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June 2007: Relocation to Abandoned Places

## Living Among the Poor: What does it Mean for us?

by Julius Belser, *Reba Place Fellowship*

St. Paul received instructions from the Jerusalem conference "to remember the poor", which he was already eager to do (Galatians 2:10). This has been an important calling on my life as well. I have struggled again in recent times to understand what the New Monasticism calling to live with the poor in the "abandoned places of Empire" means for me and for us at Reba. What does it mean for us to live among the poor?

### **It means becoming poor in finances and in spirit:**

The essay, "The Poverty of Jesus," by Andrew Murray (Concern Pamphlet No. 11) was helpful to me in remembering how clearly Jesus was poor in purse as well as in spirit. And following Jesus involves both for us.

Another booklet, Living With The Poor by Jean Vanier, conveys the experience of persons in L'Arche, living in community with deeply wounded people, who often suffer a history of rejection from the dominant society. In such a community the challenge is to build long-term faithful relationships through listening and hope. The goal of such community is to discover beauty in each other and to enter into covenant with those whom society (the Empire) counts of no value. The challenge before us is to find the resources of God's Spirit to live with the poor in deep love-- not a service of caregivers and clients, but the deep love that creates a new "us."

Poverty is a relative term, depending for its definition on comparison. Perhaps ultimately it is the state of "not having enough." Yet many families with little do not think of

themselves as poor because they live in a spirit of gratitude. Perhaps the most painful poverty is to suffer in hopelessness. Jesus' poverty involved both personal weakness and glad dependence on his Heavenly Father's care. The recognition of our total dependence on God and others is, at the same time, our poverty and our wealth. In that state we can trust we will be

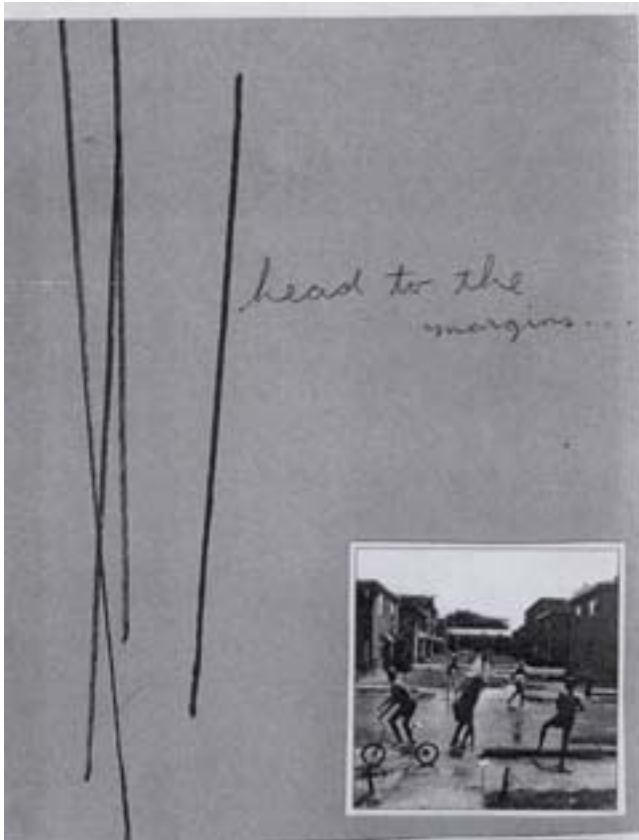
cared for and so share freely with our brothers and sisters in need, with our fears eased. We are aware of our limitations and thus very teachable. That is different from the world's resentful poverty and greed.

To accept our deep weakness and helplessness in a childlike way is something we learn from Jesus. Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty we might become rich. As we consider again this call to give ourselves to the poor and to live among them, it is important that we renew our desire to be like Jesus in poverty of purse and poverty of spirit. This gives us the opportunity to be close to our neighbors who are poor and to be very dependent on the power of God -- "as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing yet possessing all things."



*Continued, next page.*

# Relocation to Abandoned Places



dia; our sister community, Valle Nuevo, in El Salvador; in relief and development work in Angola with Guerra and Rosa Freitas, and in Argentina among the indigenous Toba churches with Richard and Ruth Anne Friesen. In all of these third-world relationships, our role seems to be accompaniment and presence rather than colonization.

In the same way that Paul and Barnabas were sent out, preparation for a venture into abandoned places of Empire involves more than exploring possible locations. It needs to include significant experience with poor people in our present environment.

There are many opportunities: We have poor neighbors, The Recyclery has partnerships working on bikes, the Reba Early Learning Center has the children of many low income families, the Sonshine Group members are poor in body and mental function, Senior Connections serves many isolated seniors, and Reba Place Development Corporation connects with many poor families in need of housing. Involvement in partner relationships with ministries in third-world countries is challenging, but exploring how to be supportive of groups where the poor are taking leadership, has many important lessons for us.

All of us are called to remember the poor and to find personal ways of relating. Only a few of us are likely called to move to the most deprived and exploited places of Empire. But we need to keep that calling before us, ready to move when the time and calling come. Some of us, because of age or other assignments, may not be available for going to the front lines. But as the call comes clearer and gets tested, the rest of us need to be ready to provide the tactical support necessary to back up those called to move. Remembering the poor and living with them is what God does, and what God desires for us to do as well.

### Remembering the poor while living among the rich:

The Reba Place Fellowship family is not rich, but we are living in the midst of the wealthy. Jesus taught how dangerous it is to be rich and how hard it will be for those with wealth to enter the Kingdom. Yet we choose to stay here and to raise our children and grandchildren amid the temptations of Mammon. Why?

One reason Reba Place Fellowship chose to live in Evanston was to be near college students, to evangelize them with the good news of radical Christianity in a visible communal witness. The opportunities for us to share with college students have become more frequent and dramatic in recent time.

We are called to offer some hopeful alternatives in a changing neighborhood -- to bring a prophetic witness

*(Continued on Page 7)*

**I believe that Reba Place Fellowship is called to launch and support Christian communities in the abandoned places of empire.** We need to accept that calling for ourselves and not just support other New Monasticism communities in their ventures. This has been our history, the reason why Reba began in an interracial neighborhood. Establishing Living Water Community Church in Rogers Park was following the call of downward mobility with Jesus. In moving south from Evanston, Living Water experienced increased cultural diversity and urban gang life. They considered prayerfully how much of the urban challenge they and their families could face or were called to bear.

Today there are many young Christian groups like Servant Partners, Word Made Flesh, Servants to Asian Poor, and Christian Vision Project who practice the presence of Jesus in Third-World slums. Urbana '07 has inspired young people in some of these radical ways of following Jesus among the poor.

We are finding our way as we support holistic ministries of friends Das and Doris Maddimadugu in In-

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## Shalom Connections

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## Having Nothing Yet Possessing Everything

An Editorial by David Janzen

I woke up this first morning of a retreat in the Plow Creek cabin to a raucous bird chorus that did not diminish, or even take notice of me, when I stepped outside. Cat birds, cardinals, warblers, wrens— all were passionately commenting on the text of “having nothing and yet possessing everything.”

I’m trying to finish this editorial on “moving to abandoned places of empire.” I’ve taken refuge in one of those abandoned places, escaping the city with its wealth of clamoring work, beckoning entertainment, and spiritual distractions.

I’ve been sinking into a kind of spiritual poverty—complaining a lot about bureaucrats who frustrate our work for affordable housing while probably becoming one myself, needing company yet finding fault with everyone, avoiding prayer. Last evening, when I finally got to the cabin, and night was settling in, I lit a candle and just sat there listening to the silence my heart was longing to hear. OK, OK! So love is the word God has been speaking from the beginning, but finally, now, once again, I can stop and let that wordless word be heard.

This cabin, while poor in electricity and its appliances, is rich in solitude. Ceasing from achievement, we allow space for God to dwell. Fasting from the pursuit of wealth, we find true wealth. Paradoxes abound, especially if one has the poverty--or is it the wealth--to contemplate them.

There is a huge difference between poverty voluntarily chosen for reasons of spirit and solidarity, and the hope-sucking intractable poverty suffered by billions in our world, whether this poverty comes from inner failure or imperial structures of exploitation. Most of us reading this essay only have the first option of voluntary poverty. There is nothing to feel guilty about if we were well-resourced in the advantages of this world when Jesus called us.

I’ve been reading, and want to recommend, a book about that call by Scott A. Bessenecker, [The New Friars: The Emerging Movement Serving the World’s Poor](#). Scott is director of global projects with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. He gathers testimonies and follows the lives of young people who have been transformed by living with their friends in garbage cities, prostitution rings, and conditions of modern-day slavery. Like earlier friars— Francis, Clare Patrick, and Bridgid— these young people are meeting Jesus in the poorest of the world’s poor.

Many young American Christians are shocked out of their comfort zones by mission trips, a more exotic feel-good kind of vacation. But do these cross-cultural exposures result in committed lives dedicated to Jesus among the poor? For such a life of voluntary poverty to be sustainable, Scott summarizes five recurrent qualities at the heart of the radical Christian life:

- Incarnation—tearing down the insulation and becoming real to those in trouble
- Devotion—making intimacy with Christ our all-consuming passion
- Community—intentionally creating interdependence with others
- Mission—looking outside ourselves
- Marginalization—being counter-cultural in a world that beckons us to assimilate at the cost of our conscience

In this issue of [Shalom Connections](#), you will find other testimonies and reflections on “moving to abandoned places of empire” that share in these same paradoxical qualities.

As Joanne and I discovered in the Congo back in the 60’s, then in community for decades since, and today, seeking with young people for a place to land in their vocations to follow Jesus among the poor, we find our wealth like the birds who, “having nothing, possess everything” in the life promised by Jesus.

## Commitment to the People We're Given

By Zoe Mullery, *Church of the Sojourners*

Of all of New Monasticism's Twelve Marks, this is the only one I really struggle with. Not at all in what I perceive as its spirit and its loving intentions, which are evident. And given its place nestled amongst the other Eleven, it's clear that the whole picture of the New Monastic vision is passionately concerned with aligning the trajectory of disciples' lives in a Jesusward direction, and it is a vision I wholeheartedly celebrate. I want to critique this phrase, "relocation to the abandoned places of empire," while affirming the attitude and challenge it poses.

I think my strongest reaction to the phrase comes from the word "abandoned," which seems to me to imply that the places we might relocate to were empty until we arrived. It has, for me, an uncomfortable residue of *rescue* in it, rather than an attitude of accompaniment, of assuming that God is already there and then looking for and partnering with what the Spirit is already doing in a particular location. Inner cities have churches already, have saints already working and serving, have a real sense of home for their residents no matter how broken and trashed the environment.

Perhaps I am being troublesome here and am not allowing the phrase "abandoned places of Empire" to resonate with its full meaning. What does it mean for a place to be abandoned by the Empire? The "powers that be" do not trouble

themselves with caring about what happens to people in such places. Schools crumble, trash piles up, crimes are committed out in the open, kids play on toxic waste heaps, homeless people sleep in doorways. Deliberately choosing to live in such places for the purpose of bringing hope and the love of Christ is certainly the intention of this Mark, and I am so glad for that, and for those who do such relocating. However, there is something in me that resists allowing what the Empire does or doesn't do to be definitive. There is almost a reverse implication that those places not abandoned by Empire are doing just fine. Whether the Empire has abandoned or not abandoned a place does not, ultimately, seem to me to be what should define our commitment to that place. (I can almost hear an audible sigh as this is being read, as the nit-pickiness of my contentions is revealed... I just want to reiterate that the Mark's intention is evident, but as one who cares about words and their subtle shadings of meaning, I can't help diving in.)

The word *Relocation* assumes that the intended audience is not those who are already living in such places, that the call is only to people who have somewhere nice to relocate from. That is an important and worthy call—for those who have been given much to choose to lay it down. But if New Monasticism were only a call to serve the poor, and not also a call to the poor, in my mind it would be incomplete as a movement.

One of the interesting questions we have encountered as a community here at Sojourners is the riddle, "When are the poor not the poor any more?" When "the poor" move in and share money and access to education and other resources not generally available to the poor, they are no longer poor. The reality of life in community takes away the "ministry" element of "serving the poor" when the poor become part of the family. We have had numerous visitors ask us what our ministry is, and we always have a difficult time answering the question in a satisfactory way, as we look around the room at one another... who is whose ministry? A richness of life in community is having the lines of who is serving and who is being served begin to disappear. Perhaps the *relocation* element has its most powerful effects in *commitment* to location, in seeing relationships grow and take root across boundaries and barriers over the long haul. I am in deep accord with this Mark in that it calls us to *live with and among* those we want to serve. Ultimately that means, person by person, receiving and committing to live as one family, loving and being loved by whomever God brings in that given location.

Let me stop there and voice my celebration with a movement that cares about the poor, that calls people to deep discipleship that is not fettered by our society's obsessions with comfort, safety, or convenience, and that calls us to love one another and our neighbors in extravagant, Jesus-fragranced ways. Please read this small word-critique in light of that far bigger resonance.



## Valle Shalom

By J.B. Smith, Hope Fellowship

Doña Margarita steps carefully over the piles of black rock, avoiding the sand that would burn through her flipflops, taking a hand as it is offered. The bluffs shade us from the tropical sun, and the gentle rush of the river soothes the ears. Strands of seaweed sway under the rippling surface.

The younger ones in our party have found a smooth stone ledge where they can dip their toes in the cool water of the Lempa River, looking across from El Salvador to the dry hills of Honduras.

They quickly catch up with Margarita Aviles and the rest of the group, Americans and Salvadorans who are making this morning pilgrimage together. We come to a gentle bend in the river, and there it is: The crossing we have heard about in so many stories from the people of Valle Nuevo.

Margarita is silent. It has been exactly 26 years since she was here last. That day, March 18, 1981, she arrived just before dawn with a toddler in her arms and two children by her side, a step ahead of the death



*Margarita, revisiting after 26 years.*

squads. She had no water to give her children, and she had heard that the streams were poisoned in the campaign to exterminate guerrillas and sympathizers. For the hundreds like Margarita who fled that night, only one choice remained: to brave sniper fire and swim across the river to Honduras.

Someone breaks the silence and asks what she is thinking.

"It makes me sad to come down here," she says in her high, reedy voice. "There were so many bad memories. So many children died."

We imagine that scene as we gaze at the sparkling river before us. Could such things have happened here? A whirlwind of dust blows in from nowhere, dancing on the Honduran shore and into the river, like God troubling the water.

After 26 years, the people of Valle Nuevo never tire of telling their story of exile and exodus, and the continuing story of resettlement.

The dozen visitors from Hope Fellowship, Reba Place and Church of the Sojourners heard it dozens of times during our annual trip. I had heard it dozens of times before on trips in 2001 and 2002. In the past I returned from these trips with a sense of righteous indignation at the abuses these peasants had suffered in the past and the economic injustices that continued to oppress them.



*March 2007 SMC guests of Valle Nuevo.*

## Relocation to Abandoned Places

What struck me this time was something different: The people's determination to write a new, more hopeful chapter.

We met a generation of villagers who have no memories of the refugee camps, but have grown up on the stories. Our Hope Fellowship high schoolers, Jesse and Emily Miller, befriended some of the youth leaders and were inspired by their determination to go to college and return to build up their community.

On a visit to the community's new high school building, Principal Juan Ayala told us that nearly 60 students graduate each year, and some 15 percent go on to higher education.

We visited Radio Victoria, the community station that has moved into a two-story concrete building and is continuing to train young people to serve their communities through information and education.

We visited the community's new hydroponic greenhouse and tilapia farm, both projects of the nonprofit ADES that are intended to provide jobs for young people.

We participated in a dedication ceremony for ten new Habitat for Humanity homes that Shalom Communities funded, including a home for Margarita. Several of us stayed in those homes and saw the stability and dignity given to these families.

The village council asked us to consider helping build at least five more homes, a request we agreed to take back to our communities in the U.S.

The persistence of hope in Valle Nuevo after all these years surprises me, like a tree growing through the pavement. It grows out of the oft-told story of exile and exodus. If God brought them together in the refugee camp and brought them back to their mother country, how could they do otherwise than march on as a people of God?

This sense of God's providence is not without its tensions.



*One of ten recent Habitat for Humanity homes built in Valle Nuevo.*

At the bend in the river, as we eat oranges peeled with the bus driver's huge knife, Margarita explains how she crossed the river with the help of Yvonne Dilling and other workers.

"So many died," she says. "But it was God's will. God made it so that we would meet the people we have now in our community."

There is a silence as our group's leader, Nancy Gatlin of Hope Fellowship, ponders that statement.

"Doña Margarita, I mean no disrespect in disagreeing," she says. "But

I believe God did not make man to destroy him. He made us to help each other. But man destroys himself."

"I believe this also," Margarita says slowly.

We pass another batch of oranges around.

"Maybe God didn't want the massacre," Margarita concludes. "But He did want the campesinos to rise up and say, this can't happen anymore. Our story cannot be forgotten." □

### *Jubilee Economics to Build More Homes in Valle Nuevo*

The ten houses built by and for the most needy families of Valle Nuevo in 2006 and 2007 have created a positive impression with a lot of good will for the Valle Nuevo leadership, Habitat for Humanity El Salvador, as well as SMC who paid for the construction materials. About 25 more requests have come to Habitat ES from Valle Nuevo families to replace their inadequate or crumbling homes with more permanent housing.

Habitat's approach in El Salvador has evolved to now offer home financed at three levels according to the family's financial resources and housing needs—maximizing the impact of outside contributions and local participation. Habitat offers: 1) no-interest full mortgages, 2) partial no-interest mortgages with partial subsidies for construction materials, and 3) full subsidies for all the construction materials. In each of these cases, the home-buyer contributes \$300 for the project foreman/ mason and two laborers who work in a team with the other families until all the houses in the

*(Continued on back page of newsletter)*

## School for Conversion at Koinonia Farm

By Sanders Thornburgh

In April, Koinonia had the great privilege of hosting and participating in a School for Conversion. Partnering with the New Monasticism, we were able to host about 40 participants for this event. The program was designed to combine five theological sessions with ministry-oriented work projects along with meals and interaction with Koinonia members. Topics covered included what it means to be born again, God's plan to save the world through a people, resisting the powers, and living in a new world of love and grace.

Along with Koinonians leading some sessions, we were also deeply edified by teachings from Millard Fuller (founder of Habitat for Humanity & the Fuller Center), Tim Otto (Associate Pastor of Church of the Sojourners) and Anton Flores (co-founder of Alterna Community).

Millard Fuller gave a moving testi-

mony of his conversion to Christ and shared how his spiritual journey intersected with Koinonia and how Clarence Jordan has had such an enormous impact on his life.

Tim Otto was able to open up the Scriptures for us in new and exciting ways, encouraging us to get inside of the biblical narrative and to see how we are now part of this continuing epic story of God's love. Tim also demonstrated how the Old and New Testaments both detail God's activity in a communal context; the God-Movement is not individualistic, but corporate.

Anton Flores helped us to identify the fallen powers in ourselves and in our world that seek to destroy God's creation. In Anton's session, we were given guidance and encouragement to overcome and renounce those things that block us from following Jesus and experiencing the presence of God.

School for Conversion participants were also blessed to be able to help out with work projects either at Koinonia, a tornado reconstruction in

Americus or a protest/vigil at the Stewart County Detention Center in Lumpkin, GA. The protest was concerning human rights violations within the facility where over 1200 immigration detainees are incarcerated. To read more about this issue and our demonstration, please visit this internet link: <http://www.workers.org/2007/us/immigrants-0426/>. It is so inspiring to know that every School for Conversion is designed to include ministry projects that help us to put work clothes on our Faith.

I believe that one of the most enduring aspects of the School at Koinonia will prove to be about the relationships made during the weekend. It was so good to be in the presence of all these people who love Jesus, many of them sharing His love with others in the context of a growing Christian communities movement. I am so thankful for the direction of Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove and all the many servants who have assisted in this endeavor. We need to continue to partner with God and one another in Christ's conspiracy to smuggle more love into the world.

*(Continued from Page 2)*

of Kingdom reality – God's colony in humanity's world. Signs of this new society are the Reba Early Learning Center, affordable housing, Senior Connections, refugee ministries, prisoner visitation, inner healing. We have worked creatively with the poor in many areas of change within our community, trying to be a model of what we hope for the larger society. Often peacemaking in the midst of various forms of violence was our charge. Our witness has been just a taste of the Kingdom. When some of us have ventured into the third world, our friends there have sent us back asking us to work on the sources of their problems in America.

Sometimes we wonder if we are sheltering our children, our elderly, and ourselves by living in Evanston rather than in a more problematic, lower class neighborhood. The forces of gentrification in Evanston

are like a steamroller, squeezing out the poor. Many are getting pushed out, and we are raising only a whimper of concern that the diversity of our city is being lost to homogeneous wealth. Are we called to keep on living here – threatened inwardly and outwardly as we are by Mammon?

We have been in Evanston now fifty years. Is our calling still to be here? I think it is, but I believe a lot depends upon how well we remember the poor, sharing in their life both experientially and intentionally.

As our neighborhood gentrifies, Reba Place Church and Reba Place Fellowship have the responsibility to minister to all the people who live here, the rich as well as the poor. But the good news is the same for all. Jesus' message is, "Fear not little flock. It's your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom. Sell your possessions. Give alms. Provide yourselves with purses that



do not grow old. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Our calling as a community is to follow Jesus. Shalom Mission Communities, New Monasticism, the Mennonite church and other connections in the people of God offer us solidarity on the journey, but the One who calls us all forward is Jesus. It's a wonderful life – a real treasure, the only wealth worthy of a life's pursuit. □

Review :

### Michael Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma*

by David Braun, Ploughshares Farm

*The Omnivore's Dilemma* by Michael Pollan looks at the sources of the ingredients of three meals, the processes involved in obtaining, preparing and consuming these ingredients, and some reflections on the attendant impacts on the author and his world.

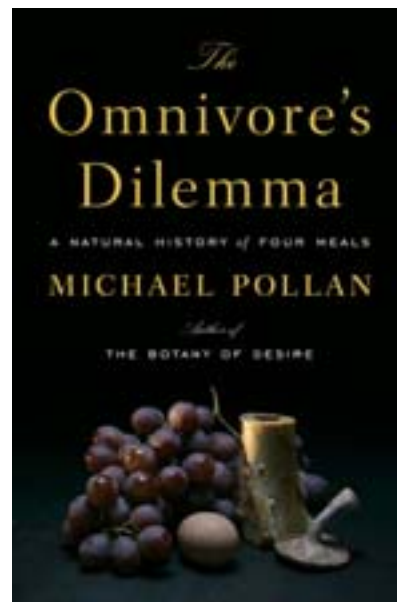
The first meal comes from the global grocery store, with products which benefit from scientific research and applications in pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers, medications and genetic modifications to maximize production and profits for corporate owners. The meal is finally a combination of burgers, fries, and carbonated beverages, purchased from a fast food establishment and eaten in a car in a hurry.

The second meal is from a small,

intensively managed "grass farm," where the owner operators are in an ongoing process of learning all about their land and its inhabitants, from the microbiological to the large mammals. Virtually all food is produced on a farm of about 120 acres, and the diversity is extensive. The author is included in working on the farm, in moving animals from pasture to pasture, in gathering eggs, forking manure, and making hay, and at the end of the day the meal is shared with the family and the people who did the work.

The third meal represents a hunting and gathering approach, where the author learns to hunt a wild pig, gather mushrooms and roots, harvest seeds, and personally combines it all in a meal which he prepares and shares with friends and the people who taught him.

The second meal appears to me to be the most sustainable for people and the times we live in. While it represents hard work, there is a large amount of food produced in a



symbiotic relationship with the immediate environment where health is pursued for all. Unfortunately, the knowledge used and developed does not become accessible to many others; the combination of interdependence and self-reliance are difficult to exploit easily. With its emphasis on long term viability versus short term profiteering, this way of eating will not be promoted by many existing market institutions. □

### How to Give a Family Farm an Edge and Factory Farms the Slip

Here is an excerpt from a recent update from Ploughshares Farm, a group of folks from Winnipeg who are returning to the land with an agrarian community vision. If you want to read more or get on their e-mail list, contact:

[rempel.marcus@gmail.com](mailto:rempel.marcus@gmail.com).

As a bunch of folks moving out of the urban granola belt and into farm country, one obvious opportunity for us Ploughsharers to do some good is to build bridges between city folk and country folk. We hope to decrease, literally and figuratively, the distance between the dwindling



number of folks who produce food, and the growing number of folks who eat it with little sense of where it's coming from. The way we see things, the source of much that ails this hurting world lies in that disconnect, and the source of much beauty and justice lies in repairing that breach.

In that spirit, we'd like to introduce you to our neighbours. The first day

we all stepped onto our quarter section as its newly minted owners, Elaine Stefaniuk rushed across from the other side of the river where they have their place to greet us with a solid farmer's handshake and a megawatt smile. As we tentatively tried to explain what kind of group we were and what kind of farming we hoped to do, "Ummm...kind of like organic Hutterites...," instead of the raised eyebrow or awkward silence we half-expected, Elaine's grin only got bigger. "The Lord has brought you here!" she beamed. We tend to be a little more tentative about declaring our own plans or other developments as a straight-up unfolding of the Lord's will, but in this past year our affection and appreciation for our neighbours has grown to the point where we would not hesitate to say that our relationship with them has truly been a gift from God. □



## Church of the Sojourners News

By Zoe Mullery, with Jeff Hare

Since our last newsletter, Holy Week and Easter have crowned our year again, immersing us in the story of the resurrected Christ we follow. A fruitful leadership retreat focusing on how we can rekindle, articulate, and live out the vision of church we have been given has dovetailed nicely with an inspired teaching series Dale Gish has been giving on the book of Revelation. We want to have ears to hear.

Dan and Kelly Zazvorka visited and greatly encouraged us with their report on the remarkable ways God is at work in the church Dan is pastoring in Lamoille, Nevada. Laura Hare and I visited Rutba House in Durham, NC, to speak on the subject of Sabbath, a topic we get very enthusiastic about. Tim Otto has just graduated from Duke seminary there after two years away from us and will be returning in June. Jack Bernard's book *How to Become a Saint* has been picked up by a publisher in England and has been released there for the edification of the British. A School for Conversion will take place here in June with Shane Claiborne speaking, giving us Sojos an opportunity to get to know him a little. Michael Kuany, one of the Lost Boys of Sudan, will be moving in with us at the end of May.

But the most glorious piece of Sojo News we have to report I have asked Jeff Hare to write up, as he is one of the major players in it.

***"Without forgiveness, there's no future."* —Desmond Tutu**

A meeting took place between Church of the Sojourners and Church of the Servant King (Eugene, Oregon) on May 5, 2007. It was designed to provide opportunities for confession, prayer, and restoration of torn, tattered relationships. Present were Jeffrey Hare, Laura Hare, Debbie Gish, Dale Gish, and Zoe Mullery from Church

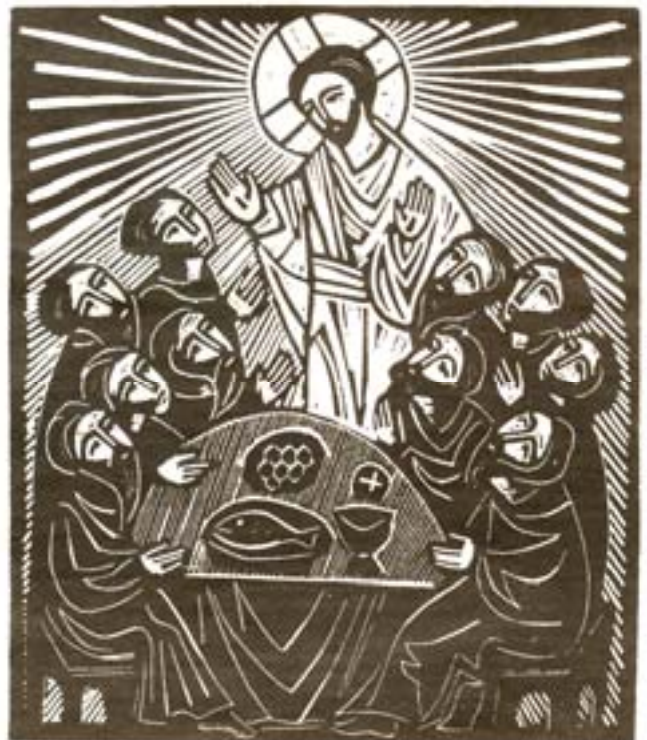
of the Sojourners; Dave Chevront, Jon Stock, Suzie Logan, Brian Logan, and Cindy Stock from Church of the Servant King, Eugene.

*The history of this situation is complex and almost impossible to summarize in brief, but here is the bluntest version: Laura and I got married in January 1997. Church of the Servant King (where I had been in leadership) refused to come to that wedding. Since then there has been much alienation between COSK and the Hares in particular, but also affecting the relationship between COSK and Sojourners. Some (John Alexander and Jack Bernard) who took part in this drama when it occurred are no longer with us for they have passed on to be with the Lord. Yet I personally felt they were at this glorious meeting in the open and kindred spirit of peace. In fact it seemed to me that this time of reconciliation had a cosmic explosion that could be felt throughout all of the heavenly places.*

On that sunny day as we listened to each other, we caught a glimpse of the New Jerusalem that awaits us all. God came down into our midst and smiled upon us. After a long hurtful process of ten years, we finally came together to luxuriate in the warmth of God's care and provision. Where else can this happen than in the kingdom of God? Where else can this happen outside of committed relationships—devoted to see to the end of the dark, troubling tunnel to the light beyond? Where can leaders defy the principalities and powers of this world to humble themselves and trust the power of God's forgiving spirit, especially when God reveals the light of truth to them and in obedience they follow? Boy did we see the light of truth and the humble footsteps to the cross of forgiveness!

Church of the Sojourners and Church of the Servant King, Eugene, are finally reconciled. We can finally be in each other's presence without the curse of sins committed long ago. We confessed those sins, our hatred, and our feelings of betrayal to one another. Church of the Servant King eloquently articulated ownership of their lack of trust in the spirit, their suspicions, their hardhearted behavior, their wielding of human power, and their lack of respect for Church of the Sojourners. We confessed our hatred, our interference in God's plan for reconciliation, and turning away from loving our enemies as Christ did. The great moment when God's mercy shines in any faithful life occurs when forgiveness takes place. Forgiveness was offered with no qualifications.

In a final gesture of care and concern there were hugs and tears for all of us to share. May the warmth of those tears never leave the memory of all of us from that day. Satan took the fall and we rose in his wake. As one of us so appropriately said, "God is good," so I, also, echo the same – God is good! □



## Relocation to Abandoned Places

### Plow Creek News

By Kate Newhouse

The season has finally heated up around here, literally and metaphorically speaking. After record long cold weather this spring, with snow still piling up in February and March, we thanked spring for arriving at last, grateful that the last frosts did not damage any of the precious berry buds. The heat also brings a heavy load for the farmers and bakers, who bear the work with grace. As a stranger to farming, it is beautiful to see the connections between the land and the hands that work the land, the laborer and fruits of labor, from one farmer to another. I hope God is blessed by the hymns of praise sung from the fields, the prayers whispered while driving to work, the songs of our hearts while doing the dishes, and conversations with God while hanging the laundry. We hope God is glorified by every small effort.

We have some new faces around here since the last update. Dan and Katie Piché arrived on loan from Church of the Sojourners until November. They bring hope, love for

others, many skills, youthful spark, and a passion for knowing Christ. Katie is working with Erin Kindy in the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) garden, also known as the valley garden. Here they grow a wide variety of table vegetables without the use of pesticides, herbicides, or anything harmful to the land or people eating the produce. Despite an incredibly dry spring, the garden is abounding with crisp lettuce, spinach, radishes and peas (two weeks ahead of schedule!), due to the diligence of Katie and Erin, who have been tromping up and down Acorn Trail every day, every two hours, moving irrigation hoses to dry sections of the garden. Working in the garden is more than a job or an interest for Katie, "It has become a meditation in depending on God."



*Heather and Paul's Wedding Embrace.*

Dan Piché is doing a variety of interesting tasks, making good use of the woodcrafting shop in the valley. He is building a hand-made guitar under the guidance of Rick Reha and hand-crafted furniture items for fun. And around the community he's refurbishing a wooden hay wagon and building stairs for children climbing up to the trampoline. Thank you Dan!



*Dan and Katie in front of this year's CSA garden.*

Paul Rohde and Heather Munn, who came to us from Reba Place, arrived here in March. Heather was Erin's farming partner here last summer. Paul has lived at Reba when he is not on spiritual pilgrimage. It is wonderful to have them among us now. Paul and Heather had a beautiful wedding at Plow Creek on May 6, commencing their marital journey. They will be living here and doing farm work until July, at which time they travel to Boston, the first step of their life's mission work. The Munns will be walking from Boston to Florida gathering support to start a retreat center here at Plow Creek for homeless folks who are committing to Christ. We wish them many blessings for their journey together.

The day after Paul and Heather's

wedding we gathered again for our Fifth annual Spring Party, an afternoon of festivities including parachute games, scavenger hunts, goat petting, gigantic bubble-making, pony rides, and an egg hunt. The children (as well as many adult children) really enjoy this event. Eight baby goats were born at Coneflower Farm (run by Dennis and Ellen Zehr and family) this season, including little Puzzle Piece, a black-and-white kid colored like a puzzle piece.

Jim Foxvog found the first ripe strawberries in the field. Woo-hoo! A familiar thrill for us Creekers. Strawberry Festival, a community event sponsored by Plow Creek Farm and held in Tiskilwa, is just around the corner, Saturday, June 9th. The event usually draws friends and neighbors from Tiskilwa and Princeton to enjoy large bowls of strawberry shortcake while chatting and watching children play. The farm team is encouraged to see the blueberries looking better than ever despite the late cold spells.

That about wraps up the noteworthy tidings of the last few months. We give our love to all you people of Shalom Mission Communities! ☐



*Pictured: Meg, Kora, Esther, Kevin, Isa, Martin, Margaret.*



*Anna Zehr and Isa Newhouse with a kid (baby goat).*



*Parachute games at the Spring Party. Picture: too many to name!*

## Hope Fellowship News

By David Heddy

Hello friends from Waco, Texas. Following are some happenings of our little community.

### Easter Retreat:

We had a wonderful time at our Easter retreat this year. This is one of our favorite times together as we worship, play games and spend quality time building friendships. Although we were able to get in one short soccer game, most of our events were indoors due to the snow that fell all day Saturday. Snow in Texas is a rare thing, and we took advantage of it...the kids building snowmen and some of the adults having a serious snowball fight. Our annual Lack of Talent show during the weekend was a hoot! Nancy was back, joined by Cristina, showing us some new yoga moves which she has named after different dying insects. For the first time ever, we had the "Power Team" with us. They broke plastic forks, karate chopped 2X4's (already cut most of the way through), and made complete fools of themselves.

### World Hunger Relief:

Many interns from World Hunger Relief Farm were part of Hope Fellowship during the year here in training. It's great to have them, but also difficult when they are finished. Two interns, Lena and Merideth, have both moved on to other places in the

past couple of months. Lena moved to Southwestern Michigan to work with Tillers International. She was excited about the opportunity to learn animal traction, but since she is used to the warm climate of Papua New Guinea, she was not looking forward to the cooler weather. Merideth moved to Illinois to spend time with her sister and is looking for opportunities to work with urban gardening and youth education.

Neil Rowe-Miller, Executive Director of World Hunger Relief, recently traveled to Veracruz, Mexico, with a delegation of business people from Waco. They met with local government officials, university staff and agricultural workers to discuss the possibilities of marketing organic fruit and veggies in their area as well as the Central Texas region.

### Governance and Committees:

With the steady growth of Hope Fellowship, we have realized the need for more structure in our church governance and have formed committees to help with decision-making. A church council, with representatives from each of the cell groups, has been working with the pastors to work on the church vision, aid the functioning of our cell groups and decide content for some of our member's meetings. The committees, that will hopefully roll out by early fall, are an attempt to delegate some of the duties and keep decision-making in the hands of all the members.



Paul Peter Flech

After some time to iron out the wrinkles, we hope that this will help facilitate living out our values as we grow in number.

### Other News:

The Matias-Ryan family will travel to Holland in mid-June to support Luis as he defends his dissertation. This is the last step of a five-year journey for Luis to obtain his doctorate in Social Sciences and Economics. He will have a few copies of his dissertation in a book format if anyone is interested.

Emily Miller will graduate this year from Waco High and will be attending Goshen College next fall. It has been a delight to see Emily grow in love and faith over these last few years, and we will truly miss her enthusiasm and her leadership in the youth group. Before she takes off, she and her family will travel to Uganda this summer to visit their former home where they served with Mennonite Central Committee for many years.

We have been teaching and discussing the Holy Spirit the last few Sundays and will continue this on into the summer. This is part of a larger theme for the year on "Receiving God's Gifts". What a great gift we have been given in the Holy Spirit! He is our comforter, guide, counselor and the Breath of God. We desire to be a community that is filled with the Holy Spirit, walks in the fruit of the Spirit and lives out the gifts of the Spirit on a daily basis. □



Rita Corbin

Reba Place News

By Tatiana Fajardo-Heflin

It's eighty-nine degrees here in Evanston today.

Whew! Yes, a clear sign that summer is coming. And a good time to reflect on another spring.

In personal and group settings we have been reading and reflecting together this spring on the first twelve chapters of Acts. It has been thought-provoking and inspiring to explore what the Church looked like as it first encountered the Holy Spirit. We have compared our season at Reba with this time of the Early Church, finding similarities (i.e. lots of people coming and lives changing) and differences (we are still waiting for healings). Acts of the Holy Spirit could be an even more fitting name for the book as Acts of the Apostles. A recent meeting ended with an extended time of prayer for healing for those in need, a moving and unifying ex-



Women of Reba Place gather for a handwork circle during the retreat.

perience.

Our study of Acts 1-12 led up to our annual spring retreat, May 18-20. We took three group sessions to review the work of the Holy Spirit in the last year according to three emphases of our mission statement: "The calling of Reba Place Fellowship is to extend the mission of Jesus by being a community of love and discipleship and by nurturing other such communities as God gives us grace."

Greg Clark and Julia Guyer led our exploration of "a community of love," Allan Howe, Chico Fajardo-Heflin, and Natalie Nyberg presented on "a community of discipleship," and David Janzen and Annie Spiro helped us look at how we are "nurturing other communities." We felt a lot of joy and freedom just being all together in a variety of activities, learning from each others gifts through crafts, archery, bicycle repair, singing new songs, being kids with the kids. We hope this freedom in the Spirit can continue to give us energy each time we meet.

Our meeting pattern has been shaken up as Reba folks in Evanston and Rogers

Park meet separately every Tuesday evening for open worship, and sharing. This gives the local groups more visibility and identity as they try to incorporate and get to know new people. Each week, either a covenant member or one of the "young people" (apprentices, practicing members, etc.) tells their story. Adam Vaughn, one of our practicing members, has been taking more leadership in our musical worship times, bringing new ideas and songs for us to share. The whole Fellowship circle of 50-some people now meets together every second Tuesday, alternating between Evanston or in the Living Water Community Church in Rogers Park. It's been a joy for all of us in Evanston to spend a bit more time in the Rogers Park meetinghouse (even allowing for full-fellowship line dancing!).

Our Monday night potluck/seminar format has also changed a bit for the first time in several years. As the Cana household was about to burst at the seams from as many as sixty people on Monday nights, a new arrangement started in April with four different households hosting potluck dinners on Monday nights. Fellowship members, practicing members, and interns are dispersed between all four, as well as North Park University students

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Ronn Frantz, poised and ready, during Greg Clark's archery workshop at the spring retreat.

Fellowship of Rogers

Park News

By Lisa Selph

As I reflected on new developments and growth in the Fellowship of Rogers Park this spring, it seemed that most of it revolved around the Dahlaws. Eric Lawrence and Katie Dahlseng came to intern with RPF three years ago. They had been seriously dating, but that relationship went through several status changes as they sought the input of other Fellowship members and considered God's call on their lives. Eventually the Lord brought them back together, and they celebrated their wedding last summer (remember pics of their wildflower-decorated tandem bike in a previous SMC newsletter?), moved from Evanston to Rogers Park, and officially claimed a new last name of Dahlaw (pronounced DA-la).

Eric has been working with The Recyclery, an intern-initiated cooperative that repairs and sells used bicycles, as well as teaching bicycle maintenance and safety to neighborhood kids (as well as Fellowship members who attended



Katie Jean Dahlaw, still gardening (and bike riding!) at eight months pregnant!

their workshops at our last two retreats....) He has also worked some this past year for Just Builders, a carpentry business hatched in the Fellowship.

Katie has been teaching dance classes and doing choreography for a Christian dance troupe, as well as working in a local health food store.

They found themselves unexpectedly expecting soon after their wedding – requiring some mental shifts on their part, and providing a lot of joyous anticipation for all of us. They decided to move into a 6 flat on the block where most of us are located (Orwin and Sally Youngquist live in one unit, and several single women from Living Water occupy another). This winter they hosted Meagan Farber, a wonderful intern from Truett Seminary in Waco, and in May, when Meagan left Elissa Laslo (formerly of Camden House) moved in to form the newest extended household.

Elissa, Katie and Doug Selph have provided the mind and muscle behind this year's garden in the Frantz family's back yard, and they included several

other fellowship friends and kids in the garden prep. Lettuce and peas are well underway, and tomatoes and beans and squash and carrots are more sturdily claiming their space every day, thus showing great potential for productivity.

Katie wisely declined attending our May 18-20 Fellowship Retreat and spent the whole weekend in labor – culminating in the arrival of Delaney Sue Dahlaw on Sunday, at 3:23 pm. As we gathered in Wisconsin, we prayed for them, eagerly awaited update calls, and signed a pieced baby comforter made by RPF mem-

(Continued, top of next page)



Silliness at the Dahlaw baby shower: Eric will eat almost anything, but not baby food!



We call this one "Rogers Park Gothic." Pictured: Nicholas Peebles (L), Hannah Blackwood (R).

ber Joan Vogt as our corporate welcome of the first baby of “The New Wave.” Proud papa, Eric, said she’s met over 60 people in her first week (in Katie’s defense, Elissa kindly but firmly blocked the door when we dropped in and smiled while saying “we need to train Eric” – one of the great advantages of household living!). He is amazed at how much food is inside his refrigerator, and how many people love this baby already.

The ways the community has cared for them has made a big impression on Katie, too – from meals and gifts (almost all 2<sup>nd</sup> hand, at their request) to many expressions of love and support. One significant source of support has been Patty Peebles (FRP member, nurse and former lactation consultant) who accompanied them through labor, the birth, and even spent an overnight with them at their home. □



*Eric and Katie Jean Dahlaw, with their beautiful Delaney Sue, born May 20, 2007.*

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and other “regulars”. Then at 7:30 we all gather in the Reba Church Ministry Center for a seminar. Visitors are still welcome, and are able to enter into a much less crazy scene. So far the four-house arrangement has been working well.

We have also started a season of workdays, every other Saturday morning. In recent weeks we have done a lot of outdoor work in several

garden and lawn spaces, helping with moves and getting things ready for our Camp Lake retreat house that is currently under construction.

The Recyclery made some major changes in its organization and structure. Eric Dahlaw was “promoted” from part-time to full-time (just in time for the birth of his baby!), and the other four core volunteers (Camille Hobbs and Jesse Miller, as well as two other Northwestern students) have been hired

part-time, up to twenty hours. This will allow for many more bikes to be fixed up and a hopeful step toward making The Recyclery financially self-sustaining. They are continuing to gain recognition throughout Evanston and the Chicago area and have had a number of successful bike sales in recent months. The Recyclery continues to be a high-point for visitors and “Reba Tours,” promoting “bikes, not bombs” (or something like that).



*Camille and Eric teach bike maintenance at the May retreat.*

My last important spring-related news is that Reba has been shaking off a bit of its “urban” identity as dozens of us have been digging in the dirt in six rented community garden plots! Last year’s growing season was a breakthrough for a group of young people that attempted two garden plots, and four more have been added to the number. It is exciting to see vegetables growing up and lots of Reba folks laboring in the sun. Some of us have joked that “eventually, Reba will own this whole place” (over a hundred 20’x 20’ plots)! Just kidding. The Kingdom of God may grow like a mustard seed, but we’ll leave imperialism to the powers that be. □

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group are built. In the coming months, Habitat ES will conduct assessment interviews with these 25 families and provide us with a summary of the housing need at these three levels.

**An investment opportunity in heavenly real estate:**

Each of the Shalom Mission Communities is discerning (by the end of June) how much they can pledge to give in 2007 and 2008 for the ongoing Valle Nuevo housing project. From July until October we will solicit donations from other friends of Valle Nuevo. In addition, Habitat for Humanity ES will add to this fund out of tithes from Habitat U.S. projects. For a little more than \$4,000 we can buy all the construction materials for a modest house in Valle Nuevo—homes that give shelter and dignity to our brothers and sisters in the family of God. Jesus declares the year of Jubilee wherever his message of good news to the poor is heard. We invite your participation in this partnership with the families of Valle Nuevo, with Habitat ES, SMC, and anyone else who wants to make a shrewd investment in heavenly real estate. (Matthew 6:19-21, Luke 16:1-8) □



*Salvadoran little ones, all geared up for school!*

Shalom Connections  
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# Shalom Mission Communities

2007 Gathering

August 5-7

Hosted by Reba Place Fellowship

- A Jubilee of forgiveness, redistribution, and renewal
- Jonathan Wilson Hartgrove as lead speaker
- What is God doing in Christian communities old and new?
- Workshops on how to live God's future now
- Build friendships and make community connections
- Still time to register c/o:  
dhjanzen2@juno.com!