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# Come, Lord Jesus!

## Two Perspectives

### The 2012 SMC delegation to El Salvador

By Megan Hering and Ruth Ann Friesen

Two of us from the same household at Reba, Ruth Ann Friesen and Megan Hering, had the opportunity to travel together in El Salvador with this year's SMC delegation. For Megan this was the first trip to El Salvador; for Ruth Anne it was a return after ten years and multiple visits before that. Our observations and reflections from this year's trip appear here side by side, inviting your own meditations on these fresh and seasoned perspectives.

**Megan:** I was excited to be in El Salvador! I couldn't believe it! Wow! Was it really true I was actually here? I had heard so much about El Salvador and Valle Nuevo at Reba, especially from persons who had been on previous delegations. I felt disturbed and scared to see men carrying big guns out in the open, right there in front of our hotel, El Torogoz (the name of a beautiful bird).

**Ruth Ann:** Coming from Colombia, I wondered whom I would find at the airport to pick me up. Emma Sosa's sister Mercedes had promised to be there. How would I recognize her? When I sighted my name scrawled across a sheet of paper outside, I sighed a huge sigh of relief, smiled, and hugged Mercedes, her daughter Suzanna, and husband René. It was GREAT to receive a warm welcome! And was it HOT!



*Margarita points across the Lempa River while Ruth Ann, of Reba Pleace Fellowship, listens on the SMC delegation to Valle Nuevo, El Salvador this past summer.*

**M:** We went to a Spanish mass at the cathedral. It touched me to know that these folks love Jesus and will be in heaven some day speaking their same language and worshipping Jesus, too! It was also touching to see where Oscar Romero is buried there in the basement of the cathedral. He was a voice for lots of people, a strong voice for the poor!

**RA:** I was impressed by the priest Father Gerardo, a very tall German, who spoke at the mass. He talked of the Kingdom of God being Jesus' central concern...a reign of justice and peace and human rights...different from the world...different from the U.S. and German imperialism and power! Lord, have mercy on us all! At Oscar Romero's tomb was a statement that Christians who cannot commit to solidarity with the poor are not Christians!

M: The next day we went to the place where Oscar Romero lived. The emotions were high for me, and the nun gave me a hug and said that Oscar Romero loves you. He is here with us; he is here in spirit. I think I was wondering about why someone would have killed him when he was speaking for the Lord and felt so deeply for the people of El Salvador. That afternoon we went to the Catholic university (U.C.A.) where the six Jesuit priests plus the cook and her daughter were killed. We saw the room of the cook and her daughter. That was one of the most emotional spots for me because I have a heart for children and felt deeply for these two! The whole day was very emotional for me.

RA: That same morning Joe Gatlin shared at breakfast a comment that Salomé, who lives in Valle Nuevo, had made the last time he was in Texas, “We are Christ on the cross of free trade!” A very succinct statement that captures the impact of free trade on the common people of El Salvador.

Then we visited Fernando Llord’s shop called the Tree of God, and Fernando told us about his life and how God led him to gift his art to the people of La Palma. The process of developing meaningful work gave value and meaning to the art, using the surrounding nature and culture of El Salvador. It gave cultural identity to the people and communicated hope and joy and faith in the natural figures that were drawn and painted. As more and more people of all generations became involved and workshops appeared, Fernando commented that crime and violence disappeared from La Palma! It’s as if a real transformation has occurred there! God is certainly active in the artwork that has flowed from La Palma!

M: I am an artist; I like to paint with watercolors. It was good to visit Fernando Llord’s shop and to see him in person. His story gave me hope and inspiration. His gift of art to the Salvadoran people gives them hope and a



*Portrait of Salome, Valle Nuevo, El Salvador*

future. His art is beautiful and captures the peoples’ lives. It inspired me to capture my life in pictures and I want to use my art in ways that might help others, perhaps in giving hope to the stressful world in the U.S. It was really sad that the art at the cathedral that he made and put so much time into has been torn down. It is neat that God is still inspiring him even through that rough time.

RA: As I awoke on Saturday morning after minor surgery the evening before, I read the Gospel story of the transfiguration and reflected that Jesus suffered, Elijah suffered, Moses suffered....Why would I expect to be different? Why should I expect to escape it? The suffering of the world is not reserved for only some folks. ... it is a part of our humanity. Be willing to share in the suffering was a strong theme. The next afternoon we visited the memorial wall in San Salvador where there are long lists of names of persons tortured, disappeared, and/or killed in the Civil War. The memorial was started in 2003 and has been added to again and again. It was quite sobering and upsetting to witness and to realize that the memories live on and on. The injustice and killing are tragic and have not stopped on the world scene.

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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 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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M: The memorial wall was sad but powerful. It was very stressful to be at the wall. What comes to mind is that the memorial wall is for the people of El Salvador because it carries the memory of the tragedies that happened there. It is not for the soldiers and the military and death squads, although they need to remember, too. It makes me think how can we break the cycles of oppression and war that hurt and overpower people's lives. Violence is still very active in our lives and in our world!

RA: The very best part of being in El Salvador is visiting in the countryside out in Valle Nuevo where we have friends, some of whom we've known over a twenty-year period. The friendships are quite a treasure and are a gift of God's grace.

M: I could hardly wait to see what Valle Nuevo would be like! It was awesome to meet and see face to face the people that I have heard about from other folks who have been on delegations. I was a bit anxious about going to the country because I didn't know what to expect, and I had a feeling that it would be pretty primitive. It helped me to prepare to hear that it would be like camping. When we got to the guest home in Valle Nuevo, it was the best house in the whole village. They had a bed for me to sleep on and a regular flush toilet. Very soon I felt more peace in Valle Nuevo than I had during the whole trip! Our hosts Rosa and Pastor were very hospitable and friendly. Their home became my home away from home!

RA: It was very special to share some time with Don Bacho and his two daughters. Don Bacho had lived at our house at Plow Creek for a summer, along with the younger Salomé. They observed how good the watermelons and cantaloupes were and would comment "muy simple" when they weren't so great! Now we shared our tears and our grief together. Margarita, Bacho's wife, had died four months earlier in mid-February, and I listened as the details emerged of her health decline. We shared together Psalm 100 which we had memorized in Spanish that summer at Plow Creek. It was a gifted time of sharing and remembering.

M: One evening we went to Tomasa's house for dinner. We started asking why the Shalom Communities relationship was different from the various non-profit groups they had worked with. And her response was that projects come and go, but Shalom Mission Communities is a friendship that will last. That discussion opened my eyes to see why delegations come every year. The land titles are a long-term process that still has not been finished. It was my first time actually seeing first hand how these folks live and how the land titles are so important to them. How happy they will be when they actually get those titles. We hope soon!

RA: It was a treasure to hear from Tomasa and Morena at supper about how the love of God is infinite, gifted, and shared as we walk together over time! The love is given as if we are family sharing life and fellowship together over meals. It is the grace of God pouring out love that can never be repaid from either side! Tomasa noted that we are all invited to work

*Continued next page...*

together in the vineyard, and we are all paid the same no matter how long we have worked. We are brothers and sisters and part of the family of God as we together do the will of God.

M: The journey down to the Lempa River was quite an adventure and hard for me! It was my first time. There were steep inclines over rocks and stones, and I needed a lot of help going down and up. But there was always someone reaching out to give me a hand. I kept telling myself I can do this....I can go down. I wanted to see where the people had crossed over the river to Honduras as they were fleeing from the army. Down by the river I could feel the hurt and the pain that they had experienced. I felt Margarita's songs and poems for her people helped her remember how God had accompanied them in their pain. It was powerful that Margarita gave her book of poems to Bethany. It felt like she was saying tell my story to the Shalom Community people. I was GLAD that I did not fall and hurt myself in any way going down and back up through the hills and rocks!

RA: It was good to be accompanied on the journey down to the Lempa by several Salvadorans who had made the pilgrimage in 1981 as they fled for their lives. As we finally made it down over the loose stones and rocks to the river's edge, several of the women sat on a big rock and looked very deep in thought. I was moved to see how somber and quiet Felipa was as she sat there. I went over to sit near her and listen a bit to her story. This was the first time she had returned to the Lempa after thirty years! Her husband Salomé had returned for the first time with the delegation last year. It was quite sobering to realize the depth of the pain that is still very real and challenging to face.



*Megan Hering (right) of Reba Place Fellowship with one of the University Students from Valle Nuevo*

M: That evening we had a going-away party, in Spanish it's called "una despedida," a time of good-bye. After the meal was the most powerful time of the whole evening. We went around the circle and people talked about their reflections and memories of our time of being there. I said you are family to us and I have felt your love. It was emotional. It helped me remember God's love through their actions and comments. We got into a big circle, held hands, prayed together for each other and our communities. It was really powerful. I could feel God's presence with us!

RA: At the despedida it was so good to hear from each person present. Pastor led off commenting that we consider one another brothers and sisters. Pedro added that these relationships have grown over many years. As they crossed the Lempa River they were very poor and lacked infrastructure like roads. In the refugee camp they learned to know folks. Now as they have returned to their land, they can see the hand of God in all that has happened. The process of legalization of their land has been long, but they have hope that very soon it is becoming reality. What a

glimpse of kingdom life among us now! Margarita talked of the presence of internationals, like Yvonne and Padre Beto, who came as angels to defend them. She gave thanks to God who put them on the road to find help in their poverty.

Pedro said that Romero was the voice of those without voice. Then he continued by pointing to the SMC delegates saying, you are our voice.

Tomasa commented that one can't carry the cross sitting down; we march with the Gospel towards the light of God! We are secure in the reality of God. Through you we have a million friends!

Juana gratefully told of Padre Gerardo's presence in the Honduran refugee camps when she said that he was always with us. He would sneak into the camps illegally. She talked of the power of God on the journey.

Rosalinda said THANKS! We are brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers to each other. Be in constant prayer for us; we need the help of God.

Certainly there was a lot of God's love expressed through all the comments, and Joe talked of the love of brothers and sisters crossing

the great chasm as we pass from death to LIFE!

M: The next morning before we left to go back to the city, Pastor, Rosa, Ruth Ann, and I all had breakfast together. We exchanged prayer requests in what we are struggling with. I told them my struggle with weight and self-esteem. Rosita said your struggle is my struggle, too....love yourself! We are family now! With God all things are possible, and you will be in God's hands and in our prayers. Rosita's prayers are for protection of her children – two in the U.S. in Virginia and one in the university in San Salvador and two at home.

RA: It would be good to carry the Valle Nuevo community in prayer for the spiritual and material unity of their community. Rosa said when there is spiritual unity, the material is more easily resolved). Also for the finishing of the land titles and for the formation of the youth of the community.

When we met with the University students back in San Salvador, I sat beside a first-year medical student and heard about his motivation for study at the university. I think I remember that everyone in his family has been involved in the medical field. He sure is highly motivated to make it through seven years of study! I talked about similarities and differences with Mayra, who is very involved in sports and enjoys all different kinds of sports. She has recently been in email contact, seeking help to get the sports equipment she needs. It has been a challenge to figure out how to relate to specific student needs!

M: We went to the student housing where twenty-one students live. It's neat to hear how they are going back to their community and want to help the community.

The whole trip was life changing, especially being in Valle Nuevo. The people there live

simply, but they have so much joy and love for Jesus! I can feel the Holy Spirit really present in their community. It made me realize how much love they have for SMC and how I can accept God's love more in my life. The week also made me think about how wars do affect us, how evil war is, and how the memories are still painful even thirty years after having fled over the Lempa River. I began thinking how to use my privilege in a respectful way. I also wondered how I can live in the U.S. more simply like not buying things I don't need and being content with what I have rather than letting the world say I need more clothes or more "stuff."

RA: It's clear the youth are very important to the community, and the university students seem to face an impossible situation as they wonder where their education might lead and how jobs will ever be available. It seems likely they will need to be creative in creating jobs. We need to pray that a way would be opened so that income can be produced. The youth also need God's protection as they study in the big city of San Salvador. Further prayer concerns mentioned were that the work initiated on the land titling could be

finally completed and that the community would be granted unity in spiritual and material areas.

As our delegation reflected together, we wished for more equal sharing of the world's resources. It often seems rather overwhelming to think on a larger world scale and to realize that there are systemic realities and problems that are much bigger than we imagine as we consider the great chasm that exists between southern and northern economies. But rather than sink into despair, we were reminded that the Holy Spirit brings changes in each of us, also beyond what we can imagine! Consider that Jesus went to the cross and wonder how that act of obedience changes the world. Fernando Llorca went to LaPalma because he felt called to do so. There often is personal cost and risk-taking as we step out in faith. Are we open to the movements of the Spirit and the steps of faith that lie ahead? We believe the people of Valle Nuevo/ Santa Marta are NOT forgotten. They live in our hearts and minds and in the contacts and care that continue. They ask us to speak the truth about the realities that are lived in their communities!



*SMC delegates with the University Students from Valle Nuevo/Santa Marta*

# What Is God up to in the Nurturing Communities Movement?

By David Janzen, with help from Sally Schreiner Youngquist

Photos by Dan Wolperet, Josh McCallister, and David Janzen

The Holy Spirit is planting a new generation of Christian intentional communities. For three years I've been visiting these groups and now, with the help of younger communitarians, the book about that movement that we've been working on together, is out. It's titled *The Intentional Christian Handbook: For Idealists, Hypocrites, and Wannabe Disciples of Jesus*. Despite all this travel and research, at the recent Christian Community Development Association Conference (CCDA) in the Twin Cities, I kept meeting members of fledgling communities whom I'd not heard of before. Now I carry a wad of their addresses in my shirt pocket until I can follow up with an e-mail or a visit. To support groups like this the Nurturing Communities Project (NCP) was launched.



The NCP has just concluded its third annual gathering, bringing more experienced communal groups together with energetic leaders from younger communities to share old wisdom and new experiences for the long haul. This year (September 25-26) the NCP dipped into the 1,500 year-old Benedictine monastic tradition for two days of profound sharing at St. Johns Abbey in Collegeville, Minnesota.

The story of this Benedictine connection begins five years ago, when the monks at St. John's

Abbey invited Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove to speak to them about the New Monasticism movement. A friendship grew between Jonathan and Abbot Timothy Kelly. Since then, Abbot Kelly has passed away, but his successor, John Klassen, has renewed the relationship and commitment. So it happened that Nurturing Communities Project folks gathered at the St. John's University campus for two days (September 25-26), just in time to enjoy the gold and crimson hues of autumn on the edge of one of Minnesota's 10,000 lakes. Even though the Abbot was away in Rome, he kept us in mind, sending e-mail instructions home to make sure we were well cared for in the guesthouse and in the monastery chapter house, the normal meeting place for the 145 local monks.



We were forty-five participants from about twenty-five communities coming from California, New York State, and points in between. Several veteran communities like Koinonia Partners, the Bruderhof, Jesus People USA, and Reba Place Fellowship were represented as well as younger groups like Radical Living from Brooklyn, Lotus House from St. Louis, and Oak Park from Kansas City.

After getting acquainted with each other as communities, we broke into small discussion circles on requested topics such as "Reviewing and renewing the community vision," "Speaking the truth in love," "Becoming a neighborhood church," "Egalitarian ideals and the need for leadership," and "How much common life does a community need?" Our discussions spread out on the Monastery grounds in lively circles, sharing our experiences and counsel. (Request notes of these and other discussion topics from

joshwmccallister@gmail.com.)

Four Benedictine Brothers joined us for a morning to share the treasures they find in being an order linked by a common rule of life, a shared spiritual formation and a history of visitations. Together we reflected on the ways our communities are exploring



something like the supportive relationships of an emerging order. Brother Raverty, an anthropologist, asked about our structures for membership and leadership, concepts which seem a little slippery in our newer communities. It was useful to discover how different groups are taking hold of these important features of community order -- a topic many want to pursue further in next year's Gathering. In ways both visible and intangible, we witnessed God's blessing and encouragement from the Brothers, who lifted up the importance of what is happening to our communities in the wider drama of God's kingdom making its home on earth.

The bells at St. John's Church reminded us of God's gift of time, inviting us to join the Monks for common prayer four times a day. As guests (including children) we were welcomed into the center of their worship space, sitting between Choirs One and Two. A gracious prompter helped us locate the proper pages in the nine prayer books that make up their three-year cycle of songs, scriptures and other readings. For two days we adjusted to the rhythms of monastic life, slowing down our busy minds to take in what our mouths were speaking and our ears were hearing as one body.

Ivan and Lois Kauffman played an important role in lining up some of our local arrangements. They awaited our arrival with nametags and welcoming hugs. The Kaufmans have been life-long Mennonites and more recently Menno-Catholics involved in the Bridgefolk movement bringing Anabaptists and

Catholics together for dialogue. Ivan has also been a participant and cheerleader of the New Monasticism movement since its beginning, contributing a chapter in 12 Marks of the New Monasticism.

Ivan and Lois welcomed us for Tuesday dinner at the Michael Sattler House, a haven of hospitality for social-justice activists and others seeking a place of retreat and participation in local monastic life. For those familiar with 16<sup>th</sup> - century Anabaptism, the name "Michael Sattler" invokes a story of terror and persecution that, by God's grace, is turning out to be a drama of redemption and reconciliation in our day.

Ivan read the story of Michael Sattler, a Benedictine prior who, during the time of the Peasant Uprising in Europe, realized that his wealthy monastery and the Roman Catholic hierarchy were siding against both Jesus and the poor. With anguished conscience, he left his position of privilege and power to find a more authentic New Testament life with the poor. Sattler joined the Anabaptists and lent the movement his theological gifts, most notably in calling together the clandestine conference that produced the Schleithem Confession -- a unifying mission statement for the Anabaptist movement. Within a year Michael Sattler, was imprisoned, tortured, and burned at the stake, but not before hot pinchers tore out his tongue to prevent him from giving public witness at the execution. However, in our day this gruesome saga of persecution by church and state has been resurrected to new life. The Benedictine monks at St. John's Abbey have



welcomed Michael Sattler back into their graces, claiming him as one of their own saints and blessing the Michael Sattler House as a place of meeting and reconciliation between Catholics and modern-day spiritual descendants of Michael Sattler. We were

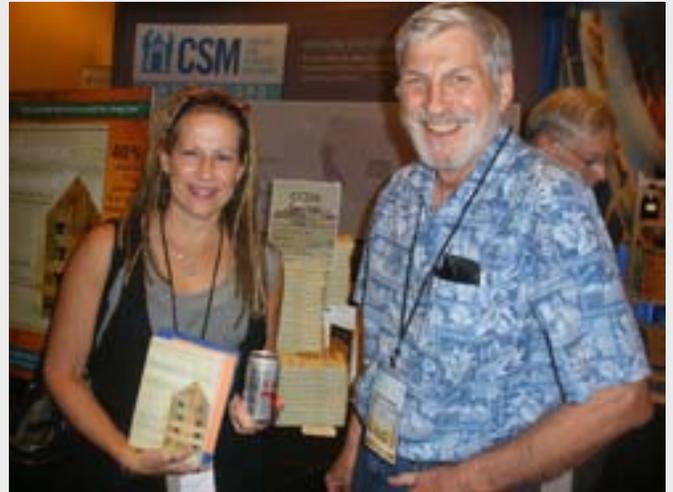
honored guests, folded by God into the pages of a drama that included Michael Sattler, the Kauffmans, plus a few Benedictine brothers and sisters who embodied this healing of history in the repentance and forgiveness of a common meal.

Our gathering participated in another celebration of sorts as each one attending received a copy of the just-published *Intentional Christian Community Handbook: For Idealists, Hypocrites and Wannabe Disciples of Jesus*. Many of us in the Gathering had participated in the dreaming, planning, and writing stages of this book. We were delighted to finally hold it in our hands and to consider how it might bless our communities along with the other idealists, hypocrites and disciples of Jesus we might know.



(More copies are available at Paraclete Press or Amazon.com.)

In our wrap-up session we heard a strong desire all around to continue such gatherings, next time giving ourselves at least three days to go deeper in discussions and friendship building. Each year the number of persons getting together has doubled in size. Our meetings have been deeply impacted by the host communities -- Reba Place Fellowship (2010), Englewood Christian Church in Indianapolis (2011), and St. John's Abbey (2012). The Bruderhof communities have offered to host next year's gathering,



perhaps in New York or Pennsylvania. We will post further plans as we work on them in the Nurturing Communities Project Committee that includes representatives from Plow Creek Fellowship, The Simple Way, Rutba House, and Reba Place Fellowship.

Finally, we want to acknowledge four communities from the Twin Cities who played a special role in hosting us for visits after the Nurturing Communities Gathering. Conversations continued and friendships grew with Thirdway, Ekklesia, Greenhouse and the Mennonite Worker (formerly called Missio Dei) as guests stayed on with them for the Christian Community Development Association Conference September 26-29.



# Church of the Sojourners

## “Kids, What Do You Have to Say?”

By Katie Rivers

*“Sojourners is awesome because we are a community and we help each other.”*  
-Leo

This fall I made it my goal to give the Sojourner’s update from a perspective I have yet to utilize: the kids. After worship a couple weeks ago, I asked each kid what was going on at Church of the Sojourners.

“I don’t know; I’m not in the meetings.” Rebecca’s face asked me why I would ask her this question. Her confusion was valid and validating.

The responses ranged from alarmingly perceptive to a shrug of the shoulders. To some the question was clearly intimidating, so I lightened up



*This is a still from the movie “The Case of the Failed Poison” written, directed by, and featuring Gigi Mullery, Alexina and JohnDavid Lockie, and Rebecca Gish, in honor of Tim and Jenny Lockie’s 14th anniversary. Pictured here are Alexina Lockie as the reporter Stacy Pencila, and Gigi Mullery as Tangerina Ivanovna, the world’s most talented and famous person.*

and asked, “What do you like about Sojourners?”

“I like it because I have a lot of people to talk with. I have a lot of friends. There are a lot of

people I can ask for help or support with problems.”

Rebecca tapped into the nature of being a discerning people together.

She’s not the only one who likes the menagerie of people inherent in the concept of community. “I like it because I get to see my friends everyday,” reported Alexina. Gigi’s tone was similar to Alexina’s, “I like being at Sojourners because you get to communicate [with other people], and you have a big family.”

“I think it’s interesting that a couple of people have the same birthday,” came from the mouth of John-David. It was his birthday, a birthday he has shared with Mary Toney every



*22nd St. Household celebrating Zoe and Gigi’s Adoption Day*

year since he arrived on planet earth.

Community comes with “a lot of chaos, things that cause the leaders and the whole church stress, things we are trying to work through. I think we are in a good place though.” Naomi’s honest stab at what it is like around here makes me realize that we can’t hide.

Mateo brings us up to date on the formation of the new Youth Group led by Nate Pequette. “We are learning to collaborate and work together as a team. It is good to learn about God together, to talk about God and Bible verses.”

Of course there are the events outside of our shared existence that we celebrate. Rubén participated in a swim meet, bringing home 6<sup>th</sup> place in the fifty-meter breaststroke and 8<sup>th</sup> place in the fifty-meter free swim.

The baby growing inside Mary Toney can’t yet speak about his or her perspective in words...BUT the mystery baby can speak in metaphors and general philosophical terms. This mystery person silently speaks to us of miracles and hidden treasure.



*Tim, Dawn, and Katie did a triathlon as a team.*

## Reba Place Fellowship News



*RPF first year novices take time to retreat at Emmanuel Lodge September, 2012*

By David Hovde

Reba Place Fellowship has four apprentices this year. Jason Brown is a Wheaton College graduate living at the Greenhouse. Rachel Daley comes from Princeton Seminary and a year of church service in Ukraine. Eric Gustafson is a North Park graduate with a year of Peace Corps service in Mali. Both Rachel and Eric live with the Frantz household in Rogers Park. Kyle Mabb is another Wheaton graduate and lives at the Patch. We are glad to have them with us. The group along with Sally Youngquist, David Janzen, and Katherine Ebling (a Garrett Seminary student at the Patch)

travelled to Koinonia October 20-29 to provide volunteer support to their Family Reunion event for their 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Our theme at RPF for the year is the Bible. Through teachings by different ones of us at RPF meetings we hope to get an overview of the Bible this year and a better understanding of how to interpret it.

We are excited about the publication of The Intentional Christian Community Handbook, by David Janzen and friends. David, Sally and Josh McCallister had a wonderful time

connecting with other communities at the Nurturing Communities Project gathering at St. John's Abbey outside the Twin Cities September 25-26.

Our first-year novices had a good retreat at Emmanuel Lodge in September. Megan Hering plans to become a covenant member in December. Gus Roddy's covenant membership celebration is scheduled for November 13. We look forward to these celebrations.

Former RPF member Martha Cooper died September 5 from the effects of post-polio. Her funeral brought many former and present Reba people together to celebrate her life and her work advocating for people with



*The newly reconstituted Greenhouse Household at Reba in fall of 2012 includes Barb Grimsley, Jess Iverson, Becca Shantz, Carol Youngquist, Jason Brown and Johnmark Hatfield. Nurturing Communities Gathering this fall.*

disabilities, and to support her family during this time.

We are thankful for Julius Belser's good recovery from a serious bike accident in late August.

There was a good turnout for our quarterly prayer retreat held at Emmanuel Lodge in October. A number of RPF men participated in the Reba Place Church Men's Retreat that same weekend.

At the end of August, the Vaughans and Barb Grimsley went to a communities conference at Twin Oaks Community in Virginia. They were the only ones representing a Christian community there.

We continue to host a number of visitors. RPF received two visits from men from Capernaum House in Springfield, Illinois in recent months. Nate Van Nord, from an interracial community without a name in Detroit, spent several days with us. We also had guests from Englewood Christian Church in Indianapolis at our October potluck. A large group of students from Valparaiso University in Indiana attended Reba Place Church this past Sunday, stayed for the potluck, got a tour of the neighborhood, and then interacted with a panel of RPF folks.

# News From Hope Fellowship

By Michelle Porter

As I prepared to write my first Hope Fellowship news update for the SMC newsletter, I thought it would be good for me to read some of the past issues available on-line. The oldest available newsletter is from the spring of 2000. As I read what Joe Gatlin had written, I wanted to cut and paste his article and just change the names.

Our community was and is going through major times of change then and now. It is so easy for us as finite beings to get caught up in the immediacy of our daily lives and the crises and changes that surround us. We quickly lose sight of the historical context of our church community just as Jesus' disciples did. How often he had to remind them of what was important and how often we need those same reminders.

As Joe so eloquently wrote in that article, "We are suspended for



*Bethany Smith, Barbara Bridgewater, and Nancy Gatlin at the Hope Fellowship Women's Retreat, Nov. 9-11 at Three Mountain Retreat Center. This year's theme was "Strength for the Journey: Walking as Disciples of Christ"*

a moment in space. We expect the winds of change to come any moment now. It is like that instant before that headlong plunge down the steepest hill of a roller coaster." How true those words seem to us

today as we face many of the same types of changes that we did then.

To continue with Joe's roller coaster analogy, there are starts and stops, jerks, hiccups, things that impede the car from plunging headlong over the top then and now. I smiled as I read about the community expectantly waiting new Bridgewater and Boardman-Alexander babies (Clare and Evan are now twelve!) and thought of the new life that has recently joined us and will join us in the next few months.

Kelly and Billy Lawson had a second daughter in August named Jubilee. Kirk and Allison added a son, Toby, to their family in October. By the time this newsletter comes out, we expect that Carrie and Fernando Arroyo will have welcomed their third child. In 2013, we look forward to celebrating new life with the Lands, Bustles, and Smiths.

Our community has also shared Neil Miller's loss of a colleague and



*Hope Fellowship kiddos trick-or-treating together*

friend with the death of Jackson Nelson, the director of World Hunger Relief Farm Haiti.

After concluding our teaching time study of the armor of God from Ephesians 6, our teaching time focused on discipleship and how that relates to our Anabaptist history and theology. November's teaching time revisited the topic of culture and identity that we started in the spring.

We continue having a once a month all-church gathering utilizing space in a local church's basement. September was Cuban themed, led by Ivette Rodriguez. And in October, we celebrated the one-year anniversary of Alan Caruther's bone marrow transplant with some wonderful cooking from Alan.

The last few months have brought job loss for some and new vocational opportunities for others. As a law student at Baylor University, Analí Gatlin helped start an immigration law clinic to help undocumented youth with the Deferred Action guidance signed by President Obama in June. The clinic helped undocumented young people fill out the necessary paperwork to ensure that they will not be deported.

John Alexander resigned from his position as the Executive Director of Waco Habitat for Humanity after twenty-one years with the organization. The city of Waco proclaimed Thursday, November 1, 2012, as John Alexander day in appreciation of the work he has done to



*The Lawsons with new baby Jubilee*

help so many in Waco. He will continue helping people in his new job as a Registered Accessibility Specialist ensuring that commercial buildings are in compliance with ADA laws.

In 2000, when the Boardman Alexander's moved out of the Gatlin home effectively ending Hope Community, Hope Fellowship asked the question, "What does community look like?"

We continue seeking answers to this question and desire to understand our identity as a church. We have been meeting on the Last Friday of the month this year to engage in activities and discussions that will allow us to listen to God and to each other concerning what it means to be part of Hope Fellowship and disciples of Christ.

September's Last Friday event was a discussion about the Hope Fellowship vision statement and allowed for a time of reflection and discussion concerning how we are or are not currently living into the vision statement.

In October, our Last Friday event dealt with the all-church worship that happens once a month. Those in attendance shared in small groups about positive and negative aspects of these gatherings and suggestions for the future.

One statement that seems quite fitting was someone commenting that they did not remember when we experimented with two Sunday services a few years ago. Someone else chimed in that one day we may laugh about not remembering meeting once a month for all-church worship. What seems like such a huge change at the moment may not even be remembered a few years later.



*Bib sister Lydia Blue with new brother Toby*

*Continued Next Page...*

It is important for us to have a shared, communal memory as a body of disciples. Sharing stories and retelling our past helps us remember that we are part of a larger story and that the conflicts and changes that seem so monumental at the moment are only one chapter in the story, one turn on the roller coaster. Although we fear change and grieve what was lost, we wait with hope for the future.

So, as Joe concluded his much more eloquently worded update in the Spring of 2000, I echo his prayer:

“Come, babies, we are definitely ready. Come, increased commitment and a fuller experience of grace, love, and unity. Come, whatever changes the Spirit may desire. We are ready to life our hands toward the sky, squeal with delight, and be whisked along for a wild ride. Come, Lord Jesus, come.

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*The one who testifies to all these things says, “Surely, I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!*

*Revelation 22:20*

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*The Thirdway Community at their annual Fall Retreat*

# News from Thirdway

By Jessie James

This was a beautiful and surprisingly long fall in Minnesota! The most exciting event at Thirdway was our annual fall retreat at YMCA camp Icaghowan Oct. 12th-14th.

To my surprise, almost all members of our humble community were able to attend this year - which was extra special. Even some newer friends to Thirdway participated in the weekend and grew closer relationally with the community.

The retreat was filled with worship of many sorts with music from our gifted Danny Churchill, Jessica Smith, and Matt Axelson, art and clay hands-on sessions led by Terri Churchill, an imaginative devotional guided by Matt Axelson, and an inspiring full body devotional directed by Daleen Ward.

Seth and Brian led the Sessions in which we talked about ordering our hearts towards the Kingdom and the disciplines of Heart Care.

The afternoons were spent going for walks together, playing games, doing archery, resting, and other activities; the evenings went late with singing and story telling around the campfire! It was truly a wonderful retreat and I felt so proud to be in community with such wonderful people! The photos accompanying this update are all from the trip by our talented Rudy Arnold.



*Jessica Smith & Karna Larson*



*Matthew Rody & Aga Ayana*

# SMC CAMP MEETING SUMMER 2013

“Telling of God’s Faithfulness”

Exodus 15: 17-18

Where: Evanston, Reba Place Fellowship

When: August 1-3 2013

Special Guest: Salvadoran Artist Fernando Llort

Attendees are invited to share works of visual art from  
their Communities that tell of God’s faithfulness

Shalom Connections  
2820 22nd St.  
San Francisco, CA 94110

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