-

pressed while committing transgressions of their own, the role of faith in giving people the strength to continue in horrific, agonizing suffering.

Two elements which are quite different, which change the dynamics, are first of all, the fact that the assault on the Southern Sudanese by the North is in great part religious in nature, framed by the northern militias as cleansing the land of infidels. The imposition of Islamic Sharia law (the most extreme of Islamic interpretations, legislating the covering of women, the suppression of churches, public stoning and whipping for certain crimes, etc.) on all of Sudan, including non-Muslims, and the attempt to forcibly convert Christians to Islam are examples of the struggles of Christians in Sudan.

The other element that sets this situation apart from El Salvador and other similar situations is the extreme isolation of Southern Sudan. Without viable roads, electricity, or telephones, the only way to get to this vast area is by foot or by little plane, and once there, it is not easy to make contact with the distant world outside. These two elements increase the intensity of the hunger Sudanese Christians have for contact and encouragement of Christians in the larger world.

There are so many stories I could tell about our time there. I should probably describe Michael’s reunion with his mother, the look on her face



This little boy’s skeleton costume was his only clothing.

as she embraced her boy, last seen at age five, now, a grown man returning as a strong, tall leader to encourage his people. Or the beautiful welcome night celebration, when the whole village came out and surrounded us, singing call and response songs of welcome and thanksgiving and also songs about cows (the Dinka are a people who love their cows, and Michael says most of their songs are about cows). Or worshiping in a small mud-and-grass Episcopal church, with children playing the drums and women dressed all in white keeping time with tall thin wooden crosses. Or the community meeting we attended with many government VIPs, soldiers and villagers that ended up lasting nine hours, without breakfast, lunch, or break of any kind. Or the curiosity and glee of the kids, as they found endless ways to tease us, play with us, feel our hair and get as many pictures of themselves taken as possible. Or the beauty of the clusters of pointed-roof tukuls, the small round mud houses, as we walked through the village in the moonlight. Or the orphan kids who asked us if we could possibly pay for their education. Or the elders of the village, old men with wooden staffs and gaunt craggy faces, coming to welcome Michael and give him their blessings and exhortations.

The moment which is haloed in my memory just now, as I leaf through the rich collage of experiences and impressions, is one hot afternoon in Bor Town when I interviewed Bishop Philip with Michael and Tessa. Bishop Philip had been a spiritual father to many hundreds of orphans in Kakuma. I asked him, at one point, how he has been able to keep hope through all the years of suffering. He responded that he is encouraged by the faith of the next generation, Michael's generation, knowing that they will carry on. "I plant a seed!" he said, smiling at Michael. "This one will grow, for the harvest."

I looked at Michael as his beloved mentor and role model of faith spoke these words, and it was as if I could physically see him receive



Michael's joyful reunion upon finding a childhood friend on the streets of Bor Town.

those words into himself, be sown, and ready himself for that work of carrying on. He said that Bishop Philip had preached tirelessly to those suffering at Kakuma, "Have confidence in God," even while their physical lives showed precious little, seemingly, of God's provision for them. As Michael spoke, I felt the roots of his faith grip yet tighter onto their foundation, as he soaked in Bishop Philip's encouragement and expectation.

I relate this small moment out of many possible stories because I also felt "sown" by Bishop Philip and by the Christians I met there. Even in their tremendous need, in their lack of even the basic necessities of life, I felt that they were encouraging me to

"have confidence in God." They were also sowing in me, as Bishop Philip did with Michael, the fact that they need me, they need other Christians. I returned to the U.S. with a strong motivation to help address some of the many needs they have, but it is not a motivation which comes from guilt at my relative wealth, or a sense of pity, but from a powerful sense of the unity of our faith and our interdependence. I have been sown with the fierce and gentle faith of longsuffering people, and the fruit it is forming is the desire to include and be included in the same family of faith, sharing what we have and encouraging each other to carry on having confidence in God. □

If you'd like to contribute to any of the needs of the saints in Sudan, we made a list of a few things we thought would be most helpful:

- Building a school in Jalle, Michael's home village. (For more information on the fund Michael started for this, go to jalleuniteddevelopment.org.)
- Bibles/hymnals/Book of Common Prayer in Dinka.
- Support for Bishop Philip and other pastors' families (no one gets a paycheck).

- A truck and a satellite phone for the diocese Bishop Philip serves, to reduce isolation.
- Education for orphans (\$85 per month per kid).
- Visit them!
- Help make it possible for Bishop Philip and/or others to visit the U.S.

Donations can be made to Church of the Sojourners, with memo as to what you'd like it to go to (1133 Florida St., San Francisco, CA 94110). You can also email Michael at wunakuot@yahoo.com with any thoughts, ideas, questions or encouragements.

“One Hand Cannot Clap”:

Excerpts from a Conversation with Bishop Philip Chol, with Michael Kuany, Tessa Richardson, and Zoe Mullery, Diocese of Jalle, Southern Sudan, January 12, 2007. Bishop Philip Chol was ordained in 1988, and in 2004 became a bishop of the Reformed Episcopal Church of the Sudan.

Zoe Mullery: Bishop Philip, with all the suffering and need pressing on you for so many years, how do you keep from falling into despair? How do you keep hope?

Bishop Philip Chol: Yes, I keep hope. First of all, I know that if I fail, then the next generation will fulfill what I am doing. For example, like Michael here, he will fulfill that gap. His faith will hold up others.

ZM You're planting seeds.

BP Yes, I plant a seed! This one will grow, for the harvest.

Michael Kuany: In Kakuma refugee camp there were a lot of horrible things that were happening to [us]. There was a lack of food, a lack of water, and all the other necessities that the human body needs. But Bishop Philip preached to us and said, “Even though you are lacking these things, you know that there is God. Do not forget this.

Have confidence in God.” So we believed in God, and we hoped, even though we were going through so many things.

BP Yes. Yes. God is a God! When I talked with my wife yesterday, she told me the children have been asking for things, and we have no money. What shall I do? I say, “Don't worry, be patient. I will come and share that suffering with you. Don't worry, I am coming. I will be there.” What else shall I tell her? The difficulties which have passed through here for twenty-one years are not simple. You sleep between death and life, between death and life. You say “God, do what you can do.” I have the confidence of God. Jeremiah, chapter 29 verse 11: “The things I am planning for you, it will not harm you; it is for your future. I like that chapter. God is planning.

ZM What are some of the struggles you are challenged with these days?

BP First of all, the Christians, when I am teaching them, they are suffering. If somebody gets sick, I don't have the means to help them, so I have to pray, to ask Heaven, let God help to heal the Christian. Secondly, as far as material, they don't have food and clean water. We have a lot of things here, typhoid and disease in the water, they affect us so that all the time you find that



Bishop Philip Chol, our constant companion and Michael's spiritual mentor.

they are sick. Also, the pregnant woman, if the woman goes to deliver, there is no hospital. There is no operation. She will just die.

There are so many orphan children. I give them the word of God, I preach to them, but materially, no, there is no way out to help them. For myself also, my work is volunteer work. There is no pay for pastors, for bishops, there is no money anywhere. It is upon my family, upon the pastors' families. Even though I have faith, my family, when they are hungry, when my child cries, when my wife cries, because they are hungry, what shall I do? What shall I give to them? If I say that God is great, they will say, “Where is God? Where is food? We need food right now, not God.” This is hard.

I tell them, we are born without anything, so we will go to heaven without anything. The bird and animal, they don't cultivate, as the Bible say. So let us live like them, like a bird. The bird is eating, the animal is eating what God gives. They don't have, and they don't cultivate, and they are alive. This is what I tell them, to comfort their life for hope.

Another struggle we are having here, also: to build a church here we use grass only, and mud. Tomorrow, one year, and then in another year we have to build it again. One year, then next year we build it again. Christians are exhausted because always we build. We don't have our own buildings. It is difficult. Every year you are bringing the grass, the grass, because ants are eating the grasses. This you can see. But it is so impor-



Some of our welcoming committee. We spent many happy hours with these kids over the coming days.

(Continued from left page)

tant for us to gather together. We need this.

Also, if I call the Christians, the pastors to come for a gathering, they don't have bicycles; they don't have food. If I call them for a meeting today, they might come after two to three weeks. Yes, this is the nature of it, you want to do something now, and it will take you two weeks. It is difficult. Yes.

Hunger always will come. What shall we eat? All the Christians, they go to look for food, and the church will remain empty because the people must eat. The church will remain nobody. And what shall you do? You don't have anything to give them. They go. And you can't tell them, "Just do this!" The children are crying at home.

ZM What kind of partnership do you hope for between the Christians in America and the Christians in Sudan?

BP Yes. I need the partnership. We Christians here, we can give the spiritual to the people, but we don't

have the material to give. For example, the people need the Bible in Dinka, in mother tongue. They need a Common Prayer in mother tongue, and hymn books in mother tongue. But where shall we go and buy? I don't have money and transport. We need, of course, clean water, schools, theology for our pastors so hungry for God. The needs are great. But we have a saying in Arabic, we say, "You do what you can afford to do, and leave what you can't."

If the child cries inside, you run to him and see what has happened to the child. We are crying, we are the church of Africa. Where are our brothers and sisters? Because we are dying in the name of Christianity.

MK A lot of people, a lot of churches don't really know what is going on in Sudan, and what is affecting the people of God here. But the few who come, like you, Zoe and Tessa, you are the messengers.



BP Even if you cannot give anything, you visit us, and see what is going on, see our situation. The situation will tell itself. This is for all the African church. Not in my diocese only, but the African church. I need you tomorrow, ten more! As you can see, one hand cannot clap. But many hands can. So I welcome more of you to come here, and I want to tell them, "Do what you can do! Don't fear! Even though you have only a needle, and you give the needle to us; we need it, we accept it. Our church is an empty hand but rich in inspiration. Come and see." □

Homestead Heritage: Preserving Traditional Crafts and a Back-to- the-Earth Way of Life

by Barb Grimsley
as told to David Janzen

As a break from the SMC Leadership Retreat, several of us visited Homestead Heritage, an intentional community a few miles outside of Waco. Their "village" is like a living museum, displaying the life and work of an earlier era, with a water-powered grist mill, a woodworking shop, a farm with draft horses, potters working at their wheels, a blacksmith at his forge, an old restored barn with a gift shop and a bakery/deli where us tourists stopped for home-made ice-cream.

They offer classes in wood turning, herb gardening, basketry, blacksmithing, pottery making and bee keeping. The local men and boys wear plaid shirts while the women and girls wear long skirts, braided hair and kerchiefs. We found them friendly, respectful and a little on guard.

The Homestead Heritage community began a generation ago in Hells Kitchen, NY and moved several times until they found this place and a way of life that would allow parents and children to work together on a daily basis. They school their children at home and publish a curriculum which is widely used in homeschooling circles.

Homestead Heritage attracts thousands of visitors for their Sweet Sorghum Festival around Labor Day and a Craft Fair on Thanksgiving Day

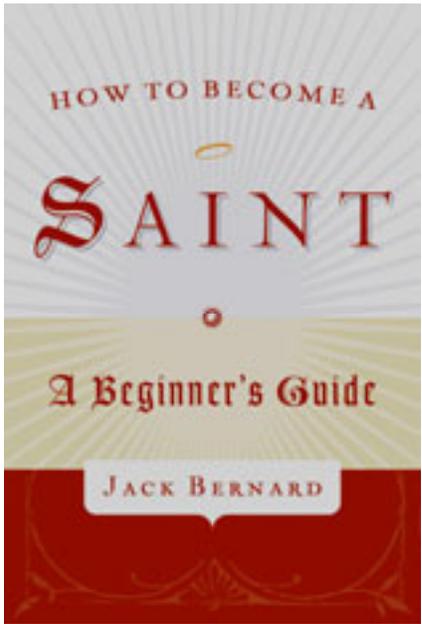
weekend when many of their beautiful hand-made items are sold to support the community.

Homestead Heritage includes about forty families who, when asked, identify themselves as a non-violent intentional community in the Anabaptist tradition. They do not have a common purse, but are mostly employees of their non-profit corporation, and give a large portion of their income to their church of about 900 members. Homestead Heritage promotional materials highlight their calling to preserve classic crafts and a homesteading way of life without mentioning their Christian community basis. We wondered if a communal life lived "on display" has taught them to be shy about their deeper beliefs—a way to avoid controversies with strangers. We came away with much to admire and some unanswered questions. □

How to Become a Saint,
by Jack Bernard
A book review, by Tim Otto

Jack Bernard wrote that his life goal was to learn how to pray. I didn't realize that until after he died and I read it in some of his writings. But as soon as I read that goal of Jack's, it made perfect sense of who he was. Whether standing in a grocery check-out line or counseling someone as a pastor at the Church of the Sojourners, Jack always seemed to be in a conversation with God. Jack was often having an inner dialogue with God about how to participate in God's loving work and play. Hanging out with Jack was great because it felt like being invited into the conversation that he was already having with God. Being with Jack, we found ourselves relating our thoughts and actions to God in a way that we hadn't previously.

Happily, Jack wrote a book that allows something of that conversation to continue. Brazos Press is publishing Jack's book with the title *How to Become a Saint: A Beginner's Guide*. While the title is somewhat more provocative than what Jack may have intended (Jack's own title



for the book was *Grace and Holiness*), it does capture the audacity of Jack's book. Jack claims that a real holiness is possible for all of us. He reminds us that holiness doesn't mean getting it all right, but giving our all to God. And if that is what God asks of us, then our good and faithful God will make it possible.

Jack doesn't suggest any formulaic techniques to become holy. An avid reader of the desert fathers, mystics, and saints, Jack relays ancient Christian wisdom in a way that the

opens up those riches for the modern reader. In the first half of the book Jack treats topics such as humility, faith, love, and obedience. The last half of the book is devoted to concrete practices such as prayer, scripture reading, money, and discerning God's will. Although other books on discipleship (such as Richard Foster's *Celebration of Discipline*) treat similar topics, one strength of *How to Become a Saint* is the seriousness with which Jack takes the church (as the necessary context for discipleship). Every practice finds its home in Christian community.

How to Become a Saint is written out of Jack's own struggles with growing into Christian maturity. It is an honest look at how growth might happen given all of our human sin and weakness. As such, it probably won't appeal much to those for whom the Christian life is humming along "just fine." But for those of us yearning to see the promises of God realized in our lives and yet constantly beset by the evidence of our own lack of progress, Jack's book is a helpful and hopeful read. I find myself returning to it often and highly recommend it for both group and individual study as a guide for discipleship in the context of communities and churches. □



Five of us from Reba Place recently attended the annual Family Reunion gathering held in Philly/Camden, hosted by the simple way and Camden Community Houses. Here are some photos from the weekend!

Top Left: Raucous dancing and music-making led by the Psalters
 Top Right: Friday's "Night of Celebration" was filled with blessings and commissionings, including the welcome of new babies and babies yet to come. Pictured here are (L to R) Chris and Lara Lahr, Katie Jean and Eric Dahlaw, and Michelle and Michael Brix.
 Bottom Right: Some Family Reunion gatherers helped set up a walking labyrinth on the floor of Camden's Fellowship House. The labyrinth aided in Saturday night's time of reflection and prayer.

Hope Fellowship News

By David Heddy

Greetings friends from Waco! Following are a few highlights of what has been going on at Hope Fellowship in the past few months...

Shalom Mission Communities

Leader's Retreat: We recently hosted the SMC Leader's Retreat and had a splendid time together. Folks from Reba Place, Sojourners, Plow Creek and our community crammed into the Gatlin's living room for three days of meeting together. We planned SMC events for the year ahead, but most importantly we spent time building friendship and worshipping God together. On Friday evening all of Hope Fellowship joined SMC leaders for a wonderful Mediterranean meal and a Doug Selph comedy show. After the meal, most of us went to a local coffee shop and listened to quality tunes from "Old Dallas Highway", a super cool band which includes Hope Fellowship's Jesse Miller, Neil Miller and J.B. Smith.

Men's Retreat: The first weekend of February, the men took off to Three Mountain Retreat Center. We did not coordinate the meals before going on the retreat, so other than the "King Ranch Chicken" served by the Retreat Center, every meal turned out to be burritos. However, Dale Barron made up for anything lacking in our meals by providing some seriously good snacks. Virgil Vogt from Reba Place came down to visit with us and share some thoughts from the Scriptures. He led us through the Beatitudes and encouraged us to

receive the blessings that God has prepared for those who are poor in spirit, meek, peacemakers, etc. A huge thanks to Virgil for joining us for our men's retreat.

Anti-Racism Training: In response to an encouragement from our visitation last year, some Hope Fellowship members have been attending anti-racism training/workshops. These members were our representatives attending these trainings and sharing with the rest of us how we can better love and respect each other as we seek to become the New Humanity. Norma Torres and Luis Matias-Ryan traveled to San Antonio a few months ago to attend a training on internalized racism. Joe and Nancy Gatlin joined Norma and Luis in early February for the Damascus Road Anti-Racism Training in Kansas. We look forward to learning from them and together asking the Spirit to teach us how to live in unity and resist racism together.

Cell Groups: With the continued growth at Hope, our cell groups have been an important place for discipleship, outreach to the surrounding community, and learning to be family. January and February have been reevaluation months, and some members have changed groups and other new groups have been formed. Furthermore, our first primarily Spanish speaking group has been meeting the past few weeks. We hope that this cell group and the others, too, can be places where we can invite our neighbors and grow into the maturity of Christ together.

Other News:

Please pray for complete healing from breast cancer for Ramona Matias-Ryan. Also ask God to give the Matias-Ryan family wisdom as they decide the best route of treatment to take. Ramona walks an hour every day, eats as if living in the Garden of Eden and is feeling good.

Alan Caruthers has been dealing with a bone marrow disease. Please pray for healing of his body and for his family (Laura and Sammy) to experience God's closeness during this time.



PSALM 139

Woodcut made by Emanuel Dominguez, Aranza Torres, Jesse Miller, Noheli Calvillo, and J.B. Smith

Youth from Hope Fellowship last year collaborated to make this poster illustrating Psalm 139. Using woodcut blocks, they reproduced the poster many times and sold the copies to raise more than \$200 to build houses in Valle Nuevo, El Salvador. To order a full-sized poster on high-quality paper, contact J.B. at jbin-waco@grandecom.net (minimum suggested donation \$20, plus postage, all for a good cause).

We are delighted to have Gabriella Gatlin back with us after her time living at Jubilee. She has been working as an interpreter at the hospital and is preparing to get her master's degree in education.

Our youth have been studying the foundational beliefs of the Christian faith. They have taken this learning process seriously and brought us some challenging questions. The study culminated in the young people standing before the church community on Sunday morning and sharing their Confession of Faith. □



Sojo News

By Zoe Mullery

As of this writing, the laundry is still tumbling from our first “School for Conversion” weekend. Fifteen guests filled our homes and encouraged us with their good questions and desire to live lives of deep discipleship. [See reflection on this weekend elsewhere in this issue.]

We celebrated Epiphany this year for the first time as a whole-congregation event. I was in Sudan then so cannot give a first-person account, but heard it was a good feast and fellowship event, and looks to be a solid new addition to our church calendar. [See reflection on my trip to Sudan with Tessa Richardson elsewhere in this issue.]

Dale Gish and Katie Piché attended the SMC Leadership gathering in Waco in January, just days before Dan and Katie packed their truck to move to Plow Creek for a time. A farewell party for them ended by Dan and Katie giving gifts to everyone—a CD of them playing and singing Katie’s songs. Their absence is a big hole in our midst, only partly consoled by the fact that Plow Creek gets to have them for awhile. Since I missed the party due to illness, I got a private performance of Katie doing Tante Tina poems in character. Plow Creekers, you have to request her to do this for you too.



Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove teaches an African song, “Never Give Up.”

Not to be missed.

Both Ian and Matt Creeger are now on a worship team, playing bass and guitar with Mike and Teri, and it is just so smile-producing to see the whole Creeger family leading worship together.

Our “Apprenticeship” this year has had a really rough time, and for a variety of reasons, four out of five of the original apprentices have left. If this were “Survivor,” Jadie Mollier would have won the million bucks, or the island, or whatever it is Survivors get. Instead, she gets to live with the Gishes, and we are glad she’s still here. We continue to keep contact with the other four in their various situations, and look for ways God might intersect our lives again in the future.

Somewhere back in December, a good 2/3 of the congregation attended a reading given by my creative writing students at San Quentin State Prison, who were thrilled to have an outside audience.

Edith Bernard continues to thrive and grow in her hospice work.

Mary Toney’s father died peacefully, surrounded by family in Minnesota after becoming suddenly and inexplicably ill in November. Please remember Mary’s family in your prayers. Jeff Hare underwent successful cataract surgery recently, and is recuperating nicely. Rick DiMicco will soon have esophageal surgery; please keep him in your prayers. Jose Guatemala recently went to the emergency room for chest pains and was diagnosed with an anxiety attack; he needs our prayers as well. I am still dealing with weird joint swelling after returning from Sudan, making walking difficult. Tim Lockie could also use your prayers as this is his busiest travel season for his job with InnerChange, when the exhilaration and enjoyment of being a full-time extrovert is paid for in exhaustion.

Kids are growing up, visitors are welcomed, households practice caring for each other, conflicts are encountered, prayers are prayed, jobs are worked, meals are eaten, God is worshiped, and by faith we know that we are all growing up into the full measure of the stature of Christ, together. □



‘School’ participants and Sojourners share Mission District burritos and conversation

Plow Creek News

By Kate Newhouse

The last few months have been times of missions with voyages afar and steady cultivation at home. For the Plow Creekers who farm nine months a year, winter is an opportune time to invest energy in others within and outside of our community, for cultivating ideas, and for communing with the Lord.

Both Erin Kindy and Jim Fitz have been on Christian Peacemaker Team (CPT) assignments in Barrancabermeja, Colombia. Erin told of one particular visit to hear the testimonies of villagers regarding encounters with military and paramilitaries who had set up camp in the middle of a village. To reach this place, Erin and a teammate journeyed by motor boat down the river for three and a half hours, then in a truck for another three hours, and then on the back of a mule for another four hours! The trip mostly went smoothly, except when Erin's mule started to lose his footing, slipping downhill in the mud, which toppled Erin off into the mud, and later another CPTer as well. Ah! . . . Colombia. Erin has many more wonderful, miserable, joyous and disheartening tales of the Lord's work in Colombia, available for both Spanish and English audiences.



Bill Newhouse with 2 Israeli soldiers during a demonstration held at a check point with Palestinian children holding signs and banners.

Jim Fitz has been a strong voice for peacemaking here in North America as well as in Colombia. In 2006 Jim spoke about the injustices he witnessed in Colombia at 34 locations and totaled over 1350 people in attendance both in Colombia and in North America.

Bill Newhouse went on a twelve-day delegation to Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Hebron with CPT. They met with both Israeli and Palestinian peace groups working toward a just solution to the Middle East conflict. The high

lights of his trip included conversing with Palestinian farmers as well as leaders of Rabbis for Human Rights, the Israeli Defense against Home Demolitions, members of Hamaas, Israeli soldiers and Palestinian refugees in a camp in Bethlehem. If you would like to find out more about any of these missions we would be happy to connect you. Write to newhouse@plowcreek.org.

During Christmas break, away from Goshen College, Daniel Foxvog went to the Gulf area with Mennonite Voluntary Service to repair homes in the continuing Katrina relief effort. Jim Fitz, Meg Foxvog and the Zehrs spent a day canning meat with Mennonite Central Committee for worldwide distribution to less fortunate folks.

The Horning family has voyaged across the ocean to Indonesia, Tutuk's homeland (where Neil and Tutuk met in Mennonite Central Committee service years ago). It's a weighty journey they undertake every few years. The Lord is faithful and is steadily working with them and their extended family through various crises and tough decisions.

Others participate in less adventure-some forms of mission on a daily



Here at Donna Hamish's memorial service is her husband Jim (on the right) with his daughter Laurie (on the left), his 3 grandchildren, and 2 great grandchildren.

(Continued from Previous Page)

and local basis. Sarah Foss and Melinda Grimes volunteer one day of the week to sort clothing and household items at "The Closet," our local thrift store. In this small three-horse town we are blessed with some pretty incredible resources.

On January 6th we celebrated Epiphany, the journey of the three magi from Persia to Bethlehem, with a play, time for reflection and refreshments. The following Sunday we held a memorial service for Donna Harnish. Many of her (and Jim's) family members came up from Texas for the gathering, which was a gracious time of sharing about Donna's life and reconnecting with family members and friends.

We Creekers have expressed a need to clear a path for the present and future journey in our community affairs. This has led us to form three groups to generate and implement new thoughts and ideas for our life together. Each member is part of one of the three groups based upon his/her interests--Group Gatherings, Spaces (Land, Utilities & Buildings), or Communications



committee. This has been a good way to empower people, to involve us in decision-making and shouldering more responsibilities.

The young folks have also been getting active! They've planned a fundraiser supper called a "Creeker Cocktail Party," with childcare provided. They're not serving real cocktails, the title is supposed to grab our attention, I think. They are raising money for a canoe trip to the boundary waters with Wilderness Wind.

The church has been nourishing the body, eating good spirit food. Since fall we have explored our membership commitments, focusing on one each month during the adult teaching time following Sunday Worship. What a wonderful time of deepening our connection in Christ by exploring the very commitments that we believe He wants us to keep. This month we are studying the commitment to use our gifts to build up the body of Christ. We hope the Lord will work among us! □

From Sanders Thornburg at Koinonia Farm:

I've lived at Koinonia Community almost 12 years now, just south a few miles from Americus Georgia. In all the years I have lived here, never have I felt so much danger as I did the other night as I huddled with my wife and children in our bathroom, praying in the dark, as our home was riddled with limbs and debris. We were lucky, with minimal damage. Just 7 miles down the road in Americus, they were not spared nature's fury. This week's tornadoes have devastated our town, as you may have heard. Never have I seen so much damage in my life...cars turned upside down and others hurled through buildings, collapsed homes, thousands of trees down everywhere. Still no electricity in Americus.

Today, as I drove through the town I have grown to love and call home, I could hardly see through my tears. Shredded; torn to pieces. Both George Bush and local resident, Jimmy Carter, walked the same chaotic streets as I did today, attempting to comfort those who lived in the neighborhoods where 200 plus homes were destroyed. Even our hospital is gone.

Koinonia's "Heart to Heart" home repair ministry van has been doing what little we can to help those in need. It's amazing to see so many people reaching out to neighbors and to one another. We appreciate your prayers as Americus begins the slow process of rebuilding. Ironically, Americus is the home of "Habitat for Humanity" and Koinonia is the birth-place of Habitat for Humanity. A town that has helped so many people all over the world build decent affordable homes, is now in need of help from the world. Still, God is good.

Peace in Christ, *Sanders Thornburg*

Reba Place News

By Annie Spiro

As I sit here at the Reba Place Fellowship "young people's" favorite local coffee shop, I watch fellow Evanstonians walk by with an almost-forgotten bounce in their steps. The air is milder today, the snow and ice are melting down sidewalks and into the street. Spring feels like it has sprung, but the cold is likely to return again - if only for a bit. This is a contemplative, anticipatory time of year.

The Fellowship, too, it seems, is in a period of intense forward vision, with a few meaningful backward glances. The major look backward lately was the passing of Linas Brown December 19. His was an exceptionally bright light, and we have definitely felt its loss this winter. Because Linas passed right before Christmas, and his funeral was held on December 30, many of us were out of town with family and friends, and thus were unable to attend to his death. So we held an informal sharing time on February 25 to better honor Linas' life and memory. Please pray for his wife, Virginia, as her condition worsens almost daily. She is almost entirely bedridden and is only eating a little.

Due to increased interest in the work of Mennonite theologian John Howard Yoder, Allan Howe is teaching a seven-week course on Yoder's

ecclesiology (vision of the church). The reading group consists mainly of apprentices, Patch household members, and varied practicing members. We are looking forward to the ways JoHoYo's teachings will enrich our lives.

As we have shared before, the Fellowship is in a huge time of transition as more young (and older!) people are feeling a deep call to communal life and wanting to visit for short or longer stays. Practicing member Celina Varela has stepped into the task of Hospitality Coordinator. Hopefully the strengthened communication of her new role will help orient visitors and us along the journey.

We are also beginning to gear up for this summer's SMC Gathering that follows Reba's 50th Anniversary! We expect as many as 400 persons for the 50th reunion and about 160 for the SMC Gathering, so there is no such thing as too soon for planning. A team consisting of David Janzen, Aaron Scott, apprentice Natalie Nyberg, and I (Patch member and extern Annie Spiro), make up the local planning committee for the SMC Gathering. We look forward to seeing many of you there!

In other exciting news, long-time Reba friend Paul Rhode and extern Heather Munn just announced their engagement, along with plans to move to Plow Creek where they plan to celebrate their May wedding. Added to the imminent nuptials of Chico Fajardo and Tatiana Heflin (to



Julie Lonneman

be held March 24), an expected first child for Katie Jean and Eric Dahlaw, and a daughter recently born to Reba friend Krystal Hamilton, this spring season is just bursting with new proof of God's love and providence.

As we approach the fifth anniversary of war in Iraq, Reba Place Church pastor Ric Hudgens is helping organize a March 16 ecumenical candle-light procession to downtown Evanston. The "Iraq Peace Witness and Prayer Vigil" is a national event, and RPC will be joining several other Evanston churches to offer our voices and prayers. Lord, hear us as we cry out for peace and forgiveness. Bless those everywhere who are working for an end to the violence. □



Here's a Reba original game! Look at the two pictures. Name seven things from the first picture that are missing from the second. Just kidding, ... there's only one! Yes, it is our dear Camp Lake retreat house. Here is a "before" and "after" from the recent demolition work. Now we wait eagerly for "all things to be made new."

Reba's Jubilee and Shalom Mission

Communities Gathering!

Jubilee is not just a 50-year celebration; it is an ongoing way of life that overflows in forgiveness of sins, redistribution of goods and social renewal rooted in the good news of Jesus present among his gathered people.

This August 3-5, Reba Place Fellowship and Reba Place Church are celebrating 50 years of life together. If you've been touched by this story or want to learn from this history, come help us celebrate God's grace through the years. We look forward to a party in Eiden Park and the Reba Meeting House, worship and testimonies from five decades of community life, activities for all ages. By April 1 we aim to have registration forms available for the Reba Jubilee celebration at:
www.rebaplace.org/Reba_Place_Jubilee.

This Jubilee celebration will continue in a Shalom Mission Communities Gathering, August 5-7, focusing on what God is doing now in the Shalom Mission Communities and in the wider Christian intentional community movement. We expect workshops led by community veterans and new monastic pioneers. Our lead speaker will be Jonathan Wilson Hartgrove from Rutba House (Durham NC) and the convener of Schools for Conversion that are gathering seekers into a new Christian communal movement.



Shalom Mission Community Gathering application packets will be mailed to all the Christian intentional communities with which we have some connection. If you have been overlooked in the mailing, please contact **dhjanzen2@juno.com**.

Save the dates:

Reba Jubilee—August 3-5

SMC Gathering—August 5-7

Shalom Connections

P.O. Box 6575

Evanston, IL 60202-6575

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