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Summer 2015: Hearing from and caring for our elderly

Interview: Elder care at Plow Creek

by Christiana Peterson

For many years, Louise Stahnke has been caring for many of Plow Creek's older folks in a variety of ways. For several of those years, David and Margaret Gale and Sarah Foss were also helping. While most of the folks at Plow Creek are able to pitch in with weekly meals to feed Jim Harnish, it has been the Stahnkes and Paul Munn who have taken on his primary care most recently. I sat down with Louise to talk about her years of experience in caring for the elderly at Plow Creek.

Christiana P: Maybe you could talk, in general, about your experience of caring for the elderly in community, whether that means what you've witnessed or your own experience. What comes to mind?

Louise S: Oh, I got started when Donna (Harnish) had a mild stroke and could no longer walk and had dementia, and we didn't want her to have to go into a nursing home when Jim (Harnish) couldn't care for her so we brought her here. I thought she wouldn't live very long and she lived eight and a half years.

CP: Wow, I didn't realize it was that long.



The Corner House at Plow Creek

Continued next page...

LS: It was. Margaret (Gale) and I did a lot of that together. Jim (Harnish) spent many hours there in the daytime but Margaret and I did the supervising together. And then by the time Donna died, Jim could no longer use his legs so he was living in the same apartment.

CP: So he was living apart from her when you guys were caring for her?

LS: For several years, yeah, he was still living in town next to the town house. So part of caring for the elderly at that point was David (Gale) and Margaret and I spent a fair amount of time clearing things out of his house and sorting things out. Elder care, by and large, is nothing grand and glorious at all [laughter]. It gives a person lots of practice in being a servant. It increases one's patience, I guess. I'm not normally a patience person. One of my approaches to life is that if something needs doing and there's nobody else obvious to do it, I probably will do it. And so for Jim, what needs doing is making sure he has meals served to him and just kind of oversight. I'm glad to have Sarah (Foss) with her experience with older people (Sarah is a nurse at a retirement home). Because I'm a retired nurse doesn't mean I've ever worked with older

CP: Was Margaret a nurse?

LS: Yeah.

CP: That was pretty handy to have you and Margaret and Sarah.

LS: Yeah and so anything that I'm unsure of now, I'll call Sarah for. I just do what needs doing.

CP: Obviously our nurse population (at Plow Creek) is dwindling. What about communities that don't have trained nursing staff?

LS: A lot of it isn't training. Mostly what I do is feed people (laughter). My training is helpful with some of Jim's issues. I know what to expect or how to handle them. And I know how to deal with the world of doctors and such. That's kind of helpful. You have to be a little proactive when dealing with the medical field.

CP: I didn't think about that, that you have to take over the medical administrative end of it.

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LS: A year or two ago I became the power of attorney, both for medical and financial stuff for Jim because his daughter lives too far away.

CP: Oh, I didn't realize that.

LS: Yeah, but you know if he needs stuff then I'll call the doctor, get the order, etc. Paul (Munn) does some of this stuff too. So anyway, you jump through all the medical hoops...Nursing homes are kind of a last ditch answer for me for people. And if we can manage whatever is needed here, like with Jim Harnish's supported living arrangement, which is what he's got, I want to be able to do it.

CP: It seems in the past that has been one of the gifts of this community, is to be able to do that for its elderly. Or do you think that's just what all communities should be?

LS: Uh, no. It's what Plow Creek has grown into as its population has gotten there. And Reba is doing a lot of it.

CP: What do you think intentional community offers that other communities cannot (to their elderly)?

LS: I'm glad when a community can offer it. It's one of the things that I've admired about the Bruderhof system from way back. They have enough people and from everything I'd ever read, they take good care of their people as they get older. It's not always reasonable to care for an aging parent in your home but if a community can provide the same kind of care...and usually people want to have their own little space because they've been running life their own way for quite a few years.



Letter from the Editor:

The topic of “Caring for our elderly” was suggested to me at the SMC coordinators meeting in January. Caring for the older folks in our community is a pressing concern for those of us at Plow Creek as we have “grown into” this issue with our aging population. Louise Stahnke shares with me some of her experience and thoughts on serving her community members in these ways. Reba Place has also had a lot of experience not only caring for their elderly but also caring for many who are ill or incapacitated. I was touched by Joan Vogt’s testimony about her and Virgil’s struggle with his Parkinson’s and the continued hope they find in God’s love and promises despite their disappointment and challenges with his disease. I am humbled by the dedication and long-term service many community folks have shown to those who need care.

—Christiana N. Peterson



Top picture: The folks at Reba pray over Susie Kauffman as she becomes a covenant member. Middle picture: the farm team plants strawberries. Bottom picture: Easter sunrise in San Francisco



*Neva, Heather, and Ian celebrate
Palm Sunday at Plow Creek*

CP: So most people don't want to move into their grown child's home.

LS: A goodly number of them I don't think would. Here we've been fortunate with Margaret and David to have two of their grown sons and their families to be massively supportive and helpful.

CP: It seems like a good partnership when you can have the family and the community to do it together.

LS: Yeah. And when Jim was in pretty bad shape a couple of weeks ago, his daughter came for a couple of days and he perked right up. That's something I want to be able to offer to people because I don't agree with the North American model or Anglo Saxon, European model of putting the older person in another facility.

CP: Yeah, Matthew (Peterson) talks about when he was in Benin (in West Africa during his years with the Peace Corps) how a lot of the, mostly older men, would sit in the middle of the community and order all the kids around. And they were revered as elders. Instead of the way we do things here.

LS: (Laughter) Yeah, I think in the Hispanic and African American populations, you get a lot

more care for the elderly than in the European populations. We're a little slow or too busy.

CP: Or too utilitarian.

LS: And if life is harder you depend more on blood family to provide what's needed. So, we try to fill that in. Occasionally when I'm doing something with Jim out in the medical world, someone will say, "Are you his daughter?" I'm tempted to answer, "Well, almost." (laughter)

CP: What is the story I've heard about when a nurse from off the property came and saw how you were caring for Donna?

LS: Oh, it might've been one of the hospice people. Hospice were kind of in awe of us. Donna had hospice for a few months there and they seemed thoroughly impressed. But mostly it was the quality of Margaret's nursing care that made them impressed.

CP: Was it because she didn't have bed sores?

LS: Yeah, Margaret plain refused to let Donna have bed sores until almost the very end when there was almost nothing left of Donna.

But you just build the care into your routine because most of it is routine care. Going over most days a week doing Jim's lunch. Feeding him the same lunch everyday because that's what he wants: a hot dog, a few French fries, a yogurt and either fruit juice or a fruit cup. I used to give him ice cream but he hardly eats that. Most of it just melted in the dish.

CP: So you mentioned that, um, it's not glamorous and it teaches you to be a servant. Are there other things that, upon looking back at caring for Jim and Donna and other folks like the Gales, that it's taught you about your relationship to God, or community or the spiritual aspects of communal life?

LS: (Laughter) Nothing for print. That God's timetable is a lot different from mine and His is a lot longer than mine.

CP: Well, that's a big one (Laughter).

The News from Third Way

by Josias Hansen



Hello from St. Paul, MN! We are incredibly glad to be experiencing the warm weather, the budding plants and the sunny skies. Many of us here in the frozen tundra experience one form or another of seasonal depression; so now that we can more easily get our vitamin D through the bright rays of the sun, we are beyond happy!

Since December, our Covenant Members and Practicing Covenant Members have been going through a 12-month process of learning about and training for how we think God wants us to live as his people together. This process covers the major theological/practical concepts of “The Kingdom of God,” “Covenant Community, and “Full Devotion.” Separately, our House Churches have been going through a six-week curriculum on “The Art of Neighboring.” It’s a way to mobilize our whole community to get to know our neighbors better and create healthier communities on our very own blocks. Furthermore, our House Churches have been getting more involved in local compassion projects. One House Church is partnering with a local agency serving homeless youth and another House Church is working with a nearby low-income, 55+ high-rise apartment building. Groundswell, the café run by some Third Way folks, is continuing to thrive and be a positive venue for bringing the neighborhood together. Currently, the walls are covered by art made by elementary students from a school located a block away. We’re trying to continue imbedding ourselves within the neighborhood and live out the “lost art of neighboring.”

Recently, Seth McCoy and the leadership team informed the community that Seth has taken a full-time pastoral role at Woodland Hills Church, sharing the pulpit with Greg Boyd, and taking over leadership for the shape and future of their weekend worship services. Furthermore, Seth and the leadership team have been dialoguing with the leadership of Woodland Hills Church in formalizing a potential partnership. The direction of this partnership is still being formed, but both churches noticed a mutual benefit in working together more intentionally within St. Paul. Woodland Hills graciously decided to pay for 5 hours of Seth’s time per week for up to a year to serve in helping Third Way transition and find the right direction. While Third Way has been mourning these changes, there is much hopefulness and excitement for what God has in store for the future of Third Way, the McCoy family and Woodland Hills Church.

This summer also brings an abundance of celebration. Rudy Arnold and Jess Smith are getting married! Years ago, their relationship began within the Third Way community, and on June 7th, the Third Way community will celebrate their new life together by dancing the night away. Also, this summer (or Fall), we will be celebrating the marriage of Laura Day and James Benhardus. A couple years ago, Laura moved from out of state into a home full of Third Way folks and ended up falling in love with one of Minnesota’s Frozen Chosen.

Please pray for us as we continue to pursue God’s kingdom throughout all these changes and transitions.



Upcoming newlyweds! Left corner photo: Jess Smith and Rudy Arnold; Above: Laura Day and James Benhardus

Our Journey with Parkinson's by Joan Vogt

Recently this verse from the Psalms stood out for me..."I will give you thanks in the great assembly among the people, I will praise you." But let's change it a little bit and say "I will give you thanks in the big fellowship meeting among the people, I will praise you".

In 2006, 9 years ago, Virgil was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease. I remember the day he returned from the doctor with the news...I cried. However, life went on in a full and meaningful way. It was something that I carried lightly over the years because of Virgil's cheerful and upbeat spirit. He did not complain and was always trusting God. Parkinson's and no complaint?...Yes it is true!

However, this January, Virgil took a turn for the worse, not a gradual decline but a big dip! This time I cried again to God, tears of loss, feeling helpless...where can I turn for help? I was then so wonderfully provided with comfort and wisdom from family and especially Mary who lives thousands of miles away. She began giving me spiritual thoughts to restore my soul along with physical ideas. Her wisdom was served up like a wonderful dish of food and given to me every day, often more than once a day. Faith was imparted and my hope was restored.

Nevin also came to the rescue with his sweet and caring heart, putting up grab bars. And it was at this point that Virgil began taking a specific medication for Parkinson's.

A journey with the word "hope" began for me. In a concordance I found the **many** references in the Bible about hope. Psalm 33:18 says "The eyes of the Lord are on those who fear him on those whose **hope** is in his unfailing love." I am also reminded of the many hymns that tell of hope. "Oh, God our help in ages past, our HOPE for years to come" or "My hope is built on Nothing Less, than Jesus' blood and righteousness" and "You give us Hope when we had no hope at all."

Then one icy Sunday morning when Virgil and I were going to church, he slipped and fell on the steps as one foot reached the icy spot on the sidewalk. Close to the street and standing on our sidewalk were two of the most servant like men in our life..."why don't they help us?" I

thought. Suddenly a lovely young woman and beautifully dressed stood beside us, "how can I help you?" she said. I immediately thought how can such a beautiful person be in this neighborhood? She quickly brought Virgil to his feet, which I was unable to do, and then guided him to the porch. She left without a thank you from either of us. We were in shock and amazement! The first thing that Virgil said was that she must be a physical therapist to pick me up like she did...if I ever fall again, pick me up like she did."

We couldn't forget her..."Was she our guardian angel?" We thought so! Now it is a precious memory.

Recently, I was even more convinced about this story. In trying to fix something, Virgil got on the floor. We worked long and hard and with a great deal of ingenuity to get him up and standing again!

Hope doesn't disappoint and it often comes in surprising ways. One day Laura Lee, Vera's niece, ordered a book for me on the internet but by mistake it was the wrong book...yet just the right one for me...it was the story of a woman's journey with Parkinson's with so many helpful ideas in the book!

Another story of God's gift was when my sister Joyce offered to give us a scooter for Virgil. Her husband had used it before he died. Without asking or pursuing this, it was given and we are seeing what a gift it is!

Virgil is now seeing a therapist who specializes in Parkinson's disease. Her expertise is amazing to us, giving new exercises along with replacing some exercises that are not good.

During the time of healing prayer here in this cluster room, I believed God would heal Virgil but it did not happen. That was disappointing to me. God has another plan and we wait as that unfolds. We have a deep sense of gratitude for the church and fellowship at this stage in our life. I want to thank you for being comrades and fellow travelers with us on our journey of faith and hope! And this night I want to give thanks to God for Sally, a faithful leader who is willing to serve us again! To close I would like to offer up the song "My life flows on in endless song above earth's lamentations." That sums it all up!



Joan and Virgil Vogt

Hope Fellowship News

by Michelle Porter

Greetings from wet Waco. More rain than usual has kept our springtime temperatures low and has also highlighted the need to complete the playground project that Evan Alexander began for his rite of passage process last year. We are thankful for a group of Hope Fellowship members who put in more sod in the backyard at the meeting house, which will hopefully keep out some of the mud prints.

Hope Fellowship members have continued in our discussion/discernment about writing a covenant. We have one more meeting where we will call for a consensus and hear from all members the last Sunday of May. We also began the discussion of the transition of Joe and Nancy from the pastoral team, which will continue through next spring. Our discussion of LGBTQ issues and sexuality continues as we finish our Sunday teaching series about the topic in May.

Our annual Easter retreat to Three Mountain Retreat had almost 100 people there at some point during the weekend. We were thankful for sunny and beautiful temperatures for Saturday. The rain storms held off until that evening, so we had an indoor Easter egg hunt on Sunday. As always, the weekend was a great time to reconnect with people we may not always see in our clusters and koinonia groups and to celebrate our lives together.

We celebrate that Anali Gatlin has a job as an immigration attorney in Austin with American Gateways. Although she is living in Austin during the week, she is in Waco and worshipping with HF each weekend.

Allan DeLaurell is spending his summer as an intern at Plow Creek and will then move to Sojourners in the fall to be an apprentice. We are excited for his experiences with other SMC communities, but we already miss him here.

May was full of birthday, anniversary, and graduation celebrations. We had one undergraduate and three graduate students graduate. Gwendolyn Matias Ryan was one who graduated from her music master's program and is now headed back to Oaxaca, Mexico where she will live with her family. Her brother, Gerson, was in town for two weeks for her graduation, and it was wonderful for HF to see him and get to catch up. Gwendolyn has a job teaching music at the local fine arts school and will be part of the house church her family started.

In June, SaraBeth Stoltzfus, Fernando Arroyo, Diamante Maya, and Joe and Nancy Gatlin will be part of the Valle Nuevo delegation to El Salvador. Joe and Nancy continue work on the book they are writing with Joel Scott about Valle Nuevo, and they



Allan DeLaurell's koinonia group taking a road trip to Dallas for bbq and ice cream as a farewell to him leaving for Plow Creek and Sojourners.

plan to share another chapter with the community during this delegation.

With Waco being in the national news again after the biker gang shooting at a local sports bar, I pray that HF continues remembering our theme of worship for the year and the verse: ***The hour is coming, and is now here, when true worshippers will worship God in spirit and truth, for God seeks such as these.... John 4:23***

I pray that we will find ways to show our neighbors we are Christians by our love and by living the reconciliation that Jesus has already made possible by his death and resurrection.



Evan Boardman Alexander's rite of passage project: finishing the backyard/playground project at the meeting house

The News from Lotus House

by Daniel Gray



A not-so-typical Friday night dinner brings friends from Chicago and New York. Below: Candace receives recognition for her 5 years of volunteer service to the tutoring program



It seems that the number of housemates whose careers or studies are aligned with the academic calendar always makes the transitions from spring to summer an interesting and exciting time for the Lotus House.

As we entered spring, the house hosted a community of communities gathering in late March, which brought some friends as far as Kansas City and Springfield, MO, as well as local groups, including Jesuit, Vincentian, and Episcopal volunteer corps, seeking and living in the rhythm of community. In April, Thirza participated with Reba's hosting of a School for Conversion. We

continue to be blessed by visitors and hosted a group of seminarians from Abilene, TX in May.

The house continues to be engaged in justice and reconciliation. This year's Holy Saturday happened to fall on the same date as the death of Dr. King. The house participated in a faith for justice march that straddled the Delmar divide, as a lamentation for the divisions that still continue. We also know that the real work of reconciliation occurs in our daily lives and actions. We recently celebrated 5 years of after-school programming and mentoring through North City Church. We know these

efforts will make a small difference in the lives of the children of our neighborhood and has also done much to expose our many volunteers to the challenges of growing up distressed neighborhoods.

This summer, we are hosting two interns who are working with the church. A total of three interns will be serving alongside the church. In addition to the summer groups we have coming for six weeks, we look forward to the work that will be done in transforming the lives of our neighbors and community. So we pray for the Besses and their efforts with the church this summer, and also that the church would have the financial resources it needs.

Several of our members will be traveling this summer. Stephen will be in Germany brushing up on the local language for his dissertation work. Scott, recently finishing his AmeriCorps work in the schools of East St. Louis, will be taking a family trip to New England, and Thirza will be visiting distant relatives in Europe. We will also be saying goodbye to Amy, as she is relocating in June to be closer to a new job.

The new home purchase (probably by the time you receive this letter) should have been completed. We are coming to the close of a long process that also will be a long beginning. Thankfully the owner of the house across the street has patiently endured a 3-month contract process caused by numerous delays due to the condition of the house. We close on the house in early June, at which point, a significant amount of work will need to be done (new boiler, plumbing, electrical, and some flooring, tuckpointing, etc.). While we have had several individuals express interest in joining the community, we know we will need additional discernment as we explore operating a second house and discerning with people if joining the Lotus House(s) is the right decision.

Plow Creek News

by Christiana Peterson



There are few places where the seasons of life are so dramatically literal than in this midwest farm and community. For most of us here, the spring is a time that brings great relief and comfort after months of cold, feelings of hibernation and isolation, and a wilderness experience that comes from being confronted with the challenges of life in the form of wintery death and dormancy.

We are always excited to welcome new folks to our community. The new interns and farm workers bring their energy, abilities, gifts, and spirit to us and we hope that they are blessed by their stay here, however challenging it might prove to be at times. We're thankful to have Katherine Manning, Allan DeLaurell, and Miriam Stoner with us for the growing season. And we're so glad that Camille Walker has joined the

team as well. Heather Munn also helps with the new CSA garden.

Rich and Sarah Foss continue to be faced with the challenges of Rich's ill health. We were thankful that he was able to return home after a recent stint in the hospital.

Margaret had a bad fall recently, injuring her hip and wrist, not long after finally moving back into the corner house on the property. After some rehab and nursing care, we were grateful that she's made a speedy recovery and is back home caring for David.

Matt Adams was accepted as an artist into a gallery/store in downtown Princeton called The Makery. His work is available for display and purchase in the lovely building right across from the new farmer's market locale where Plow Creek sells its produce. Angela continues to take on new responsibilities at work and we pray along with them for God's work to be done in the courts when it comes to their foster kids O and J.

The Stahnkes are involved several times a week at markets to sell bakery produce.

We are still in a financial sabbatical and hope for continued unity of vision. Sally Y and Allan Howe are still working with PCF to make changes and find the common ground among us. We seek the presence of Jesus in these times of limbo, knowing that His Spirit is working in unexpected and glorious ways. We hope you will join us in prayer for these joys and challenges.

Above: the 2015 farm team. Below: the music team practicing before worship on Sunday



Fifty Plus Years and Still Together

At a recent Monday night seminar at Reba Place Fellowship, we heard from three community veterans, Julius and Peggy Belser, and Hilda Carper. This amazing team of elders, all in their eighties now, have worked side-by-side for more than fifty years, first in an inter-racial communal congregation on Peoria Street on the Chicago west side in the 1960's, and then from the 1970's on in the Clearing Household at Reba in Evanston.

The Belsers and Hilda were asked to talk about what they have learned by living in community. Peggy Belser begins by referring to some things she learned about herself by living "in the family zone" with as many as eighteen people at one table. – David Janzen

Peggy Belser: I don't do well giving long speeches. I can just say what comes to mind. In household life you learn some things about yourself that you'd rather not learn. But it is good. We've had a number of different extended households over the years. Our family of five grew to eighteen. That's too big. So you blow it up and start over.

Julius Belser: I'm very grateful for Peggy. Our bond is very foundational for our relationship and for the household around us. It's accepted in the Clearing Household that we kiss and are affectionate. People see that our bond is sexual. I commend marrying someone who shares your values. Peggy loves household life so I'd better too. She enjoys gabbing, talking, . . . she's good at it. She's the hearth of our household life. She keeps it warm and enjoyable. My advice to young men -- marry someone like that.

In the context of community, it takes some doing to keep up with our biological family. Household is family too. Our advice -- keep it balanced. We've seen a wonderful delicate balance grow. Nevin, our son, comes our way every other Sunday. The other weeks we go to their place. Nevin and I meet for one lunch each week and we talk about everything. Nevin helps me with projects that are too much for me. Lots of us consult with Nevin. Our daughter, Nina, and Peggy sew together regularly.

Spiritually, one of my big challenges is to recognize when I'm in a judging spirit, trying to figure out what's wrong with other people. It helps to recognize

how generous God has been to me. Recently I was sick and needed a lot of care. I got a prophetic word that went something like this: "Julius, my love for you overflows. Give to me all the things you care about and I will bring them to a good end, one by one." I've been giving over leadership of the household, of the Reba Place Development Corporation. How then shall I pray now? I keep exploring the mind of Christ as I read in Philippians 2. We're called to share Christ's sufferings. Whatever we suffer, we do it with Jesus. Often it is overwhelming, but God is with us. By suffering, evil is transformed.

Drew Tessler: How was it to have children growing up in a larger household?

Julius: At first we toned down what we did as a family. We expected kids to act like adults but not have a say in the meetings. That was wrong. We have reconciled on that since.

Gus Roddy: I was a kid growing up in the Clearing Household and had a great experience.

Julius: I remember taking a vacation, the whole household traveling in three cars to Pennsylvania. It was wonderful and sometimes overwhelming.

Peggy: Once we left thirteen-year-old Nina behind at a service station. At the next stop we counted and noticed she was missing. The police were trying to find us. We returned and picked her up. The folks there had been very good to her.

Sally: Julius and Peggy, how do you argue when other people are around?

Julius: We take Tuesday noons away together, to eat out and talk things through. We are free to disagree in front of the household.

Sally Youngquist: It's good for others to see healthy conflict worked out between husband and wife.

Orwin Youngquist: What have you learned about authentic and trusting relationships across racial lines,

especially when you lived in an interracial community on Peoria Street.

Julius: That was before the slogans “Black Power” and “Black is beautiful.” Blacks generally accepted white leadership. Blacks tried to be nice to us. In those days we did not learn how to get beyond those expectations. Our son, Nevin began grade school in a black neighborhood, so the neighborhood boys took care of him, walked with him every day to first grade. Nevin thought he was black too and talked just like them when he was on the street. Once we heard him

complain, “That white boy has my ball.” So we did get close, but the power dynamics were different.

I look back and see that some of my sins came in relationship with an African-American supervisor whose moral character I did not respect, but I never talked about it with him honestly. We hosted a Friday night potluck, but many people were coming just to eat and did not contribute.

The biggest tensions in our Peoria Street community came when boyfriends of the young mothers in our community would get out of

prison. One time a boyfriend was trying to break into a third-story window. I tapped him on the shoulder and asked what he needed. I think back to that moment now and am grateful he didn’t throw me off the roof.

Monica Laytham: Over the years you’ve seen friends leave and major changes in community. How was it to stay here through it all?

Hilda: If the leaving was honest and processed well, then it can be good. I find change exciting. Others find it threatening.

Julius: There have been a lot of difficult challenges. Over the years here at Reba I’ve worked closely with Virgil Vogt. Our friendship sustained all the differences between us. In the end we can say that the differences were not as important as we’d thought. Bridges of friendship and family are helpful. What’s central in the Gospel is what we need to focus on. Virgil Vogt has had strong opinions. But he kept reminding us that only differences on a very few core things should cause us to split. So we are still together.



Hilda Carper and Char Oda from the Clearing

Reba Place Fellowship News

Following McCallisters' departure to Little Rock, Jesse Miller's departure to wed Andrea Buchanan April 11 (yet remain at Reba Place Church), and Alan Gallivan's departure from RPF membership in January, it was encouraging to welcome Susie Kauffman into RPF covenant membership at our March 17 members' meeting. Susie lives in Rogers Park, works as Living Water Community Church's office manager, and brings a wealth of experience to us as a soil scientist, Khmer-speaking MCC Cambodia alum, rag rug weaver, and model of simple living. Her small group members all modeled T-shirts depicting different facets of Susie the gem to present her for membership to the others. (Susie's own T-shirt read "Kale.") She made home-made bread of several types to serve as a refreshment at her own celebration. Way to go, Susie!

RPF hosted an enjoyable April 17-19 School for Conversion weekend, mostly organized by young people with motivation to recruit new housemates into their households. Having panel and workshop participants from other communities besides Reba (JPUSA, Englewood Christian Church, Bloomington Radical Christian Catholic Worker, Lotus House, and Lighthouse of Springfield, IL) insured that the 20-some attendees got exposure to different models of intentional Christian community. A big contingent of 25 students and mentors from Calvin College's six Project Neighborhood Houses swelled the ranks on Saturday. It's always good to be reminded why we live the way we do by having to tell others.

The Patch hosted one of its monthly "Hatch at the Patch" evenings of sharing original creative endeavors at the School for Conversion's Saturday night social,



and we heard awesome musical, poetic, and prose talent from the locals and some of the visitors.

We continue to pray for healing of members in our monthly RPF members meetings as seniors, disabled folk, and other members go up and down in their health. In early April Julius Belser collapsed in gastric distress at the end of our members meeting, but a few days later was back among us in good health. At our April members' meeting Joan Vogt shared a moving testimony of how God has provided for each step of the way through Virgil's Parkinson's Disease even

while he is not being healed of PD.

We also lift brothers and sisters from Plow Creek in prayer as they are experiencing health problems--most recently David and Margaret Gale, who share deep relational roots from Church of Hope on Chicago's west side with some of our seniors.

We are winding down our 3-year LGBTQ Dialogue and have presented a Third Way proposal for member review, response, and hoped for vote at some point after needed revisions have been made. One of the SFC workshops featured a panel of 3 RPF participants

(including a young gay man and two seniors) sharing about our process to date, which drew a large, interested audience. Your prayers for our continued unity amidst holding differing convictions would be appreciated.

We're doing a Monday night series at Cana Seminar on "Most important learnings in intentional Christian community" and kicked it off with a full house listening to senior members Julius & Peggy Belser and Hilda Carper. Virgil & Joan Vogt and Vera Stoehr filled another evening with their reflections. We have used subsequent Monday evenings to hear from younger folks at the Patch, Greenhouse, and 723 Seward households.

Our fledgling home health care business, Friends of the Family, just took on its first local client with our own nurse member Becky Gallivan being the lead worker. Plain and Simple, our Amish furniture store, continues to be a helpful income stream to sustain us, despite losing the talents of Josh McCallister. We saved up Lenten offerings to help send relief to the Church of the Brethren decimated by violence in Nigeria. Cliff Kindy will be sharing a personal report from his work with COB in Nigeria with us June 21-22. Giving small groups responsibility to distribute certain amounts of our Jubilee give-away money each month has given us welcome opportunity to support local and international needs, from helping supply a headstone for a recent Living Water member's burial at Plow Creek to needs in Valle Nuevo, Liberia, CPT, World Relief, and Chico and Tatiana's house fund in Ford Heights. In April Ronn

Frantz put in a month of volunteer work as Mennonite Disaster Service coordinator for a tornado recovery site in Nebraska, with Living Water Community Church providing a work team during a week's spring break.

We just re-elected Sally Youngquist to a third 3-year term as RPF community leader. She spoke of her commitment to keep pulling younger and newer members into positions of responsibility as we make a gradual generational shift in leadership roles here. Since January, she and Allan Howe have been additionally busy serving on Plow Creek's Interim Leadership Team to lend some crisis management assistance at Plow Creek. It's good to find practical ways to demonstrate our interdependent bonds within SMC. We look forward to eating vegetables and berries from Plow Creek through receiving our CSA shares this summer. On the home front, Natalie Potts and Kate Marshak are lead gardeners for the plot in front of the Reba Services office. The garden goodies are shared among the workers and then with Manna garage recipients on Friday mornings.

We look forward to going on our annual spring retreat May 29-31, with all of us spending part of this time in Evanston and some offered the option of a "north adventure" camping in Chain Lakes State Park or Emmanuel Lodge for Saturday to Sunday afternoon. We hope to recall and renew the vision that sustains us for living together in intentional Christian community while enjoying each other's company.



Friends of the Family staff Becky Gallivan (nurse to first client) and Barb Grimsley (nursing supervisor)

Sojourners News

by Katie Rivers

I think it's time, probably well past time, to introduce all of you to one long-standing Sojourner member whom you may not know: Malcolm.

Malcolm moved into Sojourner housing in the 1980s. Since that time he has been faithfully wreaking a sort of havoc in the midst of our social experiment to live with each other as family. Malcolm is the most un-quintessential Sojourner among us; at times he is the anti-sojourner. In fact I will publicly say that Malcolm is the worst housemate that any of us have ever had. He is also everyone's housemate.

Who didn't wash their dishes?

Who left a piece of half eaten pizza on the couch?

Who took a car w/out signing it out?

Who used up the rest of my shampoo without asking?

Who threw their pantyhose in the compost bin?

Who left a giant object in the hallway for Dave Lottich to trip over in the middle of the night on the way to the bathroom? (yes, Dave was once a Sojourner!)

Who did not flush the toilet during the non-drought season?

Who flushed the toilet during the drought?

Malcolm. Malcolm. Malcolm. Malcolm.

Malcolm is the preverbal Sojourner scape-goat currently embodied in a photo of a seal that sits on the mantle of the fireplace in our gathering room. Malcolm has been featured in more Sojourner Sermons than the rest of us combined. * But for all of Malcolm's faults, he's still here and showing up at every single sojourner gathering. He is at times vulnerable: consider all the times he's come to ask forgiveness for his daily, heinous crimes. Malcolm regularly reminds us of ourselves, that we all need forgiveness and that our goal is to love.

Dwayne and Hilda have been here at Sojourner's for approximately six weeks, considerably less time than Malcolm. They arrived from a Bruderhof community in New York. They are entirely opposite from Malcolm. They willingly serve, remodeling our archaic bathrooms, helping us with all the tasks and projects that have been on our lists for so long the tasks have become stale. Hilda is a seamstress like no other (pedal to the metal!), and she assists many of us in the small items of life, from shopping to Rebuild South Sudan office work. Dwayne and

Hilda have brought us a gust of rejuvenation. They remind us that our goal is to love in faithful service to the call of Jesus.

Dwayne and Hilda are not the only one's venturing out on a journey far from home. Lee Kuiper and Jody Beavers have just returned to us after three months of traveling in East Asia, at times together and at times apart. Lee was traveling for a combination of quest and pleasure. He was at times pushed to the limits of foreign illness and cultural discomfort. He was at times on boats on bodies of water, and he was at times assisting in service with partners of the faith. Jody was on a journey of ethical proportions, ensuring that tea he sources for his small tea business, Tap Twice Tea, is based in relationship: relationship with the farmers, relationship with the people with whom he shares a cup.

This June there is a journey afoot as Debbie and Rebecca travel to meet Rebecca's birth family in Guatemala, discovering part of Rebecca's origins. Debbie has been preparing the many details of the trip, and Rebecca has been practicing her Spanish more and more, knowing that she will need this skill to communicate across cultures and borders.

They are not the only Sojourners to journey to Guatemala. Nate spent at least half of his Sabbatical in Guatemala learning Spanish and listening to the stories of the people deep in the mountain communities of Fatima and Nuevo San José. He formed deep relationships at La Escuela de la Montaña, a language school that employs many in the villages, creating economic stability for the community. He will return for a few weeks in August.

Some Sojourner journeys are long. This summer we are preparing to send the Hare Family on a two year Sabbatical. Jeff and Laura have both lived inside community for 20+ years. Their family is taking some time away to rejuvenate with open ears to what God is calling them to do and be.

Some Sojourner journeys are short. Weekly Edith travels just a few blocks to visit Donna Mateer. Though the physical distance is negligible, the history and the habit of connection are profound.

Some Sojourner journeys are uncertain. We are making preparations for a housing shift. This one might be bigger than the ones that have come in the last few years. And our vision of who we are as a people in this specifically San Franciscan place is still a work in progress. Pray for us, that we can live into our goals of lovingly sharing the life of Christ together.



Sojourners at Easter Sunrise

Jim Fitz of Reba Place wanted to share a portion of the newsletter that he distributes to folks he meets and visits with. If you'd like to invite Jim to share information with your group about his years with "Christian Peacemaker Teams" giving nonviolent protection to 80 Colombian farm families threatened by guerrillas and paramilitaries, contact him at jimfitz2@gmail.com or 224-999-8000. You can read Jim's peace letters on Facebook or at jimspeacemaking.org

The U.S. budget is \$1.2 million dollars a minute for the military

That's 18 million every 15 minutes.

Has the last 12 years of military action created peace?

Has it not just fueled the fire of war and created more hate, fear, and enemies on both sides?

When our troops come home, do they not often divorce their spouses, commit suicide, and suffer "Post Traumatic Stress syndrome?"

Recent Peace Successes

1. U.S. missiles were not launched at Syria last September
2. A bill to move the U.S. toward war with Iran didn't get through Congress in February.
3. The number of drone strikes has fallen sharply in recent months.
4. 8/21/14 the halt of transfer of missiles to Israel thus stops USA feeding that war.
5. In civil rights, women suffrage, and slavery, it took many years. Even though they began very small we have succeeded in each of these. Likewise, ending war may take many years. We have to think of the long haul.

Will you join in?

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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Members of Lotus House participate in the Holy Saturday faith for justice march that straddled the Delmar divide, as a lamentation for the divisions that still continue.