NEWS FROM Celebration!

A People Serving the Church

Fall 2005

Prayer and Presence

Incarnational presence on a street of urban depression results in signs of hope. Our rowhouses, marketed at low rents to local families many of whom are single parents, are all occupied. An exuberant horde of small children play in the backyard and have joined us in playing the lawn game, Kubb, on summer evenings; occasionally they have joined in yard work.



Sprucing up the property

Community members Bill & Steven play a particular part in the committees that drive to revitalize Franklin Avenue, and this year has seen several businesses take up grants to improve the facades. The affect is augmented by the new sidewalks, curbs, street paving and freshly planted trees that offer welcome shade.

We have long supported and cheered on our Church Army partners, John and Alison Stanley, in establishing a ministry to the most disadvantaged local people. September 10th marked the grand opening of the café, Uncommon Grounds, that is now a meeting place with food and good coffee at fair prices with opportunity for friendship and ministry. The building still needs work on upstairs meeting rooms for groups such as AA, but the transformation from a derelict building and demolition site to welcoming café and garden is testimony to great hope in dark places.

Over the summer we offered hospitality to various ministry workers: Canadians Margo and Christian lived with us while working locally with the Church Army helping make a difference with the café on Franklin Avenue; students Joel and Bobby spent the summer working on a church-sponsored mission in a local housing project. Coming to Aliquippa to establish a new clothing exchange on Franklin Avenue, Carlotta stayed in our guest house until she could find a home locally.

Also two different youth groups spent work and retreat time with us, staying in All Saints House and in our households. They joined in daily prayers and in the yard work that keeps us busy throughout the summer.

Prayer and presence takes us further afield. In his role as chaplain to the FBI here in Southwestern Pennsylvania, Steven joined an exploratory visit to Mobile, Alabama to assess the needs of agents living along the Gulf Coast whose lives were affected by Hurricane Katrina.



Steven opens the city council with prayer

Mary von Minden commented that on her first trip here many years ago to visit her son James, she wondered what he was doing living in such a depressed area. "And now, I have taken up residence here myself, living in one of the rowhouses." Community is a sign of hope and can collectively bear the weight of engagement where despair otherwise abounds.



Evening Prayer in The Chapel of the Holy Spirit

Exploring Restorative Justice
Annual Conference 2005



I'm not sure what I expected when I signed up to attend Celebration's Annual Conference, in June. The theme: "A Healing River: Exploring Restorative Justice," intrigued me and the possibility of being in Aliquippa with family is always a lure. Then I saw that Dave Gustafson, a member of our household from days in Cumbrae was leading the conference, so it became an easy decision to attend. But what to expect? I wasn't sure. After spending the better part of seven years working on a novel that found its genesis in a comment made by a friend at a dinner party about the use of the death penalty, I was intrigued to learn a new way to look at justice. Certainly, my research had proven to me that the old approach–retributive, willy-nilly punishments and sentencing, an abysmal record of re-offenders–was not working. But this new idea, "restorative justice," what could that mean?



Conference Session in the Chapel

Early in the conference, we learned that "restorative justice approaches begin with a redefinition of crime: crime is harm done to persons. In these approaches, crime and conflict are seen fundamentally as violations of people and interpersonal relationships, creating obligations and liabilities. It follows, therefore, that true justice will seek to heal, to the greatest degree possible, people and relationships and to fulfill the obligations that exist."

The moving stories we heard about the difference that is possible when we readjust our thinking from the traditional concept in western jurisprudence–that crimes are committed against the state, against the government–to an understanding that justice should be about bringing healing for those who have been sinned against as well as those who have sinned, the rewards for the community are great.

At the end of the conference, after the beautiful Taizé service, I wrote to a friend of mine who has been incarcerated for years, asking her if she had ever heard of this really radical idea – that justice can be healing. Her answer:

"You asked what I thought about restorative justice. I am somewhat familiar with the movement itself ...I have ...read some articles about related things like victims and their victimizers communicating, seeking understanding, forgiveness, remorse, etc. ... So many good ideas, but so little opportunity to practice them. I have done a lot of thinking about forgiveness. And I have written an unsent letter to my victim's family. They are too angry for me to have direct contact. I do think it's a huge mistake for the ... criminals to be so segregated from the effects of their crimes and the victims."

As I re-read her letter this morning and remember what the conference taught, I can hear a new verse for an old song.

Justice is flowing like a river, flowing out through you and me,
flowing out into the desert, setting all the captives free.

Indeed, the idea of restorative justice does flow two ways, from sinned against and sinner, and as it does, all are set free.

Margaret-Love Denman directs the creative writing program at the University of New Hampshire. Her recent novel about capital punishment is *Daily, Before Your Eyes*. She and her family lived with the Community in Scotland.

News from Celebration's UK House



Phil and Margaret Bradshaw attended the Greenbelt Arts Festival in August, a multi-cultural event featuring some of the best in Christian music, worship and the arts. This year's festival took the theme of the Tree of Life, inspired by a sculpture in the British Museum created from guns left over from conflict in Mozambique. It proved to be a rich symbol for speakers to explore from various angles.

The festival includes music, visual arts, talks, performing arts, comedy, worship, literature, new media and workshops. There is far more to see and do than is possible in a weekend. Among the speakers this year were Richard Rohr, a contributing editor of Sojourners Magazine, John Bell of the Iona Community and James Jones, Bishop of Liverpool.

Today, Greenbelt works in association with the British charity Christian Aid, and has a strong ethos of environmental and social justice. Phil and Margaret were glad to be able to reconnect with their roots – which included bumping into several old friends in the crowds.

Members' Notes



James, Mimi, Steven, Bishop Epting, Joe, May, Bill

The Rt. Rev. Christopher Epting, former Bishop of Iowa and now Deputy for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations for the Episcopal Church, USA, has become our new Bishop Visitor and spent time with us in July. A Bishop Visitor is the guardian of the constitution of the Community and guarantor to the Church at large of the Community's sound administration, stability and right to confidence. Our relationship with Bishop Epting stretches back 30 years

As you can see, Mimi had her second new knee in July, so now she has matching scars.



Mimi and Bill traveled to St. Louis in May to visit Graham and Jen and three-month-old grandson, Owen Randall Farra.



Steven and Dennis

James notes the summer achievements in the property and grounds, after all the catering at conferences and youth visits, yard work and housing repairs. He and Bill installed a roof over the earth oven; it can now be used in all weathers! Those who feared the damage to their vehicles on the back driveway will now appreciate the new paved surface that has smoothed out all those humps and holes.



James

Our Labor Day houseparty enjoyed a sunny but-not-too-hot weekend of relaxation, visiting, cooking in the earth oven, lawn games and worship together. Having relaxed and lightly programmed time together enables us to catch up with one another's personal journeys and renew old friendships.

News of Fellow Travelers

In August, James drove to Detroit to celebrate Companion Phil Dinwiddie's marriage to Melanie. Phil is now the Rector of St. James, Grosse Ile, Michigan. He spent the summer of 2001 with us in Aliquippa and was a major contributor to the construction of the earth oven and the design of our website. Congratulations Melanie and Phil. We wish you every blessing.



Granville and Sylvia Hawkes spent another summer with us. Sylvia undertook stalwart duty in caring for the garden, especially keeping up watering the flowers in one of our hottest, driest summers. The Hawkes family joined the Community in 1974 when we lived in Wargrave, England. They continued in ministry there when most of the Community moved to Scotland.





Church Army interns Margo and Christian *(see page 1)*

Companion Sarah Turnblom, who has been living in a rowhouse for two years, has purchased her own house and will move across the Ohio River to Ambridge, close to her work at Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry.

New Companions

Capt. Nancy O'Leary, a Church Army missionary in South Dakota who lived in one of our rowhouses for two years, was inducted as a Companion during her visit in June.

Will Lawbaugh became a Companion at the Eucharist on September 17. He has been living with us for more than a year, exploring the possibilities for his future while he trains for ordination.

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Women's Training Project



Photo: Peter Frank

Alison Stanley and May McKeown continue to work together running the ACE Women's Training Project. With a larger group from the women's jail attending the summer course in April and May, the program expanded to include Cooking on Mondays and Quilting on Thursdays. The transformational impact for the women is perhaps best described in the words of some of those who attended.

"Celebration was very helpful on my self-esteem. It's hard when you are stuck in the jail and feel like you are constantly being ridiculed. Here I remember that I am a good person."

"We get to see that we are capable of more than we thought."

" I would love to do a workshop on parenting, like how to be a parent in our new lifestyle and not feel alone. Maybe we can find a support group where we can meet moms in similar circumstances and gain their support."

"I would love to come back. To keep that feeling that I am still worth something; sometimes out there I forget. I feel privileged to have come, because maybe I am not that bad. Please pray for my children and my sobriety."

Plans are now in place for the autumn program, beginning at the end of September with a course in jewelry and a Wellness course led by Marcia Lehman. Please pray for these women that the hope and self-belief they experience will continue to build them up.

We are still working to raise the money to move our program into the first floor of All Saints House. More remodeling is needed to make the training area suitable and to prepare space for childcare. A course in parenting is also planned for the future. This move will enable us to have a computer network and provide childcare so that mothers who live in the neighborhood as well as those on work release from the jail will be able to join the program.



"We learned new coping and life skills along with crafts. The things I've learned here will have a very positive effect on mine and my children's lives."

Visiting Youth Groups

In June, The Rev. Sandy Stayner, former Community member, brought a group of 10 youth and 3 adults from St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Cheshire, Connecticut.

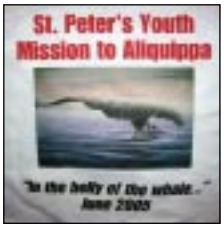


Sandy and Matthew Stayner (age 7)





The theme of the week-long mission was *Jonah*, and the group donned specially made T-shirts for a closing group picture.







In August, we hosted a group from Church of the Messiah, St. Paul, Minnesota, who came for a week to work with John Stanley at the café, Uncommon Grounds.

