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# Vamos Todos al Banquete

By Dawn Noelle Smith Beutler

***VAMOS TODOS AL BANQUETE, a la mesa de la creación, cada cual con su taburete tiene un puesto y una misión.***

**Let us all go to the banquet, the table of creation, each one with their stool has a place and a mission.**

We sang these words together this summer with our brothers and sisters in the community of Valle Nuevo in El Salvador. "We" of the SMC delegation were six from Reba Place Fellowship (David and Joanne Janzen, Greg and Micah Clark, Sam Hudgens, and Nati Cheneret); six from Hope Fellowship (Nancy, Gabriela, and Anali Gatlin, Milagro Mullet, Christina Wilson, and Steven Autry); Meredith Stewart from Springwater, and myself from Church of the Sojourners representing the west coast communities. Valle Nuevo is a community in the more traditional sense of the word--a neighborhood--in the rural village of Santa Marta, in the northern department of Cabañas in the smallest country in Central America.

A quilt brought as a gift from Reba Place Fellowship to the Valle Nuevo community also bears the words "Vamos todos al banquete." The quilt was a collaborative effort led by Heather Clark, and from what I understand, even their preschoolers participated in making it by adding kernels of corn with their fingerprints in yellow and orange paint. Sitting down at a table and sharing a meal together, recognizing that



*Quilt presented by Reba Place Fellowship to the community of Valle Nuevo*

something has died so that we may live, is one way that we remember the suffering of Christ and the sufferings of other people. David Janzen shared with us the idea that through the banquet we become "*compañeros*" (companions) - sharing together (*co*) the

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bread (*pan*). We partake of the hope that is offered in the form of new life nourished from both the broken body of Christ and the broken bodies of those who died because they simply wanted their children to have enough. This brokenness is an essential part of the Valle Nuevo story; it allows those of us who have experienced brokenness to find a connection with them, a way to walk hand in hand.

Before arriving in Valle Nuevo, the delegation spent some time in San Salvador, the capital city. We attended the popular mass at the National Cathedral and joined in the commemoration of the martyrdom of Marcelo Rivera, an outspoken environmentalist known for his anti-mining efforts in the northern Cabañas region. Rivera was disappeared, tortured, and killed just two years ago in June 2009. We walked the length of the Wall of Memory viewing the inscriptions of over 30,000 names of civilians killed during the civil war. There is also a section of this wall that recognizes an estimated 75,000 deaths whose names have not been recorded.

We experienced the vibrant color of Fernando Llor's art gallery, *El Árbol de Dios* (The Tree of God). Don Fernando's presence is like meeting your own grandfather for the first time. He is so down to earth for a man whose art graces the walls of the White House and the Vatican. Llor once studied to be a priest. Though he opted out of the celibate life to marry and have children, in my mind he embodies the priestly vocation of empowering the people to connect with God through artistic expression. *La Semilla de Dios* (The Seed of God), is an artisan workshop established by



*The 2011 SMC Valle Nuevo Delegation*

Llor that gives communities the opportunity to learn his particular artistic style and form cooperatives to produce and sell their work.

We also visited *Divina Providencia*, the hospice care facility where Archbishop Oscar Romero lived, served, and finally died for his outspoken stance against the violence inflicted upon the people during the war. Romero's voice lives on in the hearts of the people who continue to read and hear his words at popular mass, broadcast over the airwaves, and displayed in almost every form imaginable throughout the country. Our last stop before heading out to the village was the Romero Center located on the campus of the Central American University, where the six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her daughter were assassinated as subversives by the Salvadoran military in 1989. The visits we make to these locations each year give us a glimpse of the pain, the struggle, and the hope of the people of El Salvador, which is the larger story within which the story of Valle Nuevo is found.

Once the delegation arrived in Valle Nuevo our time was spent walking alongside particular individuals in their everyday activities as well as joining around the table to break bread together. I was delighted that we could split up to participate in some of these activities rather than being led around like a tour group. We sat in on adult learning circles at Pastor and Rosita's house. We visited the tilapia ponds and hydroponic green houses with Juana. We helped Morena set up for a "school for parents" workshop. We followed Pastor to the agricultural land plots known as the *picacho*. We learned to make tortillas with Felipa. We participated in

*Continued next page...*

<i>Table of Contents / June 2011</i>	
Vamos Todos al Banquete .....	1
In Search of a Machete .....	6
Maintaining Relationship with VN .....	8
SMC Camp Meeting 2011 .....	9
News from Third Way .....	10
News from Sojourners .....	12
Plow Creek in Conversation .....	13
Hope Fellowship News .....	14
Book Review: <i>How Huge the Night</i> .....	15

## Shalom Connections

Shalom Connections seeks to glorify God and provide a means of fellowship and inspiration among sisters and brothers of the member churches of Shalom Mission Communities and the wider network of intentional Christian Communities. *Shalom Connections* is published quarterly in Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter. Subscriptions are free. The views expressed do not necessarily reflect the official position of *Shalom Connections*, Shalom Mission Communities, or its member churches.

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an impromptu jam session sharing both secular and faith based songs with Carlos, Santos, Dennis, and Genaro. We sat around chatting and playing cards after our last dinner in Valle Nuevo with Pedro and Angelina's family.

Our time with the *directiva* (the governing body of Valle Nuevo) was particularly meaningful as Pastor expressed his desire for the relationship between our communities to continue even after the land legalization process is finished. SMC has walked with the community of Valle Nuevo in the purchase of the land they have occupied and farmed communally since before the civil war. Dividing up the plots of residential land in order to secure clear title for each family has been essential in the partnership that has formed with Habitat for Humanity in a community effort to ensure that everyone has adequate shelter. The community is now in the last stages of the process, which will allow each adult to hold title to a particular piece of agricultural land that they are responsible for cultivating. Pastor expressed his hope that this step will not lead them into materialistic individualism but rather will allow them to rise together to a greater sense of ownership and empowerment and remain united as a community working together toward a more just society. Together we have waited a long time for this process to be finished. We North Americans are challenged by the seeming inefficiency of this process, but our doubts are addressed as the song continues...

***Hoy my levanto muy temprano. Ya me espera la comunidad. Voy***

***subiendo alegre la cuesta. Voy en busca de tu amistad.***

***Today I arise very early. The community is already awaiting me. I go happily climbing uphill. I go searching for your friendship.***

I found a beautiful picture of what it means to wait for one another as approximately 10 community members and 10 SMC delegates journeyed to the Lempa River, to the site where 8,000 people crossed over to Honduras over the span of two days fleeing the death squads during the civil war. Fifty people were killed by gunfire on the night of March 18, 1981 as soldiers opened fire from helicopters on the refugees crossing the river. The trek down the trail to the river, after the hour-long drive, was a bit strenuous and proved especially difficult for Joanne Janzen. Rosy, one of our sisters from Valle Nuevo, knows the trail well, and could have easily gone on ahead and waited for Joanne to stumble down the trail after her. Instead, Rosy anticipated Joanne's difficulty and walked behind her until it was evident she was needed as a support - lifting Joanne's arm and placing it around her shoulder so that they could struggle down the path together.

Morena is another who has taught us about waiting. She has waited more than once in long embassy lines seeking a visa in order to be able to join us for the SMC camp meetings. In spite of being denied a visa on more than one occasion, she was more than happy to write a letter of invitation so that one of our own delegates, not a citizen of the U.S.,

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could be granted a visa to enter El Salvador for a short while.

Salome, Morena's father, waited 20 years to return to this place of memory found at the Lempa river. Salome is a man full of life, eager to make people laugh. More than once I have come across the story of his "high-tech irrigation system" consisting of a water bottle with a hole in it that he squeezes to water the plants in the garden. It is evident in the faith and joy of his family that he did not allow the tragedy of the war, nor the grief over those who were lost, to cloud his vision for teaching his children the story of the Israelites and the hope they offer to an exiled people. Salome seemed unusually silent as others shared their memories of the crossing. It was only then that we realized that this was his first time back to this place since he had crossed with his family in March of 1981. He was the most enthusiastic responder to our hesitant suggestion of a foot-washing. Though this is not a practice any of our brothers and sisters in Valle Nuevo had experienced before, they are familiar with the Biblical story of



*Rosy and Joanne Janzen struggling together down the steep hill to the Lempa River*

Jesus washing his disciples' feet. After graciously agreeing to this simple, impromptu ceremony, Salome's sense of humor resurfaced and he began to remove his shirt, mentioning that Peter requested that Jesus wash his entire body.

We as delegates were eager to serve as hands of healing to those who had suffered such trauma and

loss in the river we sat beside. We had more difficulty with the thought of allowing our own feet to be washed by those who had suffered. Allowing our brothers and sisters from Valle Nuevo to be Christ to us in this way was crucial to equalizing the playing field of solidarity as we seek to walk together as equals. In the face of injustice, we do not wash our hands of responsibility, as did Pilate. Instead we wash one another's feet "as a way to show that death, pain, and loss do not have the last word, but the last word is reconciliation and mutual servanthood as followers of Jesus" (in the words of David Janzen). Our brothers and sisters are much further down the road than we are in terms of understanding the suffering of Christ, but we were able to participate in His healing, and redemption took place as we washed each other's feet. Our brothers and sisters had come back to this place of struggle, to meet us, 20 years behind them.



*Footwashing at the Lempa River*

*Continued next page...*

***Dios invita a todos los pobres a esta mesa común por la fe, donde no haya acaparadores y a nadie le falte el con que.***

**God invites all the poor to this common table of faith, where there are none who monopolize and no one will lack what is needed.**

Rosy, Morena, and Salome have given us such striking examples of what it means to wait for one another. My hope is that their example will cause us to pause and recognize our need to repent of the ways in which we have charged on ahead, sitting down and gorging ourselves at a table of plenty while others remain hungry. We need to take a long, hard look at our own economic prosperity. In what ways do we contribute to the hunger of others because we have piled up our own plates too high? Whose water supply was contaminated so that my sons could each wear a gold cross around their necks? If we truly want to live in solidarity with the poor, and offer them a place at the banquet table of basic health care, education, nutrition, and adequate housing, then we need to find a place to meet. We will have to back track on this trail that has led us to such abundance to find our brothers and sisters and walk together, holding each other up when necessary, on a new path to a place where there is enough for everyone and "no one will lack what is needed." We must leave our obscenely abundant wealth behind and seek to change this way of life that necessitates war and oppression in order to sustain it.

***Dios nos manda hacer de este mundo una mesa donde haya igualdad; trabajando y luchando juntos, compartiendo la propiedad.***

**God commands us to make of this world a table where there is equality; working and struggling together, sharing what we own.**

It seems that the last verse of this song is best embodied in the lives of the university students who are working hard to bring a better future to their community and families. We met with 12 of the 44 students from Santa Marta studying in the capital. They are faced with the challenge of motivating their peers and younger siblings to continue their education. Additionally they wonder what the possibilities will be for them in the future. Most want to return to Santa Marta, but there are



*Pastor (center) and the group that hiked to the Lempa River.*

few economic resources available to employ them. Yesica is Pastor and Rosy's daughter and is studying public health. Her vision for the future involves returning to Santa Marta to work in the public health clinic. She graciously gave us a tour of one of the two houses where the 44 students reside (that's 20 and 24 to a house) in what most closely resembles our own experience of intentional communities here in the U.S. We observed the chore lists on the wall, the sparsely furnished kitchen and common space, the spot on the stairs where Yesica often studies, the *pila* used to do laundry by hand, and the bedrooms that house 2-4 students each.

What keeps these students going in these tight circumstances is the historic memory that permeates their identity. They are ever-conscious of the blood of the martyrs, their own family members, that fertilizes the soil where the corn was grown that fed them throughout their childhood. Both the metaphor and the physical reality of a banquet table, especially as it represents the thanksgiving of the Eucharist, gives us opportunity to remember together, to walk in solidarity, to give thanks for God's good gifts, and to make sure everyone has enough.

This is the posture I hope we can take as we sit down at the banquet table together, partaking of the bread and the wine, the body and the blood, sharing the *tortillas* and the *café*, the pasta and the lemonade. The mission that I have found at the table is to always do this in remembrance. Lord, *as I am filled at the table, may my physical hunger be replaced by a hunger for justice for those whose plates remain empty.* ✨

# *In Search of a Machete: Notes*

By Greg Clark, Reba Place

1. I didn't know what I was looking for when I went to El Salvador. Now I know. I was searching for a machete.
2. Dostoyevsky's early description of Alyosha: "he was a young man of his time – honest, demanding the truth, with an unflinching desire to sacrifice everything, even life. But, to sacrifice five or six years of his life to hard, difficult studies, to learning, in order to increase tenfold his strength to serve the truth - such sacrifice was beyond his strength." Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 26. (A first dichotomy: the sacrifice of a life through death and the sacrifice of a life through disciplined study.)
3. A popular quote of Quaker origin: "Speak truth to power." (A second dichotomy: power and truth.)
4. Our group prepares for our trip by watching the movie *Romero*. In the movie, members of the church hierarchy talk among themselves: "He (Romero) is a good compromise choice (for Archbishop). He'll make no waves. He's a bookworm. The whole country would be running

wild and he would not even notice it." (Bookworms, in spite of disciplined study, have neither truth nor power. Their life is not a sacrifice. They fall outside the dichotomies.)

5. We visit the church, El Rosario. Gabriela Gatlin points out that statues of Christopher Columbus and Bartolome de las Casas stand side by side in the courtyard. We remember Columbus for his deeds, including the exploitation and the brutal form of slavery he brought to indigenous peoples. Bartolome de las Casas O.P. (1484-1566) was the first resident Bishop of Chiapas and the first officially appointed "Protector of the Indians." We remember him for his words; he wrote books, including "A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies," and he was responsible for establishing Spanish laws which outlawed slavery in 1542. (In 1542!) Here they stand as contemporaries on the same ground, but Bartolome de las Casas' statue stands taller.

6. We visit the Universidad CentroAmericana (University of Central America) (UCA), San Salvador's version of Loyola University. We view gruesome pictures of the bodies of six priests and of the house-keeper and her daughter, who were murdered 17 November 1989 by the government of El Salvador. Our drivers, Manuel and Jesus, join us in the rose garden which marks where it happened. They remember that night. Manuel was ten years old, and he hid under his bed as guns fired and helicopters flew over their house. This is their first visit to the garden, and they are pensive. They don't have words.

7. All of the campesinos carry machetes; the machete is a farmer's tool. Pastor, who fought the government during the war, shows off his machete to us. He leads us to his bench where he shows us how to sharpen it on the sharpening stone. (The machete reconciles the sword and the plow. The machete mediates between dichotomies.)

8. On the day our group went to visit the Lempa river, where the government massacred the



*Salome and Morena, father and daughter, in VN*

peasant farmers of Valle Nuevo on 18 March 1981, I stay behind, sick. I don't speak Spanish; my hosts don't speak English. Children, home from school, come by in the afternoon. I play songs for them on my harmonica. I teach them how to yo-yo. They learn fast. We have fun, even with our limited vocabularies. I leave the yo-yos with them.

9. We host a supper for about fifteen students from Valle Nuevo and Santa Marta. Directly across from me sits the vivacious Anna Maria who is in her fifth and last year of her "hard, difficult studies" at the university and is majoring in history.

I ask her the same question my philosophy majors are constantly asked: "What are you going to do with that major?" (i.e., What power does a history major give you? Can it give you the power to make money?) She says that maybe she will work in an archive somewhere. I have a hard time imagining this. "What do you like about studying history?" Here she gives me the real answer to my first question: "Official history, the history they teach small children, is history with make-up on. Here at the university they teach us true history. I want to teach the country about our true history. They need our true history." She repeats and emphasizes "true" each time. She will be a fantastic teacher. (She begins from a different place than did Dostoyevsky's Alyosha.)

10. We attend the popular mass at the National Cathedral. It is held in the basement with people seated in the round. (The upstairs mass seats people in traditional rows, with the priests and the sacraments up front on an elevated platform.) The popular mass commemorates Oscar Romero. It is also the two-year anniversary of the murder of Marcelo Rivera who spoke out against Pacific Rim mining company's gold mining plans. (This is a church of martyrs. This is a country where words can have the power of truth, the gun the power only to silence.)

11. At UCA, I note that one of the martyrs, Arnando Lopez, was a philosophy professor. While standing at the rose garden David Janzen



*Nati with a machete*

explains the priests' teaching methods. They did not just tell their students what to think. Instead they sent them on research projects that revealed the corruption and brutality of the government. Their methods and the truths their students discovered through their own difficult studies had the effect of turning the students against their parents. That is why these priests and teachers were silenced.

12. In my bags to return home, I pack a book, *The Violence of Love*, authored by the fourth Archbishop of San Salvador, Oscar A. Romero. Romero held a position of power, and he gave his life both to difficult study and to martyrdom (15 August 1917 – 24 March 1980). They still call him the voice of the voiceless.

13. In their bags to return home, Nati, Sam, and Micah, pack machetes. Having been introduced to "the way of the machete" by Pastor, they purchased their own during our last days in El Salvador. We worry that the machetes won't be allowed into the country, even in checked baggage. In the U.S., where Catholic campesinos look like communists, machetes look like swords rather than plows, and young Ethiopians like Nati seem to merit extra scrutiny. But we all pass through customs without trouble. And now we have machetes to carve new paths on our own mountains. ✍

## *Maintaining and Building Relationship With VN of Santa Marta*

*“Today I arise very early,  
The community is already awaiting me; I go happily climbing  
uphill,  
I go searching for your friendship.”  
(translation of a verse from “Vamos Todos Al Banquete”)*

By Nancy Gatlin

Oh, those long-distance relationships! Some think them impractical or impossible. yet through providence we in Shalom Mission Communities have been given the opportunity, the gift of knowing and relating, of walking alongside with and loving our sisters and brothers in VN of Santa Marta. Through almost 20 years this relational initiative has been mutual. Over time many of us have traveled to VN and several of our compañeros(as) have come to see us, although this last part has become very difficult in the past few years.

The song, “Vamos Todos Al Banquete,” speaks of climbing uphill, eagerly searching for friendship and making an intentional effort to build friendship. What is required of both SMC and our friends in VN is remembering each other. This is exactly what Jesus asked us to do as he shared the bread and the cup with his disciples, to do “this” in remembrance of him. The very tangible act of sharing bread would come to remind us of our Lord.

Remembering is essential to building relationship!

***What are the tangible ways we can remember our brothers and sisters in VN?***

- remember special dates (March 18, October 29) and special events/efforts in their community (planting, harvesting, weather with regards to agricultures, the anti-mining work, university students and their studies, the land legalization process)
- have a quarterly pupusa night
- e-mail/ facebook (many of the youth and university students have internet access)
- call (most have phones)

- include a regular section in our *Shalom Connections* about our family in VN
- keep up with the news about El Salvador and Central America
- have framed pictures around our home of our “family” in VN
- go on delegation trips
- work on learning Spanish

These are a few ways of “climbing uphill” in search of friendship. May our Lord be honored as we remember our brothers and sisters in VN, as we build friendships and come to the banquet table together. ✨

### ***Vamos Todos al Banquete***

Strong campesinos  
with dark eyes and lean frames  
teach gringo friends  
how poor and weak we are.  
Planting rows of corn  
on steep green hillsides  
they've waited so long to own,  
they lay claim to the land  
God has given them to steward.  
Feeding young minds with education,  
they sow a crop to grow  
a new generation of leaders  
who will not forget their martyrs  
nor their deliverance  
yet are moving forward  
to claim the banquet is for all.  
In the meantime  
we wash each others' feet  
with tears and living water,  
receiving what we need  
as companeros  
on our journey together.

by Sally Schreiner Youngquist

# Rooted: SMC Camp Meeting 2011

by David Janzen

“Rooted: Stories of God’s Love” was the banner and theme of our Shalom Mission Community camp meeting to which Joanne and I looked forward with much anticipation. And yet, we just barely came because Joanne had a freak accident a week before.

A drinking glass shattered on our sink edge, fell onto Joanne’s bare left foot and cut the tendon that lifts her big toe -- which, amazingly, hurt not at all. However, the operation to reattach the tendon left her with lots of pain, so most of the time Joanne needed to lie down and keep her unhappy foot elevated with ice-packs. So at the camp meeting, Joanne spent most of the time on a pallet in the big tent with three pillows under her sorry foot, talking with whoever wanted to pull up a chair and ask what happened. The last morning of our SMC gathering Joanne testified, “I wondered about the foolishness of coming, but I have been surprised way beyond embarrassment by so much kindness. I am encouraged, not just about my foot, but for our communities because of all the care that I see people giving to one another here.”

Because of the care Joanne needed from me, I could not sign up for any chores, but I did have opportunity to roam around and take some pictures -- and in an irresponsible sort of way, observe what was going on.

A camp meeting is something of an intentional wilderness experience, a place where we are refugees, aliens needing to figure out how we’ll take a bath, wash our dishes, and borrow the things we forgot to bring along. Here we are displaced enough that God might speak a new word to us from beyond



*People visiting in a circle the size of a shade tree at the SMC Camp Meeting*

our usual defenses and obsessions to get life under control. Like the children of Israel in the wilderness, we are reminded that most of all we need God and each other, for where there is love, there is enough.

I have often heard it said that the relationships between Shalom Communities are only as strong as the personal connections between folks in our different groups. I don’t know if that is exactly true, but a camp meeting is a great occasion to

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*“Whatever it takes ... to circulate the blood in the body of Christ.”*

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make and deepen friendships. The photos I took turned out to mostly be about people intensely visiting in the all-together meeting, in circles the size of a shade tree, or one-on-one at the picnic tables. We are woven together by the stories we tell, and by the prayers for one-another that follow.

The New Testament has about fifty “one-another” admonitions to

“love, honor, care for, wait for, encourage . . . one another.” I think all of that was happening. But Nancy Gatlin added one more admonition to the list, “Visit one another.” Nancy reminded us that SMC has gone to an every-other-year camp meeting schedule with the idea that in the off years people would be encouraged to visit other communities on their own, to take vacations together, to go to Valle Neuvo -- whatever it takes to stir the pot, to circulate the blood in the body of Christ.

In the big tent we sat next to an amazing banner of the sun’s rays streaming in on a tree with roots going deep into the prairie soil, causing us to wonder, how do our roots go deeper in the stories we tell? I was reminded of the Seder meal, a liturgy celebrating the deliverance of the Children of Israel from slavery in Egypt. The words spoken remind us that this event long ago is not about “them” but it is about “us.” “We were in Egypt,” “we were slaves,” “the angel

of death passed over us,” and “with a mighty hand, God delivered us.” For those of us who share communion as Christians, “we crucified Jesus,” “we abandoned him,” and he came back from the dead to forgive us, and to call us like Peter to “feed my sheep.”

Likewise, as we hear stories from our sister community, Valle Nuevo, we are delivered from the Salvadoran death squads at the Lempa River and survived. We returned from the refugee camps to live a new hope in solidarity with sisters and brothers around the world. Though I live at Reba, and you who read these words might live in Hope Fellowship, Sojourners, Plow Creek, Third Way, Springwater, Cana Collective, Lotus House, or some other circle of sharing -- we are one with all the stories and the prayer requests embedded in them. These stories make us into a biblical people, breaking down our culturally inherited individualism, the narcissism of our egos, the solitary self that must die in order for eternal life to be born in us, to become a “we” that walks with Jesus.

It’s clear that the eight communities gathered (plus Valle Nuevo in El Salvador) are all limping in one way or another, but by telling and listening to each other’s stories, the Holy Spirit is weaving us together into the big story of God’s love that tells us who we are. ✨



*Snapshots from the SMC camp meeting*

## News From Third Way

by Natalie Potts

Summer was slow in coming to the Northern part of the United States this year. This author reflects on the late spring months with a sense of misery and impatience. However, summer did come and with it came oodles of travel, some sunshine, and a whole lot of rain.

For starters, a group from Third Way (including Rudy Arnold, Anna Buck, Seth McCoy, and myself) travelled down to Texas for a visit with Hope Fellowship community members. Highlights of the trip include a neighborhood tour

with Suzanne, evening meal at Norma’s, swimming in that big old lake, conversation with the pastoral team, touring the World Hunger Relief Farm with Allan, meals with Bridgewater and the Gatlin sisters, and a raucous game night at the Porter’s!

Soon after returning home from Texas, yours truly set off for a 7-week stay at Plow Creek. I spent time working in the bakery, learning to bake all kinds of delicious (and some healthy!) goods, and helping organize products to go to various markets. I also helped out on the farm—mostly weeding and picking berries, but also learning a lot about how to care for

plants. I spent lots of time barefoot, learned to milk a goat, sold things at market, got a fresh haircut, built meaningful relationships with community members, spent lots of girly time with my housemates Leah and Emily, and also spent a decent amount of time resting, reading, and reflecting. Thank you Plow Creek for welcoming me to work with you all this summer.

At the beginning of July, Daleen Ward flew to South Africa to be with her dad in his final days of life. He was very sick when the Ward family moved to Minnesota, and it was with a lot of sadness they left her parents behind. We are deeply

grateful that Daleen was able to be with her dad at the end of his life. Please join us in praying for her and their family as they are grieving.

Towards the middle of July, Sarah Winger and Amanda Titus took a plane together to India. It has been a long-time dream of these old friends that they could go together. They spent time in Delhi, visiting a community that Sarah stayed with last year, and they spent time in Kolkata, working with children, taking and teaching dance classes, and working with Iris Ministries. I believe there is more, but they have yet to return... perhaps a more full version of this news in a later article! Amanda will return near the middle of August, while Sarah will remain in India for 2 more weeks and then travel to Thailand to participate in a friend's wedding.

At the beginning of August, the Ward family left for California and a west-coast trip to visit prayer partners, financial donors, and hopefully some new donors. Both Bryan and Daleen work with an organization called Church Resource Ministries, and their family depends on financial support from donors. Their work with CRM is largely focused on investing in and developing folks within the church. Their investment in Third Way folks has been invaluable to us!

Final travel news... a group of 12 from Third Way attended the SMC Camp Meeting in early August. Many came away from the meeting reflecting that the time was refreshing, that it felt like a big old family reunion, that they were amazed at

how welcomed and comfortable they felt, and how much fun they had. Praise God! This author is encouraged that relationships between Third Way and other SMC folks are growing, and that more from Third Way are being blessed by interaction with these beloved intentional communities.

In other news, Joey and Pearl Cavalier welcomed their first child, Vincent Asher, into the family in March. He is a smiley, healthy young boy!

A new household-of-sorts is forming in the Selby-Dale neighborhood of St Paul. I have heard them call themselves "the headquarters," "the quarters," and perhaps most commonly "the fourplex." Three of the units in the fourplex are occupied by Third Way families or roommate groups.

Third Way has begun experimenting with a new strategy of organizing people and tasks to care for the things that need to get done within our community. We are calling the various parts "Heart, Soul, Mind and Strength." The heart team is a lot like the pastoral team that we learned about at Hope Fellowship. The Soul team is a creative arts/worship planning team. The Mind and Strength team is an all-purpose administrative team. Our desire is for folks to be plugged in where they can best use their gifts in service of the community. We also want to do enough without doing too much, and to engage ourselves in the activities we are led to, responsive to the wind of the Spirit as it blows. Please pray for us as we're giving this a shot!

Peace. ☮



*Sojourners Celebrates Rick DiMicio's 70th Birthday*



*A lively lunch discussion at Plow Creek between Matt Adams and Pete Begly*

# News From Sojourners



*Sojourners at the Covenanted Member Retreat*

by Katie Piche

Summer has not yet ended, but we have to pretend that it has because the kids are going back to school. But not before they have had a few adventures of their own. Each year we devote a week to our kids and call it “Kids’ Week.” Mattoney and Laura Hare led the kids in a week of low key activities including but not limited to an exploration of the Lord’s Prayer, a reading of *The Smith of Wootten Major* by Mr. Tolkien, and the construction and presentation of a feast to other Sojourners.

Another Kids’ Week activity is the traditional “Buddy Outing.” I happen to know for a fact that Caedmon was taken to the Zoo by Tim Otto. You may remember from previous news that Caedmon is a child who spouts Sojourner names from his lips at all times. Well the animals in the zoo were just lucky enough to have Caedmon naming them with all the passion and enthusiasm that perhaps Adam himself felt when he first named the animals not long after the creation of the world. For just a few of the other Buddy Outings, Rebecca and Katie found their way to the fish theater (I won’t explain this because I am hoping that you will be left to wonder what this could possibly be); and Naomi took Annalise out to a café.

Gigi has been on adventure after adventure. Her travels have taken her to the East Coast for a cousin’s wedding and to Plow Creek and back home again. But she wasn’t the only one gallivanting around the country. Rubén and Mateo spent the summer away in Costa Rica and Wisconsin. They were excitedly reunited to the rest of their Sojourner Posse only one day before they started at a new school. John David

and Alexina flew on an airplane on their own to be received by their family on the other end. Rebecca was received by her family on the other end of her own plane ride.

We are wrapping up our intentional “Sabbath Year.” We attempted to take life down a couple notches and focus on our relationships with God and each other. Pray for us as we go into this next year that we will be able to keep the deep concepts of Sabbath and of a God who daily provides for and recreates us if we can find our way through in trust.

We continue to walk with Chirsti Beutler as she faces one day at a time with cancer. She is showing us how to receive life while God gives it to us. Join us



*Tim and Caedmon at the zoo*

in living life with her by praying for her to continue to live with God as her center in each day that she is given.

Are you wondering about Edith Bernard in her mid-sixties? I thought so. Well let me tell you that the treasure of Edith shines forth in the color yellow from her yellow room. She is sensitive to noise, but not to movement. And while she can't join us for gathered singing, you can find her dancing with all the joy of the universe periodically through out each day. Her dance says "To Him who Loves us and has freed us!" And her dance says, "God is Good." ❧



*Rebecca helps lead worship during Kids' Week*

# Plow Creek in Conversation

photos from Heather Munn



*Rich Foss and Jim Harnish share a moment before Sunday lunch*



*Steve Graham and Paul Munn discuss computers*

# Hope Fellowship News

By Gabriela Gatlin

With the beginning of the new school year, everyone has now returned from summer travels, and it feels good to be home again with each other.

Before everyone dispersed on family vacations earlier this summer, we enjoyed hosting several folks from Third Way. They joined in our life for a few days, shared meals with us and got a full dose of the hot Texas sun.

In addition to all the various family vacations we took over the summer, we participated in some church-community trips as well. Joe Gatlin was able visit to Springwater during a Habitat trip in the northwest. He enjoyed sharing in their Sunday evening worship with about twenty people. Joe comments that in some ways it felt very much like home – several people helping to lead worship, everyone participating, new children, some people considering moving into their neighborhood. In other ways, it did not feel like home – it rained and it was cool! Earlier in the day, Joe and several Springwater people and their children enjoyed a Sunday afternoon bike ride with hundreds of other Portlanders (Portland sponsored the event and blocked off traffic on several streets). Previous visits to Springwater have inspired new ideas in Joe, and this time he returns home wanting to share reflections with Hope Fellowship on Springwater's emphasis/theme on inner healing.

Gabriela Gatlin enjoyed a visit with Alterna Community in LaGrange, Georgia. While visiting Alterna, she spent the weekend at El Refugio, a hospitality house near the Stewart Detention Center. Alterna and other friends in Georgia founded



*Hope Fellowship's ever-expanding Porter clan*

El Refugio in 2010 to provide hospitality to friends and family visiting immigrant detainees at Stewart. Several folks at Hope Fellowship were intrigued to hear about the work of El Refugio, and now we are looking forward to getting involved in a visitation program at the Hutto Detention Center near Waco.

In June, six of us participated in the SMC/Valle Nuevo delegation. Steven Autry, Analí, Gabriela and Nancy Gatlin, Milagro Mullet, and Christina Wilson spent a week in El Salvador with others from SMC. It was a particular joy for us to accompany Milagro, a native Salvadoran, on her first visit to El Salvador since she left the country twenty six years ago.

Earlier this year, three Hope Fellowship couples, Carrie and Fernando Arroyo, Barbara and Phillip Bridgewater, and Becky and Joel Scott, formed the Casa Azul (blue house) corporation to provide good rental options within the neighborhood of the Meeting House.

Casa Azul hopes to provide rental housing for Hope Fellowship folks seeking communal space as well as low-income and immigrant families who struggle to secure decent housing. In July, Casa Azul bought a casa rosada (pink house) that has three separate apartments. The three couples say that the purchase of the pink house was an enormous step of faith for them as a group. We look forward to witnessing the community life that will grow in the pink house and hopefully be a blessing to our neighborhood.

We celebrate with Matt and Michelle Porter the arrival of their adoptive daughter Eveyln and welcome her into our extended church family.

We also wait with the Caruthers family as Alan receives a long awaited transplant and spends the next several months in recovery.

We appreciate your prayers as we continue growing in numbers, community, celebrations and creativity. ☺

# Book Review: *How Huge the Night* by Heather Munn and Lydia Munn

Reviewed by Tim Otto

Students at a recent school concert closed the evening by singing “I Believe I Can Fly” by R. Kelly. They were all wearing white shirts, and for that last song they put on white gloves so that the black light made them luminescent as they gracefully flapped their arms and sang that if they believed in themselves, and tried hard, they could fly.

But they never got an inch off the ground. Perhaps I’m being a literalist curmudgeon to point that out. But as wonderful as it is to encourage kids to dream—and to affirm their efforts to achieve their dreams, I wonder about the dark side of that message. What happens when you try your hardest and still fail? What happens when you realize you’ve succeeded at the wrong thing? What happens when you’ve messed everything up by thinking you ought to fly above everyone else?

I wish I could have handed every one of those kids Lydia and Heather (mother and daughter) Munn’s new novel for teens, *How Huge the Night*.

“Isn’t that beautiful, Julien?”

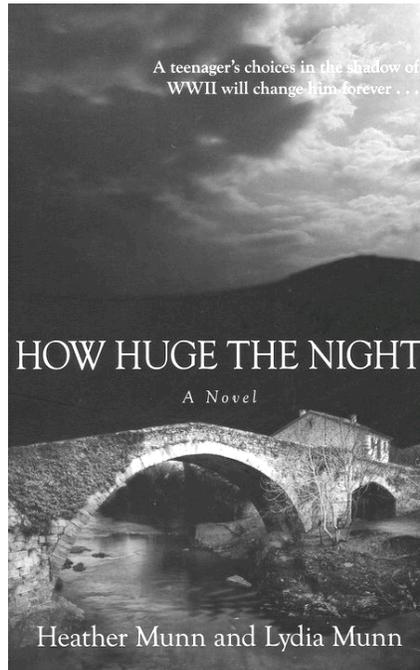
“No.”

And so the book begins. Julien, a fifteen year old who has just moved from Paris to rural France, does not give the expected answer, and yet it feels true to him as he looks down on his new hometown. The book might be thought of as a series of such questions and unexpected answers.

“God, won’t you save Paris from the Nazis?”

“No.”

.....



“Should I use the weapons of love?”

“You can’t use the weapons of love to attack.”

.....

“Should I cover the chopped logs with a tarp?”

“... the rain’s what makes them strong. Leaches the sap out, seasons the wood—it’s not worth burning till it’s been out in the storms for a year.”

Each answer is unexpected, yet its truth makes us trust the story. And in the end, many of the answers are illuminating.

And what a need for illumination there is! True to the title, the Munns don’t flinch from the enormity of the night. Julien faces a hostile group of peers at his new school. His mother sinks into depression. The Nazis assault France. A young brother and sister flee the Nazis after their father has died.

Given the dark plot, I found myself almost desperate for light, and when a shaft of grace appeared or a glimmer of kindness, I felt jarred by and grateful for its simple beauty.

The Munns skillfully juxtapose the experience of being the new kid at school with the experience of Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi-occupied northern France. Julien, like

adolescents everywhere, has huge, bad feelings about being the stranger in the midst of a tight-knit group of kids who have grown up together. But even in his self-absorption, he can’t miss the parallels to the experience of the refugees seeking protection in his small town.

As the novel progresses, difficult questions emerge concerning theodicy, pacifism, scapegoating, and the presence of God. How does one become an insider without making others outsiders? How do you fight for what is right if coercion and self-righteousness make you wrong? And by the way, where is our good and loving God in all this?

The Munns don’t answer these questions with simple slogans, but with the logic of story and all the beauty and emotional truth that story affords.

I’m almost embarrassed by how much I like this book. I think I like it because it tells the story of someone trying to be good, who fails at it again and again, and as he fails he hurts others in the process—my story. But then there is grace. And the beauty of that grace helps Julien, and me, go on.

The message I heard sung the other night, “if you try you can fly,” may initially seem like a way of esteeming teens. It communicates that we believe in their potential, and that they have the capacity to do whatever they set their minds to.

Only . . . they don’t. At least not in any absolute sense. It just isn’t true. And because of that it is ultimately a cruel and burdensome message.

*How Huge the Night*—this is exactly the word I’m looking for—honors teens. It does so because it tells the truth about the night, and how it has invaded each of our hearts. It believes that teens can handle it. And it invites them, and all of us, into the shocking and grace-full light of God.

Steven Autry from Hope Fellowship poses with a mural at Fernando Llorca's workshop in San Salvador, El Salvador. SMC's delegation to Valle Nuevo, El Salvador each year includes a visit to Llorca's workshop, El Arbol de Dios.



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