



Volume XV

A Quarterly Newsletter of Shalom Mission communities

Number 1

[www.shalomconnections.org](http://www.shalomconnections.org)

March 2011: "Take up Your Cross and Follow Me"

"Follow Me"

By Dale Gish

What follows are five meditations from my prayer and scripture journal. I have been praying and working my way through the book of Matthew this year. Each meditation begins with a scripture passage, some reflection on the passage, some wrestling with what it means in my life and my context as a member and leader of Church of the Sojourners. I end with a prayer in response to my wrestling (or 'wrasseling' as Jack Bernard used to say). These five medi-

tations deal with themes of the cross, sin, discipleship and leadership. I hope they are in some way helpful to you.

**Mark 10:28-39 NRSV**

Peter began to say to him, "Look, we have left everything and followed you." Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age--houses, brothers

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*People of the Epiphany at Sojourners.*

# "Take Up Your Cross and Follow Me"

(Continued from Page 1)

and sisters, mothers and children, and fields with persecutions--and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first."

They were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them; they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them what was to happen to him, saying, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death; then they will hand him over to the Gentiles; they will mock him, and spit upon him, and flog him, and kill him; and after three days he will rise again."

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us



Gwendolyn and Luis enjoying Sara's salsa dance class at the Hope Fellowship Meeting House.

whatever we ask of you." And he said to them, "What is it you want me to do for you?" And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." 38 But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" 39 They replied, "We are able." Then Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink

you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized;

**1) Mark 10:28 Peter began to say to him, "Look, we have left everything and followed you."**

I think these words of Peter should be taken straightforwardly. Peter and the other disciples have actually left everything behind and followed Jesus. I don't know that any of them were all that rich. Maybe Matthew the tax collector, but we don't really know. But they had lives of some sort, and family, and they did leave it all behind to follow Jesus. And that was no small thing. It was a step into the unknown. It was a dangerous step to

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## 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 Missions 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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follow a messiah, one who would likely get them killed. And ultimately that is how it plays out. I suspect many of the disciples did end up dying for their faith. They did leave everything behind and follow.

Maybe Peter is being brash and boastful here, but I take it as saying hey, this is what we are trying to do. The disciples are doing exactly what Jesus told the rich young man to do. This is good. It will lead them to abundant life in the kingdom. It will lead them to the cross. I think sometimes leaving everything and following is seen as unrealistic and so people don't do it, or they only do it when they are young. Or people see following as a one-time conversion experience, and then hold to belief until you die. My experience of leaving everything is that it is an ongoing process. It is the process of choosing paths that lead towards the cross again and again. There is always a new call, a new opportunity to leave everything and follow him. Of course it often looks more like staying in the midst of a cross-filled situation when it would be much easier to leave and escape.

*God, be with me as I attempt to continually leave everything and follow you. Help me to realize*

*that in my situation leaving everything often means living in the midst of pain and suffering, laying my life down for my brothers and sisters. God give me strength and joy as I try to faithfully follow you.*

**2) Mark 10:31 But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.**

It is really good news to hear that we are living in an upside-down kingdom. As I look out at the world it is so easy to get discouraged. As I look at our church it is so easy to get discouraged. It doesn't feel victorious, but I take hope in this verse. While it seems like nothing is happening, while it seems like the world is just crushing us, the great reversal is coming. In God's kingdom the low will be lifted up. The high will be brought down.

It's tempting to focus on the high being brought down. We want the bad guys to get what they deserve. But ultimately I try not to get too excited about that one. I suspect God will want to redeem them as well. I also



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# "Take up Your Cross and Follow Me"

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think we have enough bad-guy in us that we shouldn't be eager for the high to be brought down. We may find ourselves being the ones brought low.

But the low being lifted up.... That's something to get excited about. We can celebrate good news of hope for the hopeless, strength for the weak, rest for the weary, and the fullness of the kingdom. It's hard not to get impatient. It's easy to feel like God is not at work. I long for the day when the great reversal comes, when justice and righteousness come in their fullness. I want the new Jerusalem. We so badly need the healing and restoration of God.



Erin Mucu Kindy with her son Sebastian at Plow Creek.

*Come quickly, Lord Jesus. We need your help. We need encouragement. We need some breakthroughs. Help this church to feel like a good place. Help us to be a place of love and unity. And protect us from temptation. Deliver us from evil.*

**3) Mark 10:32a They were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was**

**walking ahead of them; they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid.**

Jesus now starts heading to Jerusalem. The disciples and followers are probably not different from one another. Disciple actually means *follower*. They are amazed and afraid. Jesus is walking towards his death. He is walking into danger.

Walking into danger, walking towards death, reminds me of walking into hard pastoral conversations. I feel like I am walking into danger. It is very costly. I find myself drained. What I want to do is go a different way, a way that is not so costly, a way that does not lead me to being hurt. Perhaps I am feeling what Jesus felt. Am I walking towards Jeru- →→→



Third Way visiting Plow Creek.

salem in my own way? Will I need to suffer and die to myself? Probably in some way.

When I find myself accepting the path of the cross, I find myself plagued by other questions. Will the way of the cross accomplish anything or just make things worse? I don't know. Perhaps that is the hardest question for me with my inflated sense of self. When I get crucified I want to know that I am doing something worthwhile. I really want my crucifixion to make a difference and it is not usually clear to me that it will. Could Jesus always see whether his death would make a difference? I don't know...

*Jesus, come and walk with me to Jerusalem. Help me to trust you,*

*trust that you will be at work. Help me to listen to you and to follow your direction. I want to give you my efforts and ask you to bring something good from them. Please be about resurrection.*

**4) Mark 10:35b "Teacher, we want you to do whatever we ask of you."**

Doesn't this express the human condition and how we view God? James and John want a special pipeline to the power of God. They want God to be on their side. They want God to be someone they can just tell what they want to do. They want what some Christians claim to have: God ready to do whatever they want God to do. Clearly it isn't true for them, and it isn't true for the rest of us. God is



*Paloma and Gerson at Hope Fellowship.*

not about fulfilling our every wish and desire. God ultimately will bring the kingdom in its fullness, but that is often a lot different from God doing what we want right now.

The problem is that we are not kingdom-focused people. We want what we want and we want it now. At best what we want is more of the kingdom right now. That is good, but as Christians we acknowledge that the kingdom is only the kingdom when it is on God's time. We can't make it happen. It's only real when God brings it.

I find myself with a good deal of impatience with God. I'm impatient about how little of the kingdom we see. I think that is understandable. My impatience is quite scriptural. In Revelation, the cry is "how long?" In Ro-



*Antonia and Annalise at Antonia's Quinceañera (Sojourners).*

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## "Take Up Your Cross and Follow Me"

(Continued from Page 5)

mans 8 we hear that all creation is groaning. So maybe I am not really impatient. Maybe I am just groaning. But I really do wish God would be more victorious among us. It feels like God is on the verge of giving us more than we can handle, like God is on the verge of allowing us to be damaged and decimated. God knows what I want. God can overcome sin. But will God overcome in this situation? What will God do?

*God, you hear my prayer. I want more of your kingdom now. I need more encouragement. Help! There is nothing more that I can say. It's in your hands.*

**5) Mark 10:37**  
**And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory."**

Of course what James and John want are positions of power, positions of prominence when Jesus comes into glory. Once again they epitomize the human condition, thinking about themselves and jockeying for status even as they try to follow Jesus. Jesus has a great answer for them. He asks them if they can drink his cup with him. "If you can't bear



*Tiffany, Daleen, and Seth (of Third Way) on a St. Paul tour.*

the cross then you can't wear the crown," says the old song. He has just gotten done detailing his impending crucifixion. It's like they haven't even heard a word he said.

The fact is that none of them will remain faithful, awake, standing with him in the time of trial. They are wrong when they insist that they are able. Of course, they will not drink the cup with him, and in the moment of trial they abandon him. Jesus is saying that his glory is tied up in his self-sacrificial death on a cross. That is how he conquers; that is the way that he defeats his enemy. The glory-blood is his own.

But the disciples don't understand, and when the cup is offered to them they turn away. But God does not give up on them; they are restored in the faith, and in



*David and Joanne Janzen at Reba.*

→→→

the end they do end up sharing the cup as they likely die martyr's deaths as leaders in the early church. What they do not accomplish in the time of trial, they make up for as members, leaders, and cruciform people within the people of God. The cross will

find them, never fear...

*Jesus, I do not desire a position on your right or on your left. I will be fine with being a lowly servant in your courts. I am sober enough not to insist that I can drink your cup. At least I know that I do not want to drink it. I*

*have seen enough in the ways of the faith to expect that the cup will come to me. Maybe I am drinking it right now. Give me strength to carry on in the way you have called.*

□

## Third Way News By Natalie Potts

### Moving

In early February we were joined by Bryan and Daleen Ward and their two kids, Kyle and Zoe. They moved from South Africa (in the coldest month of the year—kudos to them) to join in what God is doing here in St Paul. We are excited to have them and are becoming more and more aware of what gifts they are to us.

In February, we were also joined by Tiffany Mayes from Southern California. She visited us in June and felt a strong call to move and be part of what God is doing here. Tiffany has previously worked with Bryan and Daleen as part of an organization called Church Resource Ministries and will continue to partner with them and others



Hamline Church

from Third Way in ministry here.

For the month of February, Third Way has been using a

new gathering space. Hamline Church, a neighboring church we relate with, has offered for us to use their fellowship hall on Sunday afternoons. We have now moved our worship gathering to Sunday afternoons, which takes some getting used to. However, we now host a weekly dinner potluck after the Sunday Meeting, creating a regular fellowship time that we look forward to. It has been good to stretch our legs in a bigger space, and we are excited for

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Danny and the Churchill Boys at Groundswell Coffee.

## "Take up Your Cross and Follow Me"

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our Sunday meeting to feel more public. We look forward to putting more creativity and intentionality into our Sunday Meeting.

### **New Life**

Justin and Jessie James welcomed their daughter, Zola June James, on December 18<sup>th</sup>!

### **Fun**

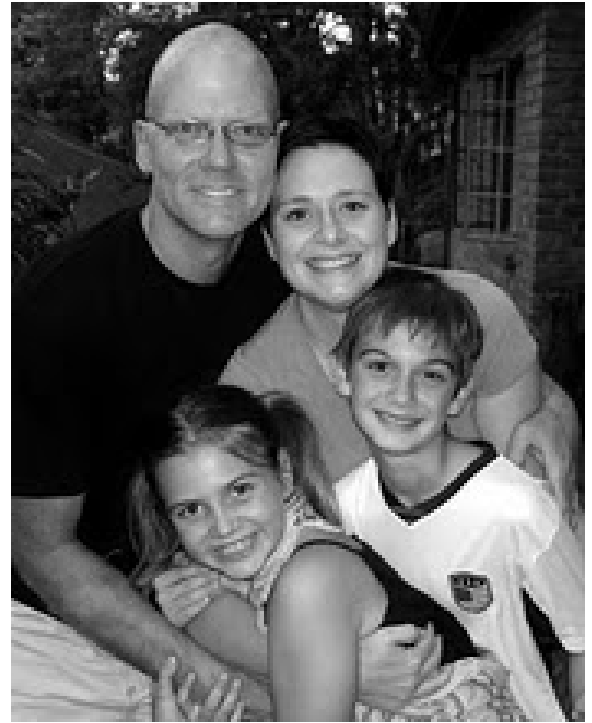
In January, Groundswell Coffee, a coffee shop owned by Seth and Tim, held a Third Way music night. There were performances by Angie Caroccio, Bethany Tweeten, Jessica Smith, and last but not least, Danny and the Churchill Boys! The music night created a performance space for our

community artists while bringing business to the coffee shop. There is talk of hosting monthly music nights and finding ways to promote other kinds of art as well.

### **Guests**

In January a group from Third Way made a visit to Plow Creek Farm, for the first of our SMC community visits this year. They came back with many good stories and increased excitement about being part of SMC!

At the beginning of February, a group of folks from West Union Mennonite Church in Parnell, Iowa came up for a



*The Ward Family.*

visit. They are part of the Central Plains Mennonite Conference (along with us) and we have been working on creating relationships between our congregations.

### **Prayer**

Please continue to pray for us. Pray for unity within our community, that we would continue to look to God for all of our needs, and that we would remember the things God has spoken to us. It is easy to forget the words of encouragement and direction that God has already spoken, and we need constant reminders. Thank you for your support. We look forward to forming more connections with you all as this year of exploration continues. Peace. ☐



*Ricky Hampton visiting Plow Creek.*



News from Sojourners  
By Katie Piche

**Welcome to Sojo Land...**

...where we travel through the proverbial exodus desert learning to trust God's accompaniment and provision. For now, the exodus story is our stage.

Painted on the desert backdrop are our sorrows and struggles. If you think of us, pray for us. Pray for God to lift our heads, to help us see that we are going somewhere. Pray for us to know God's Comfort, God's Energy, and God's Care.

Painted on this same desert scene are our moments of Feasting.

Feasting Evidence: Epiphany and Antonia's Quinceañera. □



*Naomi, Gigi, and Hannah (from Hope Fellowship).*



*IvaJo and Rick present a visual Epiphany meditation on the character of Jesus.*



*Steven, Laura, and Antonia at the Quinceañera.*

## "Take Up Your Cross and Follow Me"

Hope Fellowship News  
By Gabriela Gatlin

**Saturday, January 29, 2011**

**11:24 AM**

**Hi All,**

Just a friendly reminder that Team Alan will be running a full marathon relay tomorrow at the Miracle Match Marathon. This race and foundation raises money and awareness for bone marrow "matches" and transplant processes. As many of you know, Alan and Laura Caruthers have decided to begin the process of fundraising and preparation for a much needed bone marrow transplant in 2012. Jessica "Sic-em" Studinka will run leg 1 around Baylor campus, Kelly "Long Legs" Lawson will run leg 2 through the swank part of Waco and Castle Heights, Ruth "Country Club" Boardman Alexander will run leg 3 around Lake Shore and Lake Waco, and Joel "Quadzilla" Scott will run

leg 4 and bring it home through Cameron Park and hopefully across the Suspension Bridge finish line in one piece. Please join us in spirit as we experience the joys and trials of physical torture. We hope to see you at the Lasagna Luncheon if not before.

Peace,  
Joel for Team Alan

**Sunday, January 30, 2011**

**8:14 AM**

**Good morning!**

Alan and Sammy were the official starters of the 2011 Miracle Match Marathon race, sounding off a bull horn at 7:30 this morning.

Team Alan Caruthers kicked off

the relay with Jessica on the first leg. Kelly will take over at around Mile 5.5 at the Suspension Bridge; Ruth will jump in at around Mile 13.5 near Valley Mills and Bishop; and Joel will



Ezekiel at his dedication with family (Carrie, Jonas, and Fernando).

begin around Mile 20 with the brutal, hilly Cameron Park leg which starts at 19th and Lake Shore.

Thanks to the youth support crew - Paloma, Ellie, Hannah, and Phillip and Norma (Miranda in spirit - she's sick with a fever) who'll be heading up an aid station at Mountainview Elementary.

Thanks to everyone for your prayers of support for safety, pain-free joints and muscles, and a fun time for all!

Ruth for Team Caruthers

Alan and Laura Caruthers continue to prepare for a bone marrow transplant. In January, Jessica Studinka, Joel Scott, Kelly Lawson, and Ruth Boardman-Alexander ran in the Miracle Match Marathon to support Alan's transplant, and the Hope Fellowship youth →→→



Jessica, Ruth, Kelly, and Joel (a.k.a. Team Alan) ready for the Miracle Match Marathon.



managed a drink station along the route. Just recently, Alan received news that two perfect bone marrow matches have been identified. Of course there are more preparations and decisions to be made before the transplant can happen, but we are grateful for this positive development.

Jessica and Justin Bullock completed their internship at the World Hunger Relief Farm and are now managing a farm in Pennsylvania. They moved just a week after Jessica ran in the Miracle Match Marathon.

Ezekiel Arroyo celebrated his first birthday in January and was dedicated in the church.

Allan DeLaurel decided to enter the McLennan Community College nursing program this spring. His covenant group feels very lucky

to have free blood pressure readings any Wednesday evening that they meet. Michelle Porter has also begun taking coursework to enter a nursing program.

The men of Hope Fellowship enjoyed their annual retreat at Three Mountain Retreat Center. They centered their discussion around study of *The Return of the Prodigal Son* by Henri Nouwen. Reports have leaked out that the men of Hope Fellowship cook and eat better on retreat than the women do.

Sara Margot, who worked as a folkloric dance instructor in Peru before immigrating to the United States, has begun a Sunday afternoon dance



Ellie and Miranda enjoying Gerson's birthday celebration.

class at the Meeting House. It's the perfect time and a place to learn how to dance *sin pena*.

Gabriela Gatlin, Joe and Nancy Gatlin, and Joel Scott have begun to envision a collaborative writing project that explores the long-standing relationship between the Shalom Missions Communities and Valle Nuevo. They received the blessing of the SMC coordinators to proceed with this project and look forward to continuing conversations with other members of SMC and Valle Nuevo over the next several months.

Aranza Torres and Shannon Malburg have worked diligently for several months to develop a "REEL Images" film series on immigration. In the last couple months, Fernando Arroyo and Nathan Alleman have joined the team, and now



Hope Fellowship women celebrating Kelly Lawson's birthday.

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## "Take Up Your Cross and Follow Me"

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Hope Fellowship is looking forward to hosting these viewings for the wider Waco community at the newly renovated Jubilee Theater. Following each movie, Aranza will be leading a bilingual discussion to foster community dialogue on immigration as a complex interpersonal, social, and systemic issue.

We enjoyed hosting Renata Browne from Church of the Sojourners for a week-long visit in February. She contributed an idea for alternative Sunday School –

called God Squads at Sojourners - that might prove helpful as we continue to process our growth and alternative ways to structure our joint meetings as a church.

We completed the initial three Lasagna Luncheons for discussing three alternative church structures that might better respond to our growth in numbers and stay faithful to our shared values. Now we proceed with a few meetings to review and summarize our discussions and then make a consensus decision. For the most part, these have been positive discussions and opportunities to listen to each

other. Individuals regularly comment that they leave each discussion feeling more open to options that they initially thought would be terrible ideas.

How we feel about lasagna after these three luncheons is another matter altogether. It would be fair to say that Hope Fellowship now has mixed feelings about lasagna. Someone recently commented that at least we didn't dump a long drawn-out consensus process on green curry or tres leches cake and ice cream. That would have been truly unfortunate!

□

### News from Reba By Hope Lane

In January, we celebrated David Janzen's 70th birthday with a party. David had prepared a number of stories to share, each illustrating a lesson or meaningful moment in his life. At the conclusion of each story, David invited the audience to give feedback about what they heard going on in the story. Listeners offered their own insights and comments. If you ever have a few minutes to talk with David, ask him to tell you the

story involving a wallet, an out house, and a refused kiss!

Also in January, Reba Place Fellowship was very pleased to welcome Jesse Miller and

Jolyn Rodman as covenant members. Jesse came to RPF as an intern six years ago and has had significant involvement with →→→ the Recyclery, a



Ice cream crowd at Reba.

neighborhood non-profit bicycle collective. He is originally from Elkhart, Indiana. Jolyn Rodman came to RPF as an apprentice in 2009 and works as tenant services representative (a.k.a. landlady) of the 51-unit affordable apartment building located at 1528 Pratt in Rogers Park.

During their welcoming ceremony, individuals commended Jesse and Jolyn to the Fellowship, and both shared what brought them to this point. Jolyn peeled a rotting onion before our very eyes to make an analogy about the spiritual refinement that occurs in community. She has observed the "peeling away of layers" within herself during her time so far at RPF, and is ready for more. Jolyn and Jesse then had their feet washed by their mentors (Lisa Selph and Barb Grimsley, respec-



Reba folks listening to David's birthday stories.

tively) and then took the towel and washed their mentors' feet. We all toasted them with sparkling drink!

We celebrated another milestone birthday in February. Dorothy Konsterlie, our oldest member, turned 90. When Dorothy joined Reba Place Fellowship at the age of 52, she was the oldest

member. Sally noted this was quite a brave move to make during middle-age. Twenty-eight years later, she is *still* the oldest member! Anne Gavitt honored her with a poem and others shared appreciation for Dorothy.

In February, Eric, Katie, Delaney, and Soren Dahlaw moved to 802 Monroe Street. A mere three days before the move, Chicagoland received a certifiable blizzard complete with thunder-lightning, frightening gusts of wind, and 18 inches of snow, but a good turnout of faithful, able bodies made the move happen successfully. Another family is temporarily occupying the second and third floors of 802 Monroe, but after their stay the hope is to form a new household in these spaces.

□



David Janzen entertaining the crowd at his 70th birthday party.

# "Take up Your Cross and Follow Me"

## Membership Lines

We can't welcome you aboard  
because you've been sailing among us  
for quite some time

And we can't open the door for you  
because you already dwell in the  
house of God

We can't gather you into the family  
because you have been encircled in the  
arms of God since your first "yes" to Jesus



*Plow Creek kids goofing around.*



*Matt Adams splitting logs at Plow Creek.*

But the "yes" which you now say  
draws you into this particular  
peculiar  
circle of dance

Tonight you can  
set down your suitcases on the bunk  
unpack your things and  
settle in to your new berth

We look around at each other  
with hope—the sure kind—  
that at the next port of call  
you will still be with us  
and we will still be with you

Anne Gavitt (Reba)



There's a peace here...

As I perch on my guest house porch, the work of creation and creator frolic about. Chicks voice their needs. Roosters and hens patrol the grounds. One rooster's crow ignites neighboring cocks; a cacophony of who's in charge ensues. The bucolic grounds, heavy with the morning's dew, are lush with life and color. Across the way I hear the scattered movements of my host family preparing for day's work. Everything awakens here with the sun's rising--a 5:00a.m. wake-up call. Rabbits and chicks, roosters and hens, sheep and horses...and alas! a cascading light ensures we don't miss morning's glory. We are awake. We are alive. We are at peace.

Joel H. Scott (Hope Fellowship)

Valle Nuevo June 2010



*Plow Creek getting firewood for the winter - Matt Adams, Meg Foxvog, Matthew Peterson.*



*Plow Creek kids enjoying Friday night after the common meal.*

*SMC's Annual Delegation to  
Valle Nuevo, El Salvador*

When: June 25 – July 3, 2011

Cost: Airfare and \$500 in-country  
expenses

Who: Folks who are 16 years and older

Please consider joining the SMC annual  
delegation to Valle Nuevo, a family  
reunion with dear brothers and sisters  
whom we've known almost 20 years.

We will spend part of the time in San Salvador getting to know and experience some of Monseñor Romero's legacy as well as meeting Valle Nuevo university students. While in Valle Nuevo, we will tour the community and spend time with our compañer@s. This and more will be part of a very profound and life-changing week. For questions please feel free to write: Nancy Gatlin at [jngatlin@grandecom.net](mailto:jngatlin@grandecom.net) or Dawn Smith Buetler at [dawnoelle@gmail.com](mailto:dawnoelle@gmail.com).  
RSVP by April 15th.



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