

April 2008 Issue Number 5

COMMON LIFE

NEWSLETTER



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Engagement for Justice



...he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

Luke 4: 18, 19



Common Words

The Easter season with its story and symbols provides a provocative opportunity to reflect on our Common Life discipline of *Engagement for Justice* – the focus for this issue.

Central to the Easter story, of course, is the resurrection. I love Walter Brueggemann's expression of its meaning. "*The surprise of the resurrection is that the people who*

seemed to be in charge on Friday turned out not to be....The resurrection is a statement about who is in charge.....The crucifixion-resurrection was an event of release and valuing of all those the world had declared incompetent, worthless and therefore invisible." Those who control and oppress; who inflict violence; who refuse to share power and wealth; who destroy creation; suddenly discover that the power of the God of freedom, peace, love, justice and creativity is in charge. Their attempts to obliterate this life-giving power and the vision of God's inclusive community failed. The oppressed and oppressors, the poor and rich, the desolated and the destroyers can be transformed into new creations who are equally loved and empowered to participate in the mending of creation.

No matter what corruption, destruction and depravity we encounter as we attempt to "engage for justice," we are meant to remember and point to the vision of a world transformed, free and whole, behind the ugly mess. A hard thing to do in discouraging times. The discipline of *dedication to learning* can keep us going as we study the biblical story, read literature, poetry and theology, attend plays, look at art, and listen to music that help us hold in our imaginations the image of how the world is meant to be.

The discipline of *attending to the Spirit* also gives us hope in times when we wonder if justice will ever be accomplished. Brueggemann reminds us that humanity alone cannot make or remake the world because it is not ours. If we begin to think so and become impressed with our capacity to make and unmake the world, we will be led to despair about our inability. If we are still, we may hear underneath all our frustrated chatter, the "divine" conviction that the world can be transformed and renewed despite our human limitations.

Since we are entrusted with the task of supporting the movement towards well being for all, Brueggemann suggests that the towel and basin are the tools we have for fulfilling this work. These are "*slavelly*" tools that do the work no master would do, making contact with the repulsive dimensions of humanity, with dimensions of our humanity and creation that need personal care and attention. These tools position us like Jesus – with the ones who have been lowered by society and should be raised – with the ones who have been excluded and should be included. Engaging for justice is not about trading places with the powerful but rather about becoming new beings.

In most cases, we can't literally go around with a towel and basin to engage for justice. Jim Wallis, founder of Sojourners magazine, has a pragmatic approach to achieving justice for the common good. He has touched human dimensions we might find repulsive in his meetings with extreme right wing politicians and deeply fundamentalist church leaders and members. He is credited with converting many evangelicals to take the side of the poor and of creation – by speaking respectfully and emphasizing the teachings of Jesus and the prophets about poverty, peace, justice, care of the land. History, he feels teaches us that the most effective social movements such as abolition of slavery, voting rights for women and for African-Americans, independence of India, abolition of apartheid are also spiritual ones, which change people's thinking and attitudes by appealing to moral and religious values. He believes we must connect "*a genuinely 'prophetic' spirituality to the urgent need for a social justice*" and operate from a congregational or group base that provides the model of *dynamic countercultural communities whose life together inspires and equips members to reshape both lives and society*. (Sounds like our discipline of *commitment to community*).

Wallis recommends that we identify organizations that are acting for the common good and support them; ask people running for public office for their beliefs and action plans on justice concerns; vote according to our values; communicate our values in personal and public dialogue; write our legislators; celebrate individuals and groups who take positive social action with awards, letters, parties, e-mails, etc.

Poverty stands at the top of Wallis' concerns. He tells the story of a colleague cutting out every biblical reference to poverty and being left with a greatly reduced and "holey" Bible. We've talked about supporting the Make Poverty History campaign as a common cross group and country task for our Common Life

He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. Luke 1:51, 52

Common Words & Letters

Community. I encourage us to continue working on this – knowing full well how many of you are committed to other causes. As part of this campaign, you might also want to consider strategies for supporting the United Nations Millennium Goals which are listed in this newsletter. Wouldn't it be great if all our Common Life Communities joined together in a common cause such as this and actually influenced positive change? Consider talking about this at your annual gatherings and see what develops. Remember that George MacLeod, the founder of the Iona Community, said, 'only a demanding common task builds community', and engaging together for justice is certainly demanding.

This newsletter contains wonderful material that approaches our theme from varied perspectives. Mardi Tindal's article, "May our eyes remain open", outlines Parker Palmer's Movement Model of Social Change that flows from isolated individuals to the public arena. Tim Scorer offers an excellent adaptation of the work of Margaret Wheatley for the purpose of "Developing the Practice of Bearing Witness" to human suffering. The Sloe Jam group lists the multitude of social justice commitments undertaken by the members of their group. You'll find a prayer from John Bell of Iona and a poem from Margaret Atwood – as well as welcome news from Common Life groups across the country. Thank you as always.

Living Toward a Vision: Biblical Reflections on Shalom, Walter Brueggemann, United Church Press, Philadelphia, 1976.

God's Politics: Why the Right Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It - A New Vision for Faith and Politics in America, Jim Wallis, Harper Collins, 2005

Letters to the Editor

May I ..say...how much I appreciate each issue – I await them with anticipation and interest and do enjoy them, cover to cover, finding resources for thought and worship. Our group will pick up on the last issue's theme at our February meeting. Congratulations to you and your team for a wonderful contribution to our Common Life. Joan Gugeler

I like the title "Common Words" in your editorial. Noticed that you drew from Suzanne Johnson [Christian Spiritual Formation in the Church and Classroom]. Had I known I could have sent you [the] review I made at Heritage Seminary (Cambridge) about this time last year. Rafael Vallejo

Word from the Common Life Groups

T atamagouche

South Eastern New Brunswick Group

Group members: Bob & Shirley Childs, Linda Burns, Marilyn Burrell, Linda Fox, Janice McLean, Shawn Redden.

Our south-eastern New Brunswick group is in a transitional time at the moment. We have completed our river study and will be integrating our learnings from this for a good while. We have had focused meeting times on Engaging for Justice (Conscience Canada session) and Dedication to Learning (review of books we have found inspiring). Our regular gathering times offer us a chance to share how our lives and Common Life are a fit, or not, and to find support and encouragement for the work we need to be about as we pray, reflect, talk and eat together.

We are considering where our group needs to move with learning ideas and also the change that will happen as several other people who live in this area are interested in Common Life. The word about Common Life seems to be spreading and we celebrate that as we know its importance in our lives and see the opportunities for others to be part of this large community.

Five Oaks

Free Spirits

Group members: Yvonne Stewart, Mary Joan Bradley, Michele Braniff, Lilojean Frid, Nancy Hardy, Marion Kirkwood, BJ Klassen, John Klassen, Des McCalmont, Joan McCalmont

Advent was a time to welcome with pleasure two new members, Joan and Des McCalmont, in the hospitable atmosphere of Nancy Hardy's home in Toronto. The arts provided the means of reflecting on the season of Advent and its meaning for us. Albrecht Durer's woodcut of the nativity was set in a scene of falling down buildings and disarray – depicting the state of the world in his time. Our group reading of W.H. Auden's Advent section of his Christmas Oratorio (written in 1941 in the midst of WW II and after his mother's death) evoked feelings of

Hate evil and love good, and establish justice in the gate; Amos 5:15

Word from the Common Life Groups

desperation in times of depravity. A poem from, *Kneeling in Bethlehem*, by Ann Weems (whose 21 year old son was murdered) challenged the burdened and the sorrowing to experience the joy of knowing that they are not alone; that a healing presence lifts burdens and wipes away tears.

Our winter meeting was to focus in a similar way on the Lenten journey as well as on the meaning of the disciplines for each of us. However, two attempts to meet were prevented by two major snow storms.

Some of us share reflections between meetings via e-mail. We've shared some thoughts about the meaning of the disciplines and also our reflections on the collages we made last fall. Here is one that relates somewhat to the theme of this issue.

We live in a world of beauty that cries out to be appreciated and enjoyed. We live in a world of human-made drought and depletion and scarcity; yet we also live in a world full of the Creator's generosity and abundance.

We live in a world of violence - a world distorted by our need for power and control; yet we also live in a world in which it is possible to be vulnerable and peaceable.

We live in a world where there are forces that set individuals or groups or nations one above the other; yet we also live in a world in which there is a mysterious presence that binds us together in community.

Opening the depths of our beings to the transforming presence of the mystery of life enables us to appreciate, enjoy, be grateful, vulnerable, peaceable. Allowing the Spirit to move among us and deepen our participation, makes us into community. Acting truthfully in response to the brokenness in ourselves and the world enables us to be who we are meant to be.

New Group

Group members: Stephen Mabee, Allan Baker, Barbara Fullerton, Wayne Myhre, Betty Jean Page, Maggie Plant, Rafael Vallejo.

It has been a time of sorrow for Betty Jean and Maggie who lost a husband and a mother respectively. It had been a time of great adventure for Rafael studying theology in San Francisco. He had been meeting people like John Spong, Karen Armstrong, Marcus Borg and others and providing wonderful insights for us. Allan Baker celebrates a call and new work at Newtonbrook United Church. Stephen moves from short term job to retirement to short term job. Barb continues at the national offices and Wayne in Brantford.

In all our adventures we are deeply aware of the support each extends and of our prayers. Our social awareness has been enlarged by common reading. Our journeys make us a new group constantly so we are not inclined to change our name.

As we come to the end of our second year we find ourselves looking at doing some recommitting, perhaps inviting some new members and continuing as a group, although final action still needs to be taken.



Stephen Mabee, Betty Jean Page, Allan Baker, Maggie Plant are looking at a visual they created to demonstrate where each member considers themselves to be on their Common Life journey.

Shekhinah Seekers

Group members: Pam Byers, Barbara Bitzer, Jane Entiknap, Lloyd Smith.

The 4 Shekhinah Seekers met at Five Oaks at the end of February to connect face-to-face and to try to identify a way we could engage in justice as a group. We know that we don't want to just donate money to a project; we need and want to be directly involved in the work. Each of us has been involved in very different kinds of justice work in our own cities and so we are aware of how that involvement transforms and enriches us.

When we thought about what interests we had in common at a previous gathering, we realized Five Oaks was important to us all. Consequently, we asked Mardi Tindal to spend some time with us at this gathering to suggest possible ways we might engage in justice through Five Oaks.

Instead of just simply giving us ideas, Mardi wisely led us through an exercise to help us see the importance of choosing something that speaks to our collective hearts. Two things happened as a result of her conversation with us. First of all, we realized we are not yet ready to choose a project even though we have a better sense of how and why we would take one on. Secondly, because of our love for Five Oaks, we have agreed to help with the two Common Life discernment days at Five Oaks in 2008. This will be our first opportunity since we formed in 2005 to work together on something other than our own group gatherings. This will be a way for us to see if we can work as a team!

...and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? Micah 6:8

Word from the Common Life Groups

We really appreciated Mardi spending time with us at our gathering and were enriched by her sharing of her learnings from a recent workshop with Parker Palmer. We are feeling we are growing closer together as a Common Life group despite our geographic spread and very different lives.



Mardi Tindal, Lloyd Smith



Barbara Bitzer, Pam Byers Jane Entiknap

Sloe Jam

Group members: Janet Saunders, Thom Davies, Margaret Fisher, Lynn Godfrey, Deborah Hart, Jennie Jones, Louise Sims and one other.

Different members of Sloe Jam do one or more activities related to justice. At every meeting, Sloe Jam members relate how the disciplines are supportive in these ministries. Following is a list of justice activities:

- Works for L'Arche
- Works with homeless people at Wesley Urban Ministries
- Works for provincial government to deliver economic justice through redistribution of income, allocation and management of resources, and design and delivery of programs and services to the people of Ontario
- Volunteers in an Out of the Cold Program
- Volunteers at Eva's Phoenix (a program for teens in trouble)
- Member of a Presbytery Mission Support Committee choosing grants.
- Associate member of Iona Community
- Acts in a regional police troupe to raise awareness of elder abuse
- Gives blood
- Member of congregational Outreach Committee active in affordable housing, refugee resettlement, and congregational education
- Ecumenical involvement for appreciating the differences, affirming what is shared in common, and bridging the gaps that separate
- Volunteers for Environmental Awareness groups
- Supports the Aboriginal boycott of Uranium Mining
- Knits Prayer Shawls
- Treats Cancer patients

Editor's Note: Our deepest sympathy to Margaret Fisher whose husband died in February.

**Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?
Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover them,
and not to hide yourself from your own kin?**

Isaiah 58: 6, 7

Word from the Common Life Groups

Tent Dwellers

Group members: Joan Gugeler, Eleanor Brent, Henk Dykman, Lorraine Dykman, Joan Graham, Ellice Oliver, Celia Orth, Doug Ross, Peg Simmons.

In October of 2007, our Common Life group attended the Five Oaks *Day Away*, as planned (see the last Newsletter). We had decided on a particular focus and that made the whole experience meaningful and purposeful. Some centered on their whole covenant or a joint covenant, while others focused on the stewardship part.

The opening worship was planned by the Five Oaks spiritual guides and was particularly relevant for those of us who were concentrating on stewardship, as the passage chosen was about the widow giving all that she had. After leaving the large group to go our own way, each to a separate space, some chose to journal on the scriptures. One in our number reported later that she found this quiet time to be a real “gift”, being led to make some important decisions that were helpful to look back on. Another person found new insights into the importance of covenant to her, as well as affirmation of her decision to be a part of Common Life.

Whatever one’s experience on that *Day Away*, we all agree that it was worth repeating – at least once a year. In fairness to other participants, however, the Tent Dwellers have decided to go on a separate occasion, so that other registrants may have a say in their own retreat – in silence for part or the full time, with or without a spiritual guide. We have already requested someone from the Listening Ministries to be with us for our day apart next October, once again setting a theme for our time together and alone. We encourage other CLC groups to consider this unique way of being together for a day. Our group found it to be very special, strengthening our faith and unique ties to one another.

Naramata

The members of the Common Life group in Naramata were reading Meg Wheatley’s wonderful exploration of the power of human conversation in her book, *Turning to one another: Simple conversations to restore hope to the future*. On page 80, she raises the question, ‘What am I willing to notice in my world?’ and in the course of answering it she introduces the practice of bearing witness.

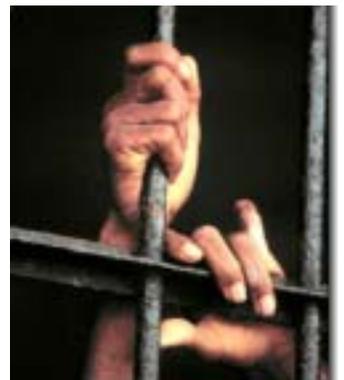


Tim Scorer, Bowen Island, BC timscorer@gmail.com

We wanted to take the idea of such a practice and make it as accessible as possible, so I shaped Meg Wheatley’s teaching into a list of 12 pointers for living a practice of bearing witness.

Developing the Practice of Bearing Witness

1. Turn toward places of human suffering and acknowledge them for what they are.
2. Be gentle with yourself as you experience your own responses to human suffering. Sometimes you might notice a tendency in you to turn away. Notice that tendency. Don’t put energy into denying it. Accept it as you continue with developing your capacity to ‘turn toward’ and to ‘bear witness.’
3. Maintain a base of support in spiritual practices so that your turning toward and bearing witness is grounded in that spiritual health.
4. Find simple ways of maintaining your practice. For example, cut out a photo of a situation of suffering or devastation which touches you and, after being present to the people in the picture, keep it in a place where you will be reminded of that situation. Only do this as long as it supports your practice of bearing witness.
5. Take time for the specific places where you can bear witness. Maintain focus. Trying to witness to all pain and all suffering is not only exhausting, but impossible.
6. Recognize that when you see or hear about human suffering in image and report, you have the choice of honouring those people by staying present to the reports and atrocities they have experienced.
7. Consider that the skills of active listening may be the gift needed by the one who is being witnessed.
8. Recognize that there are situations in your life where there is great pain and suffering and that what is most needed is someone to bear witness, not someone to fix, solve or advise.
9. Remember that in bearing witness to human suffering you are not alone and that everyone who joins the community of witnesses makes a difference in developing a consciousness which will ultimately not tolerate such human-inflicted suffering.
10. Develop a practice of lament.
11. Be aware that in turning toward others, ‘the Spirit in me greets the Spirit in you’. One becomes a channel and can let go of outcomes.
12. Notice what happens to you as you live into this practice. If you do it well, it cannot help but shape you at the deepest level.



Their hands are skilled to do evil; the official and the judge ask for a bribe, and the powerful dictate what they desire; thus they pervert justice. Micah 7:3

Articles

May our eyes remain open

by Mardi Tindal, Director of Five Oaks Centre

*May our eyes remain open even in the face of tragedy,
May we not become disheartened....*

*May we offer the power of our sorrow to the service
of something greater than ourselves....*

May we not be afraid to see or speak our truth.

~ lines from *May our eyes remain open*,
a poem from The Terma Collective

Elizabeth May, a theological student and author of *Global Warming for Dummies*, says that the federal budget introduced into the House of Commons a few weeks ago, is a budget that militarizes Canada and puts so-called security measures ahead of care for the natural environment, the source of our planet's true physical security: food security, air security, water security. As she said, "There will be more policing along polluted waterways, not cleaning them up."

I almost avoided quoting May here, since she is also a federal political leader. I almost allowed my fears to get in the way of speaking truth as I see it. I am so sensitive to those who are concerned about the mixing of church and politics, and I don't want to offend you, even when I'm sharing May's commentary without intention to woo you toward or away from any particular party. So there, I've done it. I've named one of my fears, and am about to tell you a bit about my journey toward seeing and speaking my truth, with the help of Parker J. Palmer's Movement Model of Social Change.

Parker has been a great help to me in understanding the progress – and setbacks – of my own journeys toward truth-telling in the cause of sustained action for justice, one of those practices to which we are committed and held accountable in our Common Life. On retreat with Parker in July 2007, he introduced his model and, while there's much more detail to it than what I will describe here, there are basically four stages that he identifies: **Divided No More; Communities of Congruence; Going Public and Alternative Rewards.**

When it comes to climate change and the need for environmental care, I have come to the point where it is more painful to pretend that this snowstorm swirling around me represents a nice, old-fashioned winter with kids skating outdoors and building snow

forts, than it is to tell the sorrowful truth that scientists have warned us about for so many years. Extreme and unstable weather is one of the consequences of our destructive daily habits of driving too much, heating too much and allowing our political leaders to avoid (or jeopardize) progress on an issue that threatens life on an unprecedented planetary scale. It has become easier for me to say the unpopular and uncomfortable and to support political causes that are often ridiculed, than it is to pretend that dramatic ice storms are benign.

A few years ago my spouse and I were reflecting on the tragic legacy of residential schools. A generation earlier, the church's role in the residential schools had been celebrated and promoted; now it was universally scorned and reviled. We wondered what is it that *our* children will look back on and ask, "How could they not have seen? How could they not have known? Why didn't they change?" Environmental crisis was the inescapable answer.

Divided No More: Parker explains that social change begins when isolated individuals reach a point where the gap between their inner and outer lives becomes so painful that they resolve to live 'divided no more'. They may leave or remain within institutions, but they abandon the logic of institutions and find an alternative center for their lives. He cites Rosa Parks as a prime example of someone who was simply too tired of believing one reality and living another; so was no longer prepared to sit at the back of the bus. You and I can think of countless others, some well known and some not so well known, who get to the point where going ahead with life 'as usual' is no longer an option. The impulse that leads young adults at Six Nations to block access to disputed land is the same impulse that has inspired many whom we revere today, including Nelson Mandela. A strong impulse to bring together what we know to be true and to live that truth is the beginning of social change.

Ah, you who join house to house, who add field to field, until there is room for no one but you, and you are left to live alone in the midst of the land. Isaiah 5:8

Articles

Communities of Congruence: The next stage in Parker’s model is all about isolated individuals discovering one another, sustaining one another’s sense of sanity in a world where the divided life is regarded as safe and sane. It seems to me that this is what Common Life Community groups are all about, at our best. We tell the truth and enable the leadership of those who may not have found themselves with an opportunity for leadership before, in places where to live divided is normal. We practice speaking a different language, forming community in countercultural ways.

Going Public: The third stage is ‘going public’ and it reminds me of our common efforts in relation to the Make Poverty History campaign. At this stage, a public voice is found. The movement gains momentum – and critics. The criticism can enable the movement to become refined and leaders within the movement become public leaders. It is thrilling to see young leaders emerging in the environmental movement in Canada.

Alternative Rewards: Finally, there are rewards. Mandela is liberated and becomes his nation’s leader. Political leaders from all parties begin proposing a carbon tax. And yet no reward can be greater than what comes of living ‘divided no more’. As Mandela’s story and others’ tell us, and as Parker Palmer describes it, the energies that began in abandoning the logic of institutions comes full circle to alter the logic of institutions. All because “the power of our sorrow is offered to the service of something greater than ourselves.”

I must go now and make some phone calls in the service of something greater than myself, prompted by this snowstorm.



Mardi with Parker Palmer at a Courage to Lead Circle of Trust retreat

Personal Contribution

On October 19/07, after looking at the collage I made October 7/07, I, **John Klassen** wrote:

When I look I see
what my ‘inner eye’ prompts.
When I listen I hear
what my ‘inner ear’ evokes.

Having settled in
I look forward to being unsettled.
In these moments of disturbance
newness pushes into my being.

In these moments of exploring
I get lost in the words.
The compass of my inner direction
spins in search of polarity.

In these moments of panic
I find energy in the others.
The stimulation of this synergy
Finds a sense of urgency

In these moments of discontent
I yearn for and desire air.
The air of the external
The rushing in of the masses.

In this moment of the unexpected
The Samaritans of the streets
Come unobtrusively into being
Revealing my fragility.

Human where are you?
Where are you?
Why are you?
Whose are you?

I am not male or female
I am male
I am female
I am both male and female.

I am in relationship
I am partner
I am part (not whole but holy)

I am relative.
I live ... active, do, respond, breathe
... receive – give, accept – reject
... take – let go
...love and anger; expressed – held in.

I journey on.....



(soul)

(winds of the spirit)
(holy chaos)

**But let justice roll down like waters,
and righteousness like an everflowing stream. Amos 5:24**

General News from the Centres

Tatamagouche

News from Margot Metcalfe

The Annual Gathering for Maritime Common Life is April 4th and 5th. We are pleased to welcome many new folks to Common Life. Our sessions this year will explore the five practices in considerable depth. We aim to support the intentions of our new members and to help our longer-standing members reflect on their experience of these practices. We will also be reflecting on the video "What's Right with the World".

Currently we have four active groups in the Maritimes, with the possibility of a fifth developing in the near future.

Five Oaks

News from Mardi

Annual Retreat

Our Common Annual Retreat will take place from **Sunday, June 15th at 4:00 pm to Monday, June 16th at 6:30 pm (after dinner)**. We will discuss matters of community interest and then be led by Nancy Cocks in a retreat through which we will explore the theme of **Threads of Community**. Nancy will help us reflect on and explore some of the tensions and joys of being a Common Life Community through her own lens, shaped by her Canadian experience with the Iona Community. Nancy Hardy will support Nancy with musical leadership. As in last year's retreat, there will be time for personal reflection, conversation across groups and within our own community groups. We also hope to enjoy both indoor and outdoor 'joyful activities' so come prepared to garden, or enjoy other activities. Please let Mardi know if you have matters of interest to the community to bring for discussion. We hope to have everyone within our six active groups attend, as well as some of the young adults who are in the process of forming a new group.

Nancy Cocks is a professor at the Atlantic School of Theology, and is a well known writer and workshop leader with interests in story telling and spirituality. Originally from Western Canada, she has lived and worked in many regions of the country. Recently she spent three years working with the Iona Community in Scotland in its ministry of hospitality at Iona



Nancy Cocks

Abbey. Her most recent book, *Invisible We See You*, recounts her experience on Iona and her interest in Celtic themes.

The total cost of this annual retreat is only \$105 per person and \$170 per couple (\$85 per person for couples) thanks to a General Council Common Life grant.

And a "heads up" that we will be led in our 2009 Common Life Retreat by Peter and Sue Short, May 3rd and 4th, 2009.

A Bonus Nancy Cocks Event

You may also be interested in attending the different program which Nancy is leading during the weekend immediately prior to our retreat:

Delighting in God:

Discern What Matters Most in Our Faith

June 13-15, Friday 7pm - Sunday 1pm with lunch

How do we make time and space to be with God in the midst of busy lives? Drawing on ancient wisdom and contemporary insight, we will reflect on God's invitation to take delight in times of rest and renewal. Delighting in God leads to discernment about what to take up and what to let go. This retreat will include a combination of Bible study and discussion, personal reflection and journaling, with times for singing and creative play, too. Come and let your soul delight in God.

Check the website for more details.

Discernment Days

Please remember to encourage those you know who might be interested in Common Life to attend one of the two upcoming Common Life Discernment programs. I am delighted to report that the Shekhinah Seekers have offered to give leadership to these two opportunities.

Common Life Community Discernment Evening

June 16, Monday 7 - 9:30pm

Common Life Community Discernment day

October 3, Friday 9:30am - 4:00pm

Since early 2002, Common Life Community (CLC) groups have been alive in relation to United Church education centres across the country. Our common life revolves around an intention to discern and do God's healing work in the church and world, and to follow the practices of attending to the Spirit (e.g. daily prayer and biblical study), engagement for justice, dedication to learning, commitment to community and retreat. If you are interested in participating in a new group, this is the day to begin the process. (Also see www.fiveoaks.on.ca/common.htm for more information)

Leadership: Five Oaks Common Life Leadership Team

Evening Cost: \$20

Day Cost: \$45



Prayer

Prayer

John Bell

May it not be long, Lord.

May it not be long

*before there are no more beggars at the door
waiting for the crumbs from the tables of the rich.*

May it not be long

*before the northern exploitation
of the southern economies
is a fact of history
not a fact of life.*

May it not be long

*before poor economies
cease to be havens for sex tourism,
child labour and experimental genetic farming.*

May it not be long

*before those nations we once evangelised
show us the larger Christ
whom we, too often, have forgotten.*

May it not be long, Lord.

May it not be long

*before the government of our nations
legislate against commercial avarice
and over-consumption which hurts the poor
and indebts them.*

May it not be long

*before Christians in this land
examine their economic priorities
in the light of the Gospel,
rather than its shadow.*

May it not be long

*before we find wells of hope
deeper than the shallow pools of optimism
in which we sometimes paddle.*

May it not be long

*before we feel as liberated and addressed
by your word
as those first folk did
who heard you summon the oddest of people
to fulfil the oddest of callings.*

May it not be long, Lord.

Amen.

From, *This Is the Day: Readings and Meditations from the Iona Community*, edited by Neil Paynter, Wild Goose Publications, 2002.

...They know no limits
in deeds of wickedness;
they do not judge
with justice
the cause of the orphan,
to make it prosper,
and they do not defend
the rights of the needy.
Shall I not punish them
for these things?

Jeremiah 5: 28, 29

They shall build houses
and inhabit them;
they shall plant vineyards
and eat their fruit.
They shall not plant
and another eat;....

Isaiah 65: 22

The Millennium Development Goals



In September 2000, at the United Nations headquarters in New York City, a Millennium Summit was held with the largest gathering ever of heads of state. These world leaders agreed on an ambitious agenda for reducing global poverty: The Millennium Development

Goals. For each goal, one or more targets were set, most for 2015, using 1990 as a benchmark:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

Target for 2015: Halve the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day and those who suffer from hunger. More than a billion people still live on less than US\$1 a day: sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and parts of Europe and Central Asia are falling short on the poverty target.

2. Achieve universal primary education

Target for 2015: Ensure that all boys and girls complete primary school. As many as 113 million children do not attend school, but the target is within reach. India, for example, should have 95 percent of its children in school by 2005,

3. Promote gender equality and empower women

Target for 2005 and 2015: Eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015. Two thirds of illiterates are women, and the rate of employment among women is two thirds that of men. The proportion of seats in parliament held by women is increasing, reaching about one third in Argentina, Mozambique and South Africa.

4. Reduce child mortality

Target for 2015: Reduce by two thirds the mortality rate among children under five. Every year nearly 11 million young children die before their fifth birthday, mainly from preventable illnesses, but that number is down from 15 million in 1980.

5. Improve maternal health

Target for 2015: Reduce by three quarters the ratio of women dying in childbirth. In the developing world, the risk of dying in childbirth is one in 48, but virtually all countries now have safe motherhood programs.

6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

Target for 2015: Halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS and the incidence of malaria and other major diseases. Forty million people are living with HIV, including five million

newly infected in 2001. Countries like Brazil, Senegal, Thailand and Uganda have shown that the spread of HIV can be stemmed.

7. Ensure environmental sustainability

Targets:

- *By 2015, reduce by half the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water.*
- *By 2020 achieve significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers.*

More than one billion people lack access to safe drinking water and more than two billion lack sanitation. During the 1990's, however, nearly one billion people gained access to safe water and the same number to sanitation.

8. Develop a global partnership for development

Targets:

- *Develop further an open trading and financial system that includes a commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction – nationally and internationally.*
- *Address the least developed countries' special needs, and the special needs of landlocked and small island developing states.*
- *Deal comprehensively with developing countries' debt problems.*
- *Develop decent and productive work for youth.*
- *In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries.*
- *In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies – especially information and communications technologies.*

Indicators:

Many developing countries spend more on debt service than on social services. New aid commitments made in the first half of 2002 could mean an additional \$12 billion per year by 2006.

UNDP, in collaboration with national governments, is coordinating reporting by countries on progress towards these goals. The eight goals represent a partnership between the developed countries and the developing countries determined, as the Millennium Declaration states, "to create an environment – at the national and global levels alike – that is conducive to development and the elimination of poverty."

For an update, Google, The Millennium Development Goals Report 2007.



This newsletter has been formatted by Debra Brown, Communications Coordinator at Calling Lakes Centre.

As I prepared this, I became fascinated with hands and their capacity to love, communicate, work, create, care for the earth, take action for social change – or "do evil". May these pages inspire you to Engage for Justice.