

LIVING BULWARK

The online magazine of The Sword of the Spirit
sources of strength and renewal for Christian life and mission in today's world

July/August 2012 - Vol. 61



Going Forward with Faith, Generosity, and Sacrifice

Do not be afraid - remember the Lord - and fight for your brethren (Neh. 4:14)

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Living Bulwark is committed to fostering renewal of the whole Christian people: Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox. We especially want to give witness to the charismatic, ecumenical, evangelistic, and community dimensions of that renewal. Living Bulwark seeks to equip Christians to grow in holiness, to apply Christian teaching to their lives, and to respond with faith and generosity to the working of the Holy Spirit in our day.

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Going Forward with Faith, Generosity, and Sacrifice

A Report on the Sword of the Spirit International Coordinators Meeting
May 24-28, 2012 in Newark, New Jersey, USA

Over the last eight years the Lord has spoken very strongly to the Sword of the Spirit about an open door for mission and a special season of grace, especially on the young people in Sword of the Spirit. Given the increasing difficulties and challenges which Christians face around the world – increasing religious persecution, drift from Christian morality, breakdown of marriage and family life – there has been a growing sense of urgency among Sword of the Spirit leaders to work more closely together internationally and regionally to strengthen the work of building Christian communities and preparing community members to be fully engaged in mission.

Every four years, since 2004, the coordinators from all of the [communities in the Sword of the Spirit](#) have gathered to seek the Lord together. This past May some 370 coordinators and main Kairos leaders met for five days in Newark, New Jersey. They came from 65 communities located in Asia, South Pacific, Europe, Middle East, North America, and Central and South America.

The aim of this report is to give readers, especially community members and people familiar with the [Sword of the Spirit](#), a summary of key presentations and events during the four days of meeting in Newark.



President's Address

Jean Barbara, President of the Sword of the Spirit, in his opening address spoke about a season of grace and fruitfulness which he has seen firsthand in his travels, attending regional meetings and visiting communities. He said we are witnessing a season of growth, a new level of conviction about the call and commitment to the life and mission of the Sword of the Spirit – especially among a high number of young people in the Sword of the Spirit communities. He sensed that mission among young people has only begun – and that more must be done to pass on wisdom and to equip them to take their place in mission.

Jean exhorted the leaders to not be overwhelmed with the work and challenges of responding to the Lord's invitation to move through open doors of mission. Jean said, "We are simply a response to a grand call from the Lord to the Sword of the Spirit. As he gives us grace to receive and accept the call, he also gives us grace to respond well to it... As a body of coordinators let us make an appropriate response both to God and to our people – especially the younger generation – a response of expectant faith, of generosity, and of sacrifice as we walk with the Lord who is taking us to a place *beyond our resources*. As the Lord promised, though, he is adding to our resources as we do mission."



Jean concluded his address with an exhortation based on a passage from the Book of Nehemiah: "Finally, I

want to say with Nehemiah (Chapter 4) as he was building the wall of the bulwark and speaking to the leaders of the people, with their swords in their hands: 'Do not be afraid... Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brethren, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes' (Nehemiah 4:14) ...that is, your communities. Remember brothers, that 'the work is great and widely spread, and we are separated on the wall, far from one another. In the place where you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us'" (Nehemiah 4:19).

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ICM 2012 Report continued

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A Report on the 2012 Sword of the Spirit International Coordinators Meeting, continued

Pastoring the Pastors - Saints, Missionaries, and Martyrs

The morning sessions for the first three days focused on “pastoring the pastors.” Presentations on the call to be saints, missionaries, and martyrs were followed by times for personal reflection and small group discussion.



The Call to be Saints

During the first morning session, Dave Hughes, senior coordinator of Word of Life community in Ann Arbor,

Michigan, spoke to the coordinators about the Lord's invitation to them to be saints. He explained that the pathway of being a pastoral leader is a pathway of holiness – a particular pathway of holiness for those called to do pastoral work. Dave remarked that this pathway requires “death to self” – laying down one's life for others, as Jesus, the Good Shepherd did. Dave then described the role of shepherds: they know their sheep by name and take concern for their whole lives (Psalm 23), and they “feed the sheep” by leading people to the Lord, the “bread of life” (John 6:35).

Dave went on to point out some of the specific challenges for pastoral leaders. These, he said, included the “usual suspects” of personal weakness and sin, and the precursors to sin, such as self-pity, discouragement, and a reluctance to be completely open about one's life and failings with at least one other mature brother in the Lord. Dave explained the importance of keeping balance in the different spheres of life, service, and work.

He concluded with three key steps for growth in holiness: first, staying close to a holy God. Second, staying centered in one's family – if you can't pastor your family, you can't pastor your community. And thirdly, remaining transparent and open about your life with brothers in an accountability relationship.



The Call to be Missionaries

During the second morning session, Jean Barbara spoke to the coordinators about the call to be missionaries – the call to go out, evangelize, and raise up disciples. He explained that this is part of the universal call of the church – to be a missionary people.

While there are many expressions of mission in the church, he explained some are equipped for particular types of mission which often require specialized training. Jean said that as part of the overall mission of the church, the Sword of the Spirit has been called to engage in a particular mission. Jean used the analogy of an elite army unit that has been trained for reconnaissance, like Gideon's forces who were called by the Lord to fight for his people (Judges 7 and 8). With the Lord's help Gideon won a decisive battle with only 300 men against a superior force.

Ambassadors for Christ

Jean used three images from the Scriptures to explain how missionaries should conduct their lives.

Missionaries are first ambassadors for Christ. As citizens of God's kingdom they have been sent from their country, which is "in heaven," to another city and country. They must travel light and not be distracted by other things, even good things, which might hold them back. If they encounter setbacks or opposition in the Lord's mission, they must not yield to discouragement, but overcome it with an even greater sacrifice of their lives to the Lord.

Not risk-averse

Jean also explained that missionaries are called to be good soldiers of Christ who do not get entangled with civilian affairs (2 Timothy 3-4), but who take on the mentality of soldiers who are fully equipped with spiritual weapons (Ephesians 6). He explained that a soldier must be ready at all times to undergo hardship and suffering, and even die in battle. Alluding to the example of Joshua in the Old Testament, Jean said, "there is no retirement age for those engaged in spiritual warfare" (Joshua 14:10-11). Jean encouraged the coordinators to not let fear hold them back from leaving their comfort zones, taking risks, and being willing to suffer for the sake of the Lord's mission. Jean remarked, "The Lord wants us to name our fears and face them... Some of us are risk-averse, cautious, and careful... Let us trust in the Lord who will give us spiritual courage as we engage in mission for him."

Patient and hard-working

The third Scriptural image which Jean used was the patient and hard-working farmer (2 Timothy 2:6, James 5:7). Speaking from his own experience, he sensed that the open door which the Lord has invited his missionaries to walk through is not necessarily wide open. It will often require hard and serious pushing to fully open it. Missionary work requires serious effort, patience, and hope – not giving up or turning aside from the great work.

Jean concluded by reminding the coordinators that every member of our communities is called to be a missionary and to take on a missionary mentality and lifestyle. It is important to invest young people in mission – to train them for mission and to teach them to take risks and step out of their comfort zones in doing mission. Jean concluded by saying, "may our response to the Lord's call and mission be our legacy... And after a long and fruitful life, may we say, 'we worked hard, we kept the faith, and we fought the good fight.'"



The Call to be Martyrs

David Mijares, mission coordinator for the Ibero-Americano region of the Sword of the Spirit, spoke to the coordinators about the call to be martyrs. David explained that the word martyr literally means “witness” – witnessing to Jesus Christ with one’s own life, even to the point of shedding one’s blood, as Stephen the first Christian martyr did (Acts 22). The call to be a martyr flows from the call to follow Christ as his disciple. That is why Jesus explained that his disciples must die to themselves and take up their cross daily for his sake. David explained that dying to oneself frees us to live for others.

An act of love

David described martyrdom as an act of love. He showed how the highest expression of love is the willingness to lay down one’s life for others (John 15:13, 1 John 3:16). He gave the example of Jesus in washing the feet of his disciples (John 13) and in dying for them on the cross (Romans 5:8). David explained that the greatest preacher today is the body of Christ – the witness of Christians living together in love and in laying down their lives in humble service of one another.

An act of war

David also described martyrdom as an act of war. He explained how the Scriptures demonstrate this in the witness of the early Christian martyrs who overcame Satan “by the blood of the Lamb and by their word of testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death (Revelations 12:11). David explained that since martyrdom is the highest expression of love it is also the most powerful weapon against sin, death, and Satan (Revelations 2:9-11).

Daily life training

David then explained how daily life discipleship is connected with martyrdom. He showed how the concrete situations of daily life can train disciples for martyrdom (1 John 3:17-18). He concluded by sharing how faithfulness to community life – laying down our lives for our brothers and sisters in Christ – is a great path to dying to self for the sake of loving and serving others.

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International Coordinators Meeting

May 25-28, 2012

Newark, New Jersey
USA



A Report on the 2012 Sword of the Spirit International Coordinators Meeting, continued

Covenant of Full Membership with Sword of the Spirit

On Saturday evening during the general assembly, four senior coordinators, on behalf of their respective communities, signed the covenant of full membership with the Sword of the Spirit along with Jean Barbara, President of the Sword of the Spirit.



Jim Kolar, senior coordinator of Christ the Redeemer Community in St. Paul, Minnesota (2nd right)



The coordinators of La Nueva Jerusalem, from Miami, Florida, witness the signing of the covenant of full membership with the Sword of the Spirit



Brendan Lynch, senior coordinator of Nazareth Community in Dublin (2nd right)



Romeo Fernando, senior coordinator of Jesus the Good Shepherd Community in Vasai, India (2nd right)



The coordinators of Jesús es el Señor, from Quito, Ecuador, witness the signing of the covenant of full membership with the Sword of the Spirit

Prophetic Words from the Lord

During the Sunday evening prayer session a number of prophetic words were given to the assembly of coordinators.

A couple of prophetic words described the image of a gathering storm in a time of spiritual conflict and turmoil.

“The clouds are darkening. The darkness will come quicker than we can imagine. Be urgent to prepare people for the time of increasing darkness. Do not put off what I have told you to do.”

“What’s coming is coming sooner. It will be a fiercer spiritual battle. We don’t have time to wait around. The Lord wants his people to fight this spiritual battle now. The Lord will pour out spiritual gifts and power as we engage in mission and fight for him.”

The Lord promised to give “streams of living water” (John 7:37-39) and a fresh infilling of the Holy Spirit to those who seek him (Ephesians 5:18).

One prophetic word was addressed to the younger men of the Sword of the Spirit:

“The Lord says, ‘my young men, my Timothys, love wisdom. I intend to give you wisdom. Apply yourself to wisdom, and I will give you wisdom.’”



Concluding Remarks

At the conclusion of the four days of meetings, Jean Barbara gave three exhortations to the coordinators.

Jean said, “The ‘open door’ prophecy is an invitation to go through an open door for personal holiness... Tonight, we received a prophecy that is very relevant in that regard: I have imparted to you a great deal through your encounters with your brothers, I have imparted to you through the teachings, I have shepherded you directly. I have changed you as individuals and as a group of men. I don’t want you to go back to business as usual, but to carve out time in the days and weeks ahead to reflect on what I have said to you and done for you. Take time, carve out time so that what I have done for you will have its effects. It is important to me that you do this.

Jean remarked that the “open door” prophecy also has to do with mission and working with young people. He said it is more than an invitation, rather, it is a command for all the regions and communities of the Sword of the Spirit to move forward courageously and take new territory for the Lord. Jean concluded with a prophetic word given during the evening assembly: “I have built you for more. In the midst of your trials and difficulties, cry out to me and remember that I have built you for more. I will spread and grow this work. Remind me, ‘You have built me for more’.”

“Thirdly,” Jean said, “this International Coordinators Meeting (ICM) was not simply a personal retreat, or a time to talk about our mission and Kairos, or simply a time for prayer meetings and personal sharings, no matter how good they were. This was a solemn assembly of the coordinators of the Sword of the Spirit. It was important that you were here and I am sorry that some were not able to attend (I believe for good reasons). As of today please make a note of May 2016 in your personal and community calendars for the 4th ICM and make every effort that your coordinators and main Kairos leaders attend. May the Lord bless us and grant us the grace and wisdom and power to go back home and lead our brothers and sisters to be saints, missionaries and martyrs!”

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Icon of the Lord Jesus and apostles feeding the multitude with the miracle of the loaves and fishes

Witnesses of Our Master, the Lord Jesus Christ

by Archbishop George Bacouni, from Tyre, Lebanon

[Since the Sword of the Spirit is an international ecumenical association of communities, three church services – Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox – were held on Sunday morning for the ICM conference participants. Archbishop George Bacouni, the Greek Melkite Archbishop of Tyre, Lebanon, presided over the Catholic Liturgy and delivered the following homily for the Feast of Pentecost. Archbishop Bacouni resides in Tyre, Lebanon. He has been actively engaged in the life and mission of the People of God community in Lebanon since the early 1980s.]

Before going back to his Father, Jesus told his disciples to stay in Jerusalem, and to wait for the gift which his Father promised to give them – his Holy Spirit. He told them that when they would receive the Holy Spirit, they would become his witnesses, not only in Jerusalem and all of Judea and Samaria, but to the ends of the earth as well.

On the day of Pentecost the Father fulfilled his promise to send the Holy Spirit. The disciples began by declaring the wonders of God and proclaiming the Good News in many languages.

The Father's strategy was to send his Son, the Lord Jesus, and then to send missionaries who would continue his work. In order for this mission to be successful through succeeding generations, the Father's plan was to raise up missionaries who would be true witnesses of the Lord Jesus. If I may say so, these witnesses would be another "Jesus" – hundreds and thousands of missionaries – all sons of God working to build the kingdom of

the Trinity – as we prayed at the beginning of the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom: “Blessed is the kingdom of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and forever.”

In the Gospel of John, chapter 7, the temple guards went back to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, “Why didn’t you bring him in?” The guards declared, “No one ever spoke the way this man spoke” (John 7:45-46). They were astonished not only because of the words, but also because of the person who pronounced them. They had heard about the wonders and miracles of Jesus, and they had also heard about his way of life: his simplicity, his mercy, his love, his humility – and in summary, his holiness.

Throughout the history of the church the Good News has continued to spread. And one particular fact stands out in this regard. When the missionary was a saint who lived a holy life, a lot of people were converted to Christianity through the witness of the saint’s testimony.

The twelve apostles didn’t convince thousands of people because they were well organized and well educated. They won many people to Christ because they acted as real disciples – real saints. In the past many lands converted to Christianity through the work of saintly missionaries. All the great religious orders and missionary societies were established by saints.

Do we accept the teaching we receive in our communities because it is delivered by very intelligent and well educated people only – or is it not more through the witness and quality of life of teachers who live what they say, because they take seriously the call to holiness.

I joined the People of God community in Lebanon in the late 1980s. What motivated me to accept the teachings I received and apply them in my personal life was the conviction that those who were teaching were genuine men of God. These men of God continue to be for me “another Jesus,” because I can find in them Jesus who speaks and teaches through his disciples. I see these men first and foremost as men who strive to live as disciples who want to follow Jesus. I know very well that they have weaknesses, just as I, too, know my weakness. It is the witness of their way of life – their desire for holiness – that attracted me and helped me to open my ears and my heart to the message of the good news of Jesus Christ.



The theme of this International Coordinators Meeting (ICM) is saints, missionaries, and martyrs. If I want to use one word to sum this up, that word is witness. To be a genuine witness of the Lord Jesus requires growth in holiness.

Our time, the particular age in which we live, is in need of saints – saints who can impact it with the gospel of Christ. We hear lots of critics of the clergy, and some are leaving the church due to the behavior of some prelates and priests. Why? Because people expect us to be real witnesses, to be holy like our Master, the Lord

Jesus.

Today I am talking to coordinators – leaders of our communities in the Sword of the Spirit. The members of your communities and other Christians look to you to be real witnesses – to be holy like your Master, the Lord Jesus.

In the first two days of the ICM, we heard about a number of concerns: our kids, raising young men to be radical disciples, and vocation to the Servants of the Word. I would also add as concerns for us the average age of our coordinators and the need to raise up more younger coordinators, the busyness of life and how it impacts our life and mission.

I am convinced that God will continue to bless and guide us in finding solutions to our concerns, especially if we take some further steps to grow in the area of holiness – more intimacy with the Lord, a more radical way of living Christian values, a simplicity in our way of life, and much more love for each other and washing the feet of one another as Jesus taught.

Brothers, I am happy to be with you during this ICM and to celebrate Pentecost with you. I appreciate the welcoming letter of the Archbishop of Newark, John Meyers, and his prayers for us and for our meetings. I love you all, my brothers, and I pray the Father grant us more and more of his Holy Spirit to fulfill our mission. Amen.

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A Report on the 2012 Sword of the Spirit International Coordinators Meeting, continued

Reflections from ICM Participants

Joy in serving a covenant keeping God

It has truly been an amazing experience for me attending the International Coordinators Meeting (ICM) in New Jersey. We were around 370 men from various countries and regions, with different backgrounds and languages; however we gathered with a common and united spirit giving our praise to the one true living God. I must say the praise and worship was truly anointed. I saw men giving their all in their worship; no distractions would take their focus from the Lord. Proverbs 29:18 says, 'Where there is no vision, the people perish' The opposite is also very true, where there is a vision, the people have a joy for living, a purpose to fulfill and a mission to strive for. The vision of the Sword of the Spirit is huge: to be a community of communities, of people on a mission and living a common way of life; to be a bulwark. I was so blessed to see and be part of this bulwark in action. I am grateful to be part of and experience this bigger picture of community life.

As I pondered each day during my personal prayer time at the ICM, I realized the Lord took me out of my comfort zone, over the South Pacific Ocean, into another hemisphere, over countries and continent's to show me the bigger picture. I have truly come back with a deeper passion and desire to take my calling seriously. To spend more time with the Chief Shepherd, our Lord Jesus, I serve a covenant keeping God and I pray that I will be true and obedient to keep *his* covenant relationship to the end.

- Harry Lowe, coordinator from Lamb of God, New Zealand



Prophetic sign and action of God's presence

It was a great privilege and honor for us in the People of Hope to host the third International Coordinators Meeting. Having the conference here in New Jersey, after many years of difficulties, was a prophetic action and a clear sign that God is with us. It was a privilege and a joy to serve the coordinators and Kairos leaders, and helped all of us to see more clearly that we are part of something bigger than ourselves. From providing transportation to and from three airports, to registration, to bartending at the “fellowship hour” each day, we had the opportunity to renew many friendships and make many new friends from around the world. Many from the People of Hope were able to reconnect with many familiar faces and meet many new brothers as well at the Lord’s Day ceremonies and entertainment on Saturday evening. We were able, indeed, to behold how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell in unity. “Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe”- Hebrews 12: 28).

— Brian Murray, ICM conference administrator and coordinator
from the People of Hope, Newark, New Jersey



Changed and renewed in strength and unity

For us in the People of Hope, the hosting of the third ICM held special significance. It was a clear expression

of how much the Lord has done in our midst to not only reconcile us with the Archdiocese of Newark, but to be able to move forward together in proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Archbishop Myers wrote two letters, one to all the coordinators, welcoming them to the ICM and a second one to acknowledge the presence of Archbishop Georges Bacouni. Moreover, Archbishop Bacouni, Bruce Yocum, John Keating, Jean Barbara, Dave Touhill and myself were able to spend an evening with Archbishop Myers, sharing with him the good news of what the Lord is doing among us in the Sword of the Spirit and listening to him speak of his passion to spread the Gospel in Newark. An amazing moment, to be sure, in the midst of the action of the Holy Spirit throughout this amazing International Coordinator's Meeting. I believe we are all changed, lifted up, and renewed in our vigor to move forward with the work the Lord has given us, in strength and unity. To God be the glory!

– Gregory Floyd, senior coordinator, People of Hope, Newark, New Jersey



Greatly inspired by the personal witness of brothers

During the four days of the ICM in Newark, I was greatly inspired by the brothers in my small sharing group. They came from Maryland, Dublin, Manila, and Pittsburgh. I'll never complain about the number of meetings in the Lamb of God after I heard that the brother from the Ligaya Community in Manila attended three meetings a week, every week, in addition to the Sunday community meetings.

I was inspired by Jeff Smith, a coordinator from the Triumph of the Cross community in Maryland with only 29 adults, who part-time managed a university outreach to a university one hour's drive from home. Jeff as regularly hosted Kairos gappers who volunteered a year of service, and has also sent several of his young people as Kairos gappers to other communities in the USA and Europe. All from such a small base of members. Wow!

I thought the main theme saints, missionaries, and martyrs thinking they would focus on some historic figure with some added Scriptures to support their motivation vision. However I was surprised at how personal the reflections were and relevant to my own life.

David Mijares a Servant of the Word brother from the Ibero American region spoke on our call to be martyrs,

saying that we are all called to be martyrs by us accepting the call to be Disciples of Christ. The word “cross” appears 34 times in the New Testament however the word “dying” appears 111 times in the New Testament. The disciples call is to take up the cross daily and in concrete things. He quoted Mathew Henry commentary on Luke 9:23 “We must get used to all kinds of self-denial...” This is the best preparation for martyrdom. We must live a life of self-denial, mortification, putting the world aside; we must not satisfy our comfort and desires because it will be then difficult to endure hardship, suffering, fatigue and want for the cause of Christ. We receive our daily affliction and we must adapt to it.. and learn to endure hardship. Frequently we find ourselves with crosses in the road of our duty; and although we don’t have to live drawing them to us, they are out on us, we must take them and carry them following Christ and getting the best out of them.

– Greg Hall, coordinator from Lamb of God, New Zealand



ICM 2012 Report continued

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International Coordinators Meeting

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A Report on the 2012 Sword of the Spirit International Coordinators Meeting, continued

Youth work and mission challenges and the juvenilization of culture

During the International Coordinators Meeting of the Sword of the Spirit, held in Newark, New Jersey May 25-29, two sessions focused on some of the key challenges which affect work with young people and mission in general. Dan Keating and Tom Bergler each gave a presentation on some of these challenges. Dan is a mission coordinator and elder of the Servants of the Word. Tom is associate professor of youth ministry and missions at Huntington University, Indiana, and a frequent speaker at Kairos conferences and summer academy.

Three key challenges

Dan Keating gave an overview of areas in which we can expect from the social environment of today significant challenges to our call and mission. The first area he mentioned was a continual “slide” in modern secular culture in the area of moral life. Dan said, “This is a huge challenge to us. If our call is centered on living a way of life – a way of life that follows the gospel – then the constant change away from a Christian moral or ethic will hit us directly. It is a headwind blowing more and more strongly, and it is right in our faces. We should not be surprised about this.” Dan mentioned that in some parts of the world this is a wind that is coming from the side, rather than a direct hit in the face. He warned, however, that “the wind is shifting constantly, so that more and more it will be directly in our faces, and we will have to live our life in a stronger headwind of immorality.”

Dan gave one example of the issue of same-sex marriage. This is now quite accepted in Europe and Canada, and more and more becoming the standard in the USA. Dan said that for most people, they cannot even see why it could possibly be a problem! He said that there has been a steady but radical shift in the past 10 years on this – and it doesn’t look like it is going to turn back any time soon.

A second challenge which Dan described was the rise in religious persecution. Dan said that there has always

been noteworthy religious persecution in parts of the world. But general religious persecution is on the rise, and it is having an impact in more parts of the world.

The third challenge Dan presented was the area of financial hardship and struggle, which, he said, seems to rise and fall from place to place. He said that we may be in for a longer-term period in which financial hardship will become the rule, rather than the exception. Dan said that we may have to learn how to go about our community life, and our community building and expansion, with less financial resource than in the past. This, he said, may affect whole communities and regions, but also affects the amount of money a family has available to send their children to many of our events – and we may need to learn new ways of doing many of the same things with fewer or less financial resources.

“Juvenilization” of Culture



Tom Bergler gave a presentation on the profound cultural shift towards an increasing immature form of Christianity caused by the [“juvenilization”](#) of society and its impact on Christians as well. Tom defined juvenilization as “the process by which the religious beliefs, practices and developmental characteristics of adolescents become accepted as appropriate for Christians of all ages. It begins with the praiseworthy goal of adapting the faith to appeal to the young. But it sometimes ends badly, with both youth and adults embracing immature versions of the faith.”

Tom pointed to three leading causes of this problem: Modern youth culture tends to create the need to adapt Christianity to appeal to youth. The time between puberty and full adulthood is getting longer in society in general. And the understanding of adulthood has increasingly changed to allow more immaturity.

Moralistic, therapeutic deism

Tom cited a national study of youth and religion, conducted in the US, which showed that American teenagers have a faith that can be described as “moralistic, therapeutic deism.” Tom then defined each of these terms: A moralistic approach promotes the view “God wants me to be good. The main purpose of religion is to help me be good. But most people are good on their own, so religious involvement is optional.” The therapeutic approach promotes the view that “I like God, my faith and my church because they help me feel better about my problems.” The deism approach promotes the view that “God is there, in the background, when I need him for help. But he is not central to my life.”

Adolescent Christianity

Tom cited several characteristics of what he called “adolescent Christianity”: (1) Adolescent spirituality favours touch, physical activity, and other bodily ways of expressing faith. (2) Adolescent Christians are concerned about how their faith relates to their sexuality and their romantic relationships. They want to experience a “personal relationship with God” and like the idea of “falling in love” with Jesus. (3) Cognitively, adolescents are growing in their ability to think abstractly. They can now grapple with concepts like love, truth or justice. In their new found zeal, and their excitement over a new cause, they easily become judgmental of adults who don’t share their enthusiasm. (4) Adults influenced by adolescent Christianity romanticize the supposed idealism and zeal of youth and try to conform to its patterns – adolescent Christians blame someone

else for the world's problems and seldom recognize their own role in evil social systems. (5) Adolescents lean heavily on a few close friends who provide a sense of emotional security, advice, and acceptance, and less on parents and the wider adult community. (6) Adolescent Christians see faith as incomplete unless it is affecting them emotionally. Tom concluded by stating that "adolescent Christianity lacks a biblical vision of spiritual maturity, dislikes the goal, and prefers the journey."

Tom cited four problems which he saw with juvenilization: (1) We are not trained to think and speak clearly about truth and morality. (2) We don't have a higher sense of purpose and goal in life (the highest and most noble goal is to live a comfortable life). (3) Peer groups that promote immaturity (routine intoxication, extreme amounts of time on video games). (4) Civic engagement is viewed as something good for someday – but not now. No time or money for volunteering. No moral obligation to serve others.

The new immature adulthood

Tom then described what he saw as the key characteristics of what he called "the new immature consumer adult." These characteristics include the following: being impulsive, searching for identity, focused on self and my needs; believing that material goods can heal my pain, craving the approval of others, willing to spend as if one doesn't have other responsibilities. Tom summarized by stating that "people who behave like adolescents make good consumers."

Tom contrasted the new immature adulthood with the "old adulthood" which emphasized responsibility, duty, and caring for others. He said that the old adulthood was not perfect, as anyone knows who dealt with an emotionally distant father. But, he said that the new adulthood has removed the expectation that becoming an adult includes growing out of the immature ways of adolescence.

He concluded his presentation by observing that today adulthood has been disconnected from maturity. He said that this creates two problems for raising young men: (1) It is harder for young men to see maturity as desirable and attainable. (2) And fewer adults can model and teach maturity.

Tom emphasized throughout his presentation that these problems are not caused by adolescents, but by the adults who are shaping society.

Intergenerational communities

Tom stated that, "Only intergenerational communities of people devoted to mature Christianity can build sea walls high enough to hold back the tide of juvenilization that has now risen high enough to threaten all of us."



What do we need to do?

Dan Keating concluded the morning session with three recommendations for how leaders should move forward in facing these challenges.

Great Courage

Dan stated that if we are going to face a more hostile culture, more persecution, and more financial difficulty, then **we will need real courage**. He said that courage is defined as “the willingness to die in battle.” He stated that “we will need the willingness to really suffer and even die for the faith. I think the Lord will be calling us to greater courage in the days to come. Let us pray to the Lord for courage.”

Deep Wisdom

He also stated that he believed we would need **deep wisdom** to handle the coming challenges. He said that there will be need for genuine prudence in responding to new situations and to opposition to our approach to raising up children for the Lord.

Anchored Faith

Dan also said that we would “need **deep roots of faith** to weather the storms that the Lord has promised and that we can see coming. A lot of trees are going to be uprooted in the winds that are blowing. How will we stand? We need deeply anchored faith in the Lord, in his promises, in eternity.”

Dan finished by reminding the coordinators that “with men it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God” (Mark 10:27). He stated, “Let us put our trust in the one who can do the impossible!”

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St. Juvenile Church

by Michael Shaughnessy

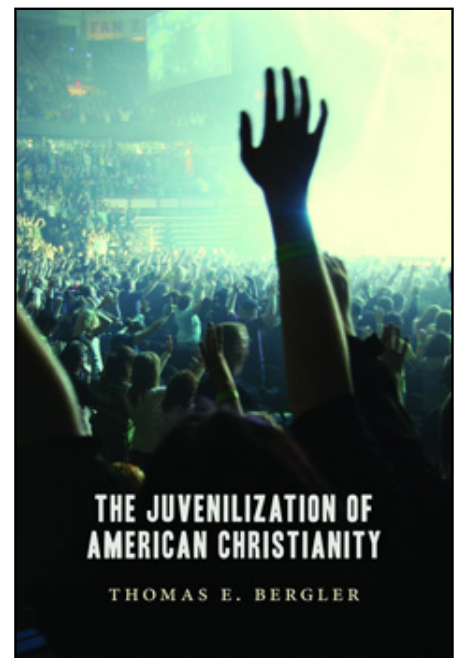
In 1930s and 1940s American Christians realized they weren't keeping their youth in the church.

Something had to be done. Young Life and Youth for Christ began as off-shoots of the Miracle Book Club at this time. They all developed approaches targeted specifically at adolescents. It was also in this era that youth culture was rising and preparing to take over as the premier culture of the Western world.

Dr. Tom Bergler in his recently published book, [The Juvenilization of American Christianity](#), traces the way youth ministries have both breathed new vitality into the major American church traditions and juvenilized them at the same time, resulting in widespread consumerism, spiritual immaturity, self-centeredness, and a shallow, feel-good faith.

Recognizing the power, the ways, and the means of youth culture is necessary if we are going to reach teens in the modern world. Hardly any are unaffected by it. However, leaving teens with a juvenile faith is hardly better than leaving them with a childish faith. Neither will serve them effectively as adults.

[The Juvenilization of the American Church](#) is the lead story in the





Tom Bergler served on the [University Christian Outreach](#) (UCO) staff during the 1980s in Lansing, Michigan, and in London. He is a frequent speaker at UCO's [Campus Outreach Academy](#).

Mike Shaughnessy is an elder in [The Servants of the Word](#) and the Director of [Kairos in North America](#). Kairos is an international federation of outreaches to high school, university and post university aged people. This article was first published in the February 2011 Issue of the [Kairos North American Youth Culture Newsletter](#).

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front end digger in Roger's backyard pool

“What Is a Front End Digger Doing in Our Pool?”

by Roger Foley

In the 7.1 magnitude earthquake of September 2010 which struck Christchurch, New Zealand, our swimming pool was damaged and since then has been unusable. Then the significantly more powerful February 2011 earthquake in Christchurch, which caused many deaths and ravaged the cluster and eastern suburbs, finished off the pool by spiraling nearly 20,000 litres of stagnant water several metres into the air, then when the water crashed down it sucked soil, rock and garden into the pool...

Month following month, the pool disintegrated into an unsightly and unhealthy deep green color with no possibility of seeing the bottom. I hammered the insurer repeatedly and advised that on measuring the water loss and replenishment rate, the average was 7,845 litres a week since last November. But still no action, until last week.

A window of encouragement

And then within four frenetic days – with trucks and diggers and land compacting machinery seemingly everywhere – the back end of the carport, also damaged in the earthquakes, was demolished and the pool was extracted and then the hole was backfilled with dirt. It was a job well done.

But that is not necessarily the end of concerns, because several hundred thousand litres of leaked water went somewhere! Take a look at the photograph. The pool damage is evident, but look at the wetness of the excavated soil. Take a look at the collapsed ground which slid into the pool taking the digger with it as soon as it moved close to the pool edge. It took much skill and five hours to extract the digger.

The repair of the significant damage done to our home could still be several years away, as with five or six others of our nineteen damaged homes in the cluster. But it did feel somewhat satisfying to see, at last, some progress on the pool. It was a window of encouragement.

Where did that come from?

This week we received news of the unexpected 5.3 magnitude earthquake that hit the area around Melbourne, Australia and my thoughts and prayer went immediately to our brothers and sisters in the Families for Christ – they would indeed be unnerved and wondering “where did that come from?” And our Wellington Branch people live right on top of what is reputed to be the “big fault-line” of New Zealand. And worldwide there are many of our communities vulnerable to severe disasters and devastating acts of nature. But we all have access to God. The best and perhaps only real preparation for our lives as we move through life is our relationship with the Lord.

And so Veronica and I have had a flicker of re-build activity right there in our garden. It is not much, but it is a start. But in a more significant way we have the assurance of the Lord as he spoke to our community gathering in June:

My ways are not your ways. I know that you have served me faithfully for thirty-three years, but I say to you this day that your work for me is only just beginning. It is only just beginning for all around this nation I have placed lights, lights, the Lamb of God Community – in cities and in provinces. I say this day that your work for me has only just begun. And for those of you who are young I say this work is for you too. And for those who are getting older I say to you this day that your strength is in me and not in yourself. I will give you strength. For days of darkness are coming on this land. Your work for me is only just beginning.



Roger Foley is the senior coordinator of the [Lamb of God Community](#). He and his wife Veronica live in Christchurch, New Zealand.

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Confessions of a Man with a Sick Identity

by Sam Williamson

My wife Carla almost died on our honeymoon. Traveling to Colorado for a two week vacation, we spent Sunday night in Iowa. The next morning Carla vomited, had diarrhea and a fever. We went to a doctor. He gave an antibiotic and told us to remain in town.

We treated Carla's symptoms. When she felt feverish, she took Tylenol and cold baths to reduce her temperature. But soon she felt worse, so I bought a thermometer. Her temperature was 104.9 degrees. I called the doctor. He said, "Get her to the hospital immediately."

Carla remained in the hospital five days. If we had waited to bring her in—the doctors said—she would have died. As it was, she barely survived.

(My brother's response to Carla's nausea and diarrhea was, "I told her not to kiss you!" Ah, family!)
My wife's life was saved by a finely calibrated thermometer. It drove us to the hospital. A finely calibrated understanding of the Law can drive us to God.

The Law?

I've been reading the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). In it, Jesus finely calibrates the demands of the Law (like, "You've heard it said don't murder; ... but I say to you ... whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire.").

Yikes!

I struggle with the deep demands of the Law because I don't want shame. But sensing "shame" can actually be useful. Shame reveals an identity that comes from behavior instead of from God's love. Shame is a symptom of our real problem: the love of God is not real enough in our hearts.

A legalist is not someone who keeps a bunch of petty rules (though many think so), nor is it someone who makes a bunch of petty rules (though many think so). A legalist is someone who gets an identity from the rules (whether they keep them or not).

Alas, that also means that I'm a legalist. At least occasionally.

A legalist can be proud, ashamed, or fearful. Proud legalists don't look at the depths of heart change that the Law speaks about; I sometimes say, "I'd never do that." Ashamed legalists see how they fall short of what the Law demonstrates; I myself can sometimes feel condemned in this way. Fearful legalists don't look at the Law at all; I have been known sometimes to hide behind biblical truths like, "I'm saved by faith not works," or "I have a new heart."

Symptoms vs. disease

The Law is a painting of how a Christ-changed heart will look when we let his word reach maturity in our heart. Think of how beautiful the world would be if everyone lived according to the Golden Rule ("Act toward others as you wish they'd act toward you," Matthew 7:12).

My wife Carla had a serious infection but she and I merely treated the feverish symptoms with Tylenol and cold baths. A thermometer finally drove us to treat the disease.

I tend to treat symptoms rather than the disease. If I'm ashamed, I quit reading the finally calibrated moral Law; or I work really hard to do better. But I'm not dealing with the disease.

If we respond to the Law with shame, fear or working really hard, let's treat those responses as symptoms – symptoms that we are still getting our identity from our behavior (our doing) rather than from resting in Christ's love (our being).

Joy

Jesus and Simon (a Pharisee) discussed a prostitute who was washing Jesus' feet. Jesus said that "she loved much because she had been forgiven much, while Simon loved little because he's been forgiven little (Luke 7:47 paraphrased).

A good Law thermometer will show us how far we fall short of the Law—but let's not stop there!

It also shows how much we are loved and forgiven. We can say, "Wow, I've never murdered, but I often think others are morons...and I've been forgiven for all those times! I'm much more loved and forgiven than I ever imagined."

Knowing the depth of our being forgiven brings love and joy. It creates a rich identity.

Like Carla and me on our honeymoon, let's let a finely calibrated thermometer drive us to the Doctor for a deep healing of our deepest identity.

Sam Williamson grew up in Detroit, Michigan, USA. He is the son of a Presbyterian pastor and grandson of missionaries to China. He moved to Ann Arbor, Michigan in 1975. He worked in London England from 1979 to 1982, helping to establish [Antioch](#), a member community of the Sword of the Spirit. After about twenty-five years as an executive at a software company in Ann Arbor he sensed God call him to something new. He left the software company in 2008 and now speaks at men's retreats, churches, and campus outreaches. He is married to Carla Williamson and they have four grown children and a grandson. He has a blog site, www.beliefsoftheheart.com, and can be reached at Sam@BeliefsoftheHeart.com.



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Love Beyond Measure

by Bernard of Clairvaux (1090 – 1153)

You wish me to tell you why and how God should be loved. My answer is that God himself is the reason why he is to be loved. As for how he is to be loved, there is to be no limit to that love...

...There are two reasons why God should be loved for his own sake: no one can be loved more righteously and no one can be loved with greater benefit... My answer to both questions is assuredly the same, for I can see no other reason for loving him than himself. So let us see first how he deserves our love.

How God is to be loved for his own sake

God certainly deserves a lot from us since he gave himself to us when we deserved it least (Galatians 1:4). Besides, what could he have given us better than himself? Hence when seeking why God should be loved, if one asks what right he has to be loved, the answer is that the main reason for loving him is, "He loved us first" (1 John 4:9-10). Surely he is worthy of being loved in return when one thinks of who loves, whom he loves, how much he loves. Is it not he whom every spirit acknowledges (1 John 4:2)? ... This divine love is sincere, for it is the love of one who does not seek his own advantage (1 Corinthians 13:5).

To whom is such love shown? It is written: "While we were still his enemies, he reconciled us to himself" (Romans 5:10). Thus God loved freely, and even his enemies. How much did he love? St. John answers that: "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son" (John 3:16). St Paul adds: "He did not spare his only Son, but delivered him up for us" (Romans 8:32). The Son also said of himself: "No one has greater love than he who lays down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

Thus the righteous one deserved to be loved by the wicked, the highest and omnipotent by the weak. Now someone says: “This is true for man, but it does not hold for the angels.” That is true because it was not necessary for the angels, for he who came to man’s help in time of need, kept the angels from such a need, and he who did not leave man in such a state because he loved him, out of an equal love gave the angels the grace not to fall into that state.

I think that they to whom this is clear see why God ought to be loved, that is, why he merits to be loved. If the infidels conceal these facts, God is always able to confound their ingratitude by his innumerable gifts which he manifestly places at man’s disposal. For, who else gives food to all who eat, sight to all who see, and air to all who breathe? It would be foolish to want to enumerate; what I have just said cannot be counted. It suffices to point out the chief ones: bread, sun, and air. I call them the chief gifts, not because they are better but because the body cannot live without them. Man’s nobler gifts – dignity, knowledge, and virtue – are found in the higher parts of his being, in his soul. Man’s dignity is his free will by which he is superior to the beasts and even dominates them. His knowledge is that by which he acknowledges that this dignity is in him, but that it is not of his own making. Virtue is that by which man seeks continuously and eagerly for his Maker and when he finds him, adheres to him with all his might.

- excerpted from *On Loving God*, Chapter 1

[Bernard of Clairvaux (1090 – 1153) was born of noble parentage. He became a Cistercian monk at the age of 22 and took with him thirty young men, including his brothers and uncles, to Cîteaux Abbey in France. Three years later he founded a new monastery at Clairvaux. This abbey became a center of the Cistercian order and a source of spiritual renewal throughout Europe.]

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The Rich Fool

“You Can’t Take It with You”

By Jeanne Kun

The parable... shows the pointlessness of greed. Possessions, even an abundance of possessions, cannot give us security; they can only give us an illusion of security. And that illusion can distract us from the true source of our security, God’s care for us. The folly of the rich farmer lay not in his having full barns, but in his believing that his full barns were all he needed.

– George Martin, *God’s Word Today*

The request that prompted Jesus to tell this parable might seem to be a rather innocent one. Someone in the crowd just wanted to receive his fair share of his family’s possessions. But to Jesus, the man’s concern with money betrayed the fact that he had missed the point – he had focused his attention on the things of this world rather than storing up treasures in the kingdom of God.

So Jesus distanced himself from this man’s personal concerns and proceeded to tell a story about a man with so much earthly wealth that he thought his future was secured. The rich landowner had “ample goods for many years,” so why not “relax, eat, drink, [and] be merry”? It’s easy to

Luke 12:13-21

13 Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.” 14 But he said to him, “Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?” 15 And he said to them, “Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.” 16 Then he told them a parable: “The land of a rich man produced abundantly. 17 And he thought to himself, ‘What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?’ 18 Then he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.’ 20 But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ 21 So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God.”

In the Spotlight

The Insatiable Desire for More

Pleonexia is the Greek word for “greediness” or “covetousness.” It carries overtones of an insatiable desire for more and more. The verb form is commonly used to describe the actions of those who try to take advantage of others or strive ambitiously for gain, and the adjective is descriptive of one who never has enough.

Jesus named *pleonexia*, or avarice, one of the evils that come from within the heart and defile a person (Mark 7:21-23). St. Paul included it among the characteristics of the ungodly and wicked (Romans 1:29) and of those who are alienated from God by their hardness of heart (Ephesians 4:19).

As Christians who have been buried with Christ in baptism and raised up with him, we are to “put to death” in ourselves “whatever is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed – *pleonexia* – (which is idolatry)” (Colossians 3:5)

imagine this man at his leisure, enjoying the fruits of his labors.

So why is this man a fool? Don't we all take measures to provide for our future security? The problem with the man in the parable is that he didn't have his priorities straight. The wealthy man put all his trust in his possessions instead of putting his trust in God. He sought happiness and security by stockpiling his wealth, not even thinking of sharing it with others. We know from his monologue that he was self-centered – the personal pronoun “I” appears six times and the possessive pronoun “my” five times – so the possibility of sharing his abundance with others apparently never even crossed his mind. He didn't thank God for his prosperity, nor did he seek advice from anyone about how to put his surplus to good use. His only thought was to build a bigger barn in which to store his wealth for his own future. He was so preoccupied with his possessions that he idolized them, letting them usurp God's rightful place in his life.

Suddenly, when the man was confronted with his imminent death, the senselessness of his actions was made plain to him. God himself says: “You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?” (Luke 12:20).

The wealthy landowner's actions and his perspective on life were based on a set of falsehoods – which is why he was called a fool. How easy it is to deceive ourselves just as this rich fool did. We're susceptible to the same all-too-human tendencies that he was, and our vision can be just as short sighted and distorted. We try to control our own destiny, when it is God who has ultimate control. Perhaps we base our security in riches and things we can see, forgetting that we can only be secure in God. Or, focused on our own well-being and interests, we neglect the needs of our neighbor. We forget that all we have comes from God – it's not really ours. We mistakenly live for the present, giving no thought to securing our eternal future.

The parable of the rich fool is another of Jesus' pointed and disquieting reminders that we are not to invest ourselves in the perishable riches of earth, but rather in the enduring riches of heaven, that will gain us eternal interest (Luke 12:21, 33). When we perceive the truth about God and the fullness of life that he offers us, we'll be eager to be “rich toward God” (12:21). “For where [our] treasure is, there

Understand!

1. Why do you think Jesus refused to judge the dispute between two brothers about their inheritance? What does the parable indicate about how God judges people like these brothers?
2. Jesus said, “One's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions” (Luke 12:15). According to his parable, in what should our life consist?
3. The Old Testament describes a fool as one who lives as though God does not exist (Psalm 14:1; 53:1). In what ways did the rich man forget about God or act like he did not exist?
4. In concrete terms, what do you think it means to “store up treasures” for ourselves (Luke 12:21)? To be “rich toward God”?
5. According to Jesus' words in Luke 12:22-34, which immediately follow this parable, we should trust in our heavenly Father to meet our material needs. How does his teaching build on the message of the parable?

Grow!

1. What forms of greed do you recognize in your life? Desire to acquire things for their own sake? Selfish attachment to your possessions? Hoarding? How can you guard against such attitudes and practices?
2. If you find yourself at times basing your security on material goods, income, or achievements, why do you think this is the case? What would help you trust less in worldly things and more in God?
3. In what ways does a preoccupation with satisfying our material needs keep us from serving God and his people? What might help

[our] heart will be also” (Matthew 6:21; Luke 12:34).

In the Spotlight

Love for the poor is incompatible with immoderate love of riches or their selfish use. (2445)

The tenth commandment [“You shall not covet... anything that is your neighbor’s”] forbids greed and the desire to amass earthly goods without limit. It forbids avarice arising from a passion for riches and their attendant power. (2536)

The Lord grieves over the rich, because they find their consolation in the abundance of goods. (2547)

Desire for true happiness frees man from his immoderate attachment to the goods of this world so that he can find his fulfillment in the vision and beatitude of God. (2548)

— From the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

In the Spotlight

Eye of Evil, Eye of Envy

“Are you envious because I am generous?” the landowner asked the grumblers. The literal translation of the original Greek of Matthew’s gospel would be, “Is your eye evil because I am good?”

This “evil eye” is the eye of envyn in Hebrew by the Jewish sage Ben Sira around 200 B.C., was later translated into Greek by the author’s grandson. A passage from this Greek translation reads, “The eye of the greedy person is not satisfied with his share..... An evil eye is envious over bread, and it is lacking on his table” (Sirach 14:9-10). A similar expression equating the eye with greed, avarice, and envy was used again by Ben Sira in Sirach 31:13. Jesus refers to the state of the “eye” as healthy or unhealthy, calling it the lamp that brings light or darkness to the rest of the body (Matthew 6:22-23).

In the Spotlight

Gifts of Love

In Calcutta, we didn’t have sugar; and a little Hindu child, four years old, he heard Mother Teresa has no sugar. And he went home and he told his parents: “I will not eat sugar for three days. I will give my sugar to Mother Teresa.”

you increase your focus on the values of God’s kingdom and on eternal life?

4. Make a list of the qualities you think are necessary to be a good and prudent steward of God’s gifts. Which of those qualities would you like to grow in?

5. What have you learned about God and what is important to him from this parable? About yourself and what is important to you?



Reflect!

1. *Still yourself and quietly meditate a while on the inevitability of your death. In this light, are there any ways that you should change how you relate to status, possessions, and material goods?*

2. *Reflect on the following passages to deepen your insight into the parable you have just studied:*

[Job] said: “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there; the LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.” (Job 1:21)

*All day long the wicked covet,
but the righteous give and do not hold back.
(Proverbs 21:26)*

Set your minds on things that are above, not on

After three days, the parents brought the child to our house. In his hand he had a little bottle of sugar.... the sugar of a little child. He could scarcely pronounce my name, but he knew he loved a great love because he loved until it hurt. It hurt him to give up sugar for three days. But that little child taught me that to be able to love a great love, it is not how much we give but how much loving is put in the giving.

– Mother Teresa of Calcutta, *Respect Life*
In the Words of Mother Teresa of Calcutta

Sometime back two young people came to our house and they gave me lots, lots of money. And I said, “Where, where did you get so much money?” And they said, “Two days ago we got married, and before marriage we decided we will buy no wedding clothes, we will have no wedding feast. We will give you the money.” For a Hindu family that’s a big, big, big sacrifice because wedding day is one of the biggest days in their life. And again I offered, “Why, why did you do that?” And they said, “We love each other so much that we wanted to share the joy of loving with the people you serve, and we experience the joy of loving.”

– Mother Teresa of Calcutta, *Love:*
A Fruit Always in Season

Excerpted from [Treasures Uncovered: The Parables of Jesus](#), by Jeanne Kun ([The Word Among Us Press](#), © 2005). Used with permission. This book can be ordered [online](#).

Jeanne Kun is President of [Bethany Association](#) and a senior woman leader in the [Word of Life Community](#), Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA.

things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.

Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry). (Colossians 3:2-5)

There is great gain in godliness combined with contentment; for we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it; but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains. (1 Timothy 6:6-10)

As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty, or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but rather on God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life. (1 Timothy 6:17-19)

Act!

Simplify your life! Are you “storing up” things unnecessarily? Take some time this week to begin to sort through your clothing, household goods, and other possessions. Donate what you don’t need or aren’t making use of to a charitable organization so that others will be able to benefit from these items.

If this is a big step for you to take, begin slowly and ask God to guide you.



Koinonia students, gappers, and leaders on retreat together

Surprised by Zeal

by Paul Michael Graham, Koinonia Mission Leader

As seems to be the norm for [Koinonia](#), we hit the ground running this year, and where we ran unsteadily, the Lord secured our steps. The plan at the beginning of term was to gather a small group of students who could, as they came closer to Christ over the course of the year, grow into positions of service and leadership in the areas of discipleship, evangelism and community. Instead, the Lord brought to Koinonia a core of already zealous disciples, both new students and students from previous years, who were eager to claim a place in the mission of building a culture-impacting community where people can encounter the Lord.

The result? The level of people feeling a sense of belonging to Koinonia has soared. “Reload,” our renamed, revamped, regular prayer event, has changed in accordance with what the students want to see done in that time together. Students are competing with Kairos gapers, volunteer staff workers who moved to London from other places for a year of service, to see who can bring more people to events. When 40 people came together to celebrate the end of term, it was the students who organised and ran the entire party. And they love it. One student put it like this: Koinonia is what the whole church should be like.

It is a characteristic of our generation that, even in a profoundly cynical era, young people’s response to any phenomenon depends on how involved they can be in sculpting it; witness open source software and wikis, the

Occupy movement, and other grassroots political activity. This is not news to a God who has for millenia been equipping and entrusting responsibility to those who are “only youths,” and I am inspired to see brothers and sisters stepping up, for such a time as this.



A Joyful Weekend Retreat for Koinonia

by Camille Chippewa

Last January some 40 university students and staff workers for Koinonia held a weekend retreat at Buckden Towers, an historic castle dating back to the time of Henry VIII, and located 50 miles north of London, UK.

Our lives as Christians are often woven with paradoxes. For instance, one generally wouldn't think a group of forty university students would discover the immense and deep joy of the Lord in the very castle where Catherine of Aragon, first wife of Henry VIII, was held under house arrest between 1533-34. The house of oppression became a house of praise for us.

Joy was tangible the whole weekend. From the start of the retreat on Friday to when the weekend ended, the air was filled with an infectious laughter. If a stranger walked into the retreat, he or she might think that the group had known each other their whole lives, not a handful of days. The provision of the Lord was evident in the relationships formed, in the ease and comfort that they reflected. The worship throughout the weekend had an ease and abandon not commonly found among strangers.

Imagine 40 people with a common vision gathered together in one room. Now imagine 40 people engaging in worship of the living God, uniting their purpose and voice to rejoice in the Lord. Joyous worship abounded over the weekend. Saturday night was set aside for a prayer meeting. Prior to the meeting Koinonia leader PM Graham gave a talk on worship and rejoicing in the Lord. The worship was powerful. The overwhelming presence of the Lord inspired awe, fear, joy and exultation.

Lives were changed. Like the voice of God coming in a whisper, the joy and the presence of the Lord crept in to everybody's lives. There weren't any thunderclaps or lightning bolts, nor were there torrential tears, but the Lord was clearly present. God's love, God's joy were as real and tangible as the delicious food that was prepared over the course of the weekend, and similarly fueled the students.

The Lord was truly at work. Between tiredness, GAP years, exams, or whatever else a 20-something could be going through, the Lord worked, because that's what the Lord does. He works in us and actively participates in the adventures that are our lives.

See next > [How I Found Christian Community at University of London](#), by Lucy Trewinnard

Also see > [A Showering of God's Favor and Faithfulness](#), by Mark Jordan, Koinonia Director

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Lucy (center) at a Koinonia weekend retreat with friends

How I Found Christian Community at the University of London

by Lucy Trewinnard

When I first moved to London in September 2011 to study theology at Heythrop College at the University of London, I began to search for Christian Union, a popular university Christian student group. Unable to find a Christian Union group at my college, it was purely by chance that I stumbled upon Koinonia, an ecumenical Christian community outreach to university students in London. I decided to settle for this ecumenical group. What I found, thankfully, was so much more than I was expecting.

Koinonia was providing Christian fellowship for students unlike anything I've seen before. It felt more like a family. Looking back more than half way through my first year, it's weird to actually acknowledge how much impact Koinonia has had on my student life. What was originally just a once-a-week commitment to meet with Koinonia to try and keep my mom happy that I had found a Christian student group turned into something I look forward to.

It has been great to have met other students, gappers, and leaders through Koinonia, and it has provided a place where I can freely worship and pray. The charismatic set up is not something that is unusual to me at all, but doing it ecumenically is, and I think that these are key things why koinonia works so well for me. Despite our denominational differences, our own situations and diverse nationalities, we're each bound together in one God. It's that, and going to the pub after the prayer sessions, which won me over.

I have benefited so much from being part of Koinonia. I've met some of the best people I know in London and I

have gained a network of support as well. God has placed this community and what it stands for on my heart. More than anything I'm excited for what's to come for Koinonia in the upcoming academic year and for my part in it.

A Showering of God's Favor and Faithfulness

by Mark Jordan, Director for Koinonia

One of my favourite lines in the Scripture, recorded in Chapter 6 of John's Gospel, comes from Philip, one of the twelve Apostles of Jesus. When thousands of people had gathered in a remote place in Galilee to see Jesus, Jesus turned to Philip and asked him where they could buy bread to feed this multitude of people who had come to hear him speak.

Without a moment's hesitation Philip, rather than answer Jesus' question, instead announced that "two hundred denarii (around 8 months wages) would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little. How did Philip reach his calculation so quickly? It strikes me that Philip had already been wondering where the people would get food from, and perhaps he had already done calculations in his head about how much it would cost and where they would get money from and whether the apostles could afford to pay. His conclusion was that it was impossible. So when Jesus asks him this question Philip shoots out a pre-formulated conclusion.

Of course, we see as the story goes on that what Philip has not calculated on is the power of the Almighty God. And I think the main reason that Philip makes me smile is that I see something of myself in him.

I love new ideas and plans and strategies and projections and big, audacious goals. But it can be easy to lose yourself in them. Like Philip I need to be brought back to the power of the Almighty God. The last six months of life in [Koinonia](#) have been full of ideas and strategies and goals, but they've also been full of surprises and laughter at what we see God doing and full of joy at seeing the life he brings into our midst.

God turned the tables on our plans for Koinonia this year. We were thinking buckets and God was thinking rivers. We were thinking the rain was coming and God was raising the water table.

I get a bit more perspective now on university outreach work as my work and life have taken on more of a British Isles focus with connection and involvement with university groups in Glasgow, Belfast and Dublin. It's clear to me that we in Koinonia experience a real showering of God's favor and faithfulness as we see the life he brings into our midst among students in Central London. This little group of students, staff and volunteers are building Christian community, sharing the gospel and impacting people from all around the world.

Despite my best projections and calculations I don't think I could have foreseen some of the things that God has done. We are highly blessed to see students coming to faith for the first time, and students who are making missionary commitments in Koinonia. Thank the Lord, we're not dependant on my calculations.

See next > [Surprised by Zeal, by PM Graham, Kairos Mission Leader](#)
and also > [A Joyful Weekend Retreat for Koinonia](#)

LIVING BULWARK sources of strength and renewal for Christian life and mission

July 2012 - Vol. 61



Elyssa (front center) at a Koinonia weekend retreat with friends

“Here I am Lord, send me wherever you want”

by Elyssa Fawaz

Last year, when I looked back on my life, and saw the great things God had done for me, I said to him: “Here I am Lord, send me wherever you want.” I wanted to do something for him in return, I wanted to change the world, I wanted to make a difference in people’s lives, and I wanted to spread the good news.

ME... ME... ME... ME...

It wasn’t very long after the beginning of my Kairos GAP year that God made it clear that it wasn’t at all about me doing things for him, but him loving me and being faithful to the promises of making me new!

It was indeed a decision I had made, but firstly, I sensed a personal invitation from him at this time, to know more of his love, to draw near to him, and to be his warrior. I was so surprised at how much he was concerned for and interested in me. He wanted to shape me into his disciple – a child that can follow him and build his kingdom alongside him.

Bit by bit, throughout the Kairos GAP year, the Lord worked to change me and to reveal for me a new beginning.

The change started with honesty

When I was searching to be super together and super holy both with people and with God, God reminded me that he already knew me, that my life does not have to be complicated, and more, it does not have to be hidden. As I became

more true to myself and to the people around me, great Christ-centred relationships were formed and the students I was meeting up with were more open to listening to God's word. With simple and honest prayer I began to tell the Lord what was really on my heart, and not what I wished would be on my heart. This helped me to open the door to what was really inside my heart and for him to transform what needed to be transformed.

The change also started with wanting

A distinction has been made this year between *wanting* to be a disciple and being capable of being one. More importantly a third phase came in-between: there was a time of sitting down and considering whether I could do what God wanted me to do. This period is the one I really struggle with, because it involves waiting, it involves still doing well what I was enthusiastic about at the beginning despite the loss of the enthusiasm. It involves being patient and still, and letting God take the lead.

I discovered also that maturity is inevitable in our discipleship journey, and that God wants us to use our intelligence and our mental capacities. When I began the gap year my heart desired to serve but my mind was switched off. And then I realized that one's my mind is very useful for pressing on in zeal. I began to understand that my mind was needed for decision-making and for continuing to press on toward the goal, especially when the excitement goes away. Discipline, organization, responsibility and change of bad habits have started to be practiced thanks to the wisdom God was offering me!

The transformation started with expecting

God had invited me for the Kairos GAP year in London one month before the GAP program started, and had put the desire in my heart to set a year apart for him. But with no prior planning, I had no money, no time, and no language abilities. I also had to face leaving my parents and my friends, let go of the plans I had for myself and go to the unknown. On a practical level, I felt that God would have to make it happen if the doors were to open. This is how I started to expect big, impossible things from him. And here I am, already at the end of my Kairos GAP year looking back and seeing how God was providing financially every time I was in need, how he managed my time, how my English improved a lot, and how it seemed to improve dramatically every time I was talking about him to students! God used this as an exercise to teach me that I can be absolutely certain that he is able to turn the impossible into the possible, and to know that faith is a gift that has to be exercised for it to take affect. This is how expecting miracles became more normal and natural for me. Certain spiritual gifts that I had heard about or read about in the Bible, were granted to me when I asked for them in faith! Confidently expecting help from God, allowed me to see miracles happening in the lives of people around me. More importantly I was able to see God at work as I witnessed the transformed life of the students, my fellow gapers, and myself. There are many many stories to tell! I experienced incredible love and power from the Lord by just opening up, expecting and accepting.

It started with love

I could see myself giving a lot, and then at some point measuring what I got back, starting to keep score. In trying to love others in all circumstances – especially when serving and giving to others was not reciprocated or was taken for granted – I was very disappointed that my own needs were not being met! When I had reached the limit of my own love, I cried for help and God was very quick to open my eyes, and to show me that love that expects something in return is a human being's love. It comes to an end and cannot give any more because it needs God's unconditional love to replace it. I learned that the "sitting down" and "waiting" for God to act – not previously my favourite approach – became the one I liked best because I could receive the love (for him and for others) which springs from him first loving me.

The change started with the Lord adding color

In this journey of freedom, God dealt with a lot of what was in black and white in me of weaknesses, of hidden desires, of wrong motivations – and colored them in vivid colors so I could see them, to admit them and offer them

to him. As you can see from all the above, he has had to deal with the pride in me, and has worked to turn me into a disciple that he can use and that he can count on!

It all started by saying yes to putting myself in a place where I could receive more of God's grace in such a time like this.

And today, the Kairos Gap year finishes as it had started by me saying now with much great confidence, zeal, motivation, and joy: "Here I am Lord, send me wherever you want."



Elyssa Fawaz is from Lebanon. She has been an active member of University Christian Outreach in Beirut since 2008. She graduated in 2011 with a Masters in Environmental Engineering.

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Students and Gappers at the January Koinonia weekend retreat

Digging Deeper and Growing Stronger in Faith

by Marie-Sophie Vanderstuyft

Five more days and my Kairos GAP year in London will be over. The year has gone so quickly!

I started this year with a lot of hope. I had seen some people leave on gap years and come back different people, changed for the better, and I hoped something like that would happen to me, too. Back home, I had tried to live a good life, but some of those old habits seemed just too stubborn.

Being in London was very different from what I expected. I thought of it as a "sabbatical" i.e. a peaceful, restful year of course filled with service and teaching, but still peaceful and restful. It wasn't.

In London this year we saw the start of something new for gappers – a "mission school." It involved four mornings a week of training. In addition to that, we worked for Koinonia, the local outreach to university students, and we served the teenagers of our host community, Antioch, we lent a hand serving practically in different family homes, and we lived in household. Needless to say we did not get bored.

But in this midst of this seemingly crazy schedule, God was at work. And he worked hard. I have seen miracles happen this year. In Koinonia, in the people around me, and in myself. Looking back, I cannot but thank the Lord for this opportunity to dig deeper and build stronger foundations.

Let me tell you a little more about those miracles.

We started the year with fewer than 10 people in Koinonia. Fresher's week, when new students get to meet representatives of the various student groups on campus, went very well for Koinonia. So by November there were 18 committed people in Koinonia, including 12 students. At the end of the academic year some of the events we hosted brought together more than 30 people at a time, and we were regularly following up with around 50 students.

We knew it wasn't because any of us were born sales people, nor because Koinonia was offering students so much fun. It was clearly God working, in adding to our numbers. We saw this as a sign of God's word to Antioch to be prepared to collect a harvest people hungry for God. Now we saw it happening in our midst.

I also witnessed miracles in people around me. I saw people's attitudes change 180°, I saw people decide to choose for Christ and touched by the Holy Spirit. I saw people who had a problem with their hearing being prayed over and being able to hear clearly once again.

One of our students came to a morning meeting, not looking very happy. He said one of his teeth was causing him a lot of pain. So one of us asked if we could pray over him. The student, a very rational thinker, did not believe it would heal him, but said yes out of politeness (maybe a little bit of hope, too?). When the prayer was finished, the student looked very surprised. The pain had left completely. I can testify that he was glowing for the rest of the morning.

And miracles in myself.

After 5 years of studying medicine, my mind had been brainwashed. Everything that happens around me has to have a rational, logical, scientific reason. A couple of months after I started my time in London, Antioch Community organised a healing-service. About 400 people attended that evening. Many people asked prayers for healing, and people testified that they experienced God healing them. I asked some people to pray over me, but I didn't experience any healing. I began to think to myself, I really hope those people who claim to be healed of cancer, of hearing loss, of blindness,... are going to check this with a real doctor. I had no faith this kind of things could happen and definitely not to me.

A few weeks later, the community organised a 'power-weekend' for people in the community who wanted to experience more of the Holy Spirit and his gifts and fruits. I went and asked for more faith, a little crack in that wall of logical, down to earth rationality around me. The person who prayed over me started to pray for more freedom for my mind, which was an interesting, a new thought for me. But, during that prayer I started to realise how amazingly great God is, how much more he has for us, how small this little worldview of mine was and how 'logical' it is for God to intervene in our world in such a transcendent way.

It was a very freeing experience, and during the year I could see my faith grow more and more. I am very thankful for that grace and I find myself impatient to see what else it will lead to. This growth in faith had an impact on my prayer life, on my greater understanding of the importance of the charismatic gift of speaking in tongues and on trusting that God will provide and protect, and that he will do miracles.

God really provided what I needed this year: being put in London, and in a strong community with excellent leaders and great fellow gappers, but also financially, emotionally and physically.

This is just a fraction of what God has done with me this year, and I am certain He will continue showing me more and more things that have changed over these last months. This Kairos GAP year will be a strong foundation to build

the rest of my life on. The motto “A year set apart for a life set apart” is very true. I am ready to go back now and use all these new experiences, examples, ideas and calls in order to see His kingdom grow.

Thanks to everyone who made this happen.



Marie-Sophie Vanderstuyft is originally from Belgium and is a member of the Jerusalem community in Brussels. She finished her 5th year of medicine at the Catholic University of Leuven and participated this past year in the Kairos GAP program in London with Koinonia, a Christian outreach to university students.

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UCO Asian Outreach group sharing a meal together

Learning to Plant

A personal reflection on my Kairos GAP year of service

by Rebecca DePoe

I moved to Ann Arbor, Michigan in the autumn of 2011 to do a Kairos GAP year of service with the [Ann Arbor University Christian Outreach](#) (UCO) chapter. I had previously been involved with the UCO chapter at the University of Pittsburgh, so I was looking forward to continuing that kind of service in Ann Arbor as part of my Kairos GAP year helping other people come to know the Lord. And I was asked to serve with UCO's Asian outreach program. I enjoyed my involvement with the staff and getting to meet Asian students. A key lesson for me occurred in January of this year. The UCO staff had decided to do a six-week Life in the Spirit course, referred to colloquially as Life in the Spirit Fridays (LSF) beginning in mid-January, and I was asked to serve as a discussion group leader for any Asian women who might attend.

I was pretty excited. Finally, the opportunity to serve the Lord doing something I felt I was already good at: listening to women share about their experiences, and praying with them to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. I spent most of December encouraging Asian women already in contact with UCO to attend the course. I was confident that the Lord was going to use me to build his kingdom, if only I worked hard enough.

But not a single woman I had contacted came to the first session of the course. I was pretty hurt, because I took their lack of attendance personally. At course team meeting after that first session, I asked my supervisor what I had done wrong. He simply asked if I had spent any time the previous week interceding for the course. I blushed and sheepishly admitted that I had not. He suggested that I take an hour to pray and seek the Lord's guidance before following up with the women I had invited.

That evening, as I prayed, the Lord led me to a passage from 1 Corinthians 3: 5-7 that altered my attitude about serving in that Life in the Spirit course as well as my whole my GAP year. Paul writes:

What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe - as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.

I realized in reading the passage that what I had done wrong was to trust in myself rather than relying on the Lord. I did not trust that the Lord would bring the women to the course, so I tried to compensate with get-togethers over coffee, Facebook messages, and clever e-mails.

Until the course, I had fought hard to maintain control over my work. Since the GAP year was such an experience of relinquishing control over all other areas of my life and giving them to the Lord, I clung tightly to controlling this particular area of my service. Interceding for the course showed me that my work was not my own, but the Lord's, and I had to offer this area over to him. I began to pray that these women would personally desire to know the Lord Jesus Christ even if they would never attend the course.



Rebecca (right center) and Shuyi at a UCO event

A couple of days later Shuyi, one of the women I had invited to the course, agreed to attend. Over the next several weeks, she learned about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and charismatic worship. We had rich discussions together on topics such as "How do you know God exists?" and "What is the difference between faith and luck?" At the final night of the course, at her request, we prayed for her to accept Jesus Christ as her Lord and Savior. Praying with her was definitely a highlight of my GAP year.

Since the course, the Lord has given me a lot of freedom about my control issues. He has taught me the importance of coming before him each morning in prayer and offering him my day. Learning to trust in the Lord has strengthened my relationships with my housemates, supervisors, and co-workers. Trusting in the Lord also made me more patient, compassionate, and willing to accept authority. Most importantly, learning to trust the Lord as my Master has made me a better servant.

[Rebecca DePoe, who hails from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, comes from a Presbyterian background. She graduated from the University of Pittsburgh in 2011 with a degree in history and literature. In the autumn of 2012 she will be returning to Pittsburgh to continue to serve the

Lord on staff with UCO at the University of Pittsburgh.]

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Dr. Solecki in the operating room

The Bone Surgeon

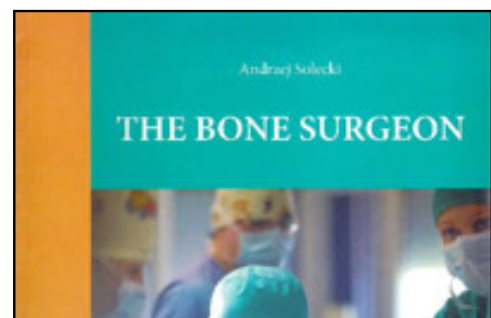
A personal story of a life-changing revolution

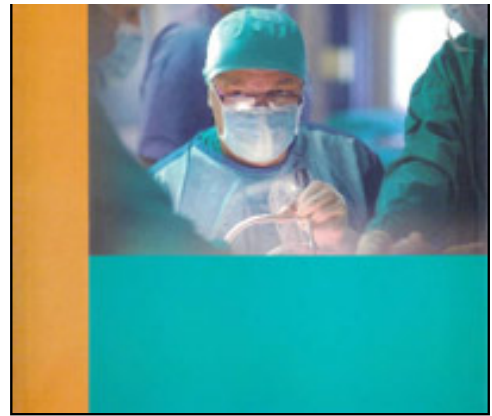
Part I

by Andrzej Solecki

Andrzej Solecki, M.D. is an experienced specialist in orthopedic trauma. Prior to his medical practice, he has worked as a carpenter, car mechanic and caretaker of a disco and a bowling alley in Vienna. He has had seasonal jobs at a touring funfair in Sweden and in vineyards in different parts of Europe. For a short period of time, he was president of the board in a kitchen furniture plant. He founded the Sunbeam Enterprise, which imported second-hand windows from Germany. He initiated The Teetotalers' Winter Sports Tournament in Kamesznica, southern Poland.

In the early 1990s he became one of the founders and leaders of a charismatic Catholic community, [City on a Hill](#), which originated from the Polish charismatic renewal.





Finally, he is one of the founders and chairman of St Luke's Hospital in Bielsko-Bia?a, which is a medical centre promoting high professional standards and Christian ethics.

He is married and has two children. When he is not working, he enjoys canoeing, motorcycling and skiing.

The Bone Surgeon, published in Polish and English (c) July 2011, is his literary debut. The author openly shares his personal experience of a life-changing revolution in his system of values. It is a story of an individual's search for truth at the time of political transformations in Poland at the end of the 20th century.

Part 1 of *The Bone Surgeon* is reprinted with permission. Part 2 will follow in next month's issue of Living Bulwark.

[Click on links below to read separate chapters.](#)

[Chapter 1](#) [The Tools](#)

[Chapter 2](#) [Communism and the Trouble with Grazyna](#)

[Chapter 3](#) [Intuition and Resuscitation](#)

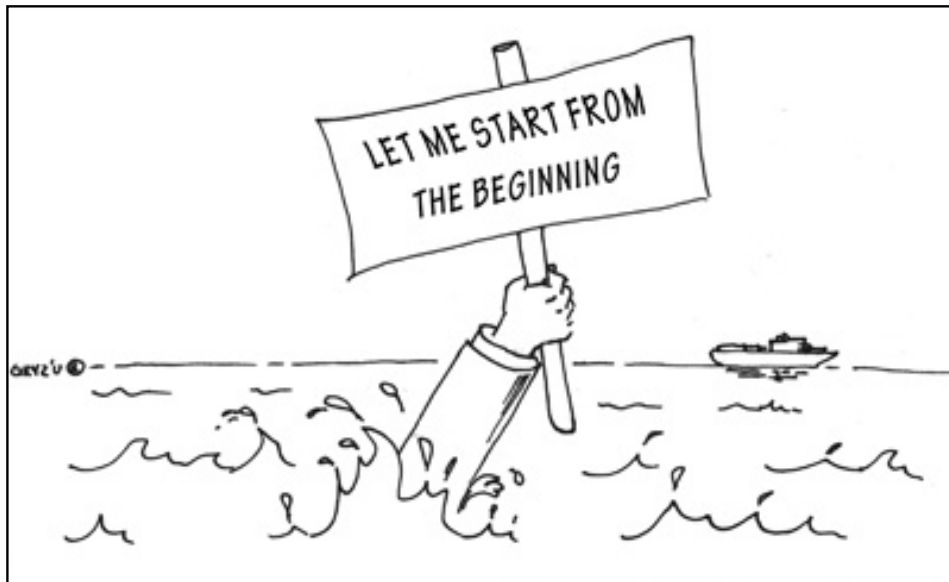
[Chapter 4](#) [Post-Wedding Bash](#)

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The Bone Surgeon: A personal story of a life-changing revolution
by Andrzej Solecki



illustrations by Grzegorz Grys

Introduction

There is a comic strip by a well-known Polish cartoonist that I keep remembering. It presents trivial, seemingly unconnected events from the life of one person. Each of the drawings is provided with a date and a caption, such as: "April 4, 1976: got spattered by a car", "November 3, 1982: slammed my finger with a hammer", "May 10, 1986: got completely stoned", etc. The last picture explains the connection between the events. The character is in the water, waving his hands desperately. The bubble above his head says: "I was drowning. My whole life flashed before my eyes."

My life has probably been as exciting as the one in the comic strip, maybe with the exception of several significant events; like the fall of Communism; starting a family and a few meaningful encounters and conversations. However, I still see it as an adventure, which I owe solely to the unusual people whom I met along the way. There was one Extraordinary Person, who left a very special mark...



Chapter 1: The Tools

It was 1987. I came back to work after a two-week holiday in Yugoslavia. I had an impressive tan, which made me stand out among my colleagues. It was noticeable for three reasons. First, in those days very few Poles travelled to the warm countries. Second, the white medical coveralls contrasted splendidly with my tanned skin. Third, my position in the professional hierarchy was rather low; a junior assistant with a short working experience and a small salary. I was therefore not too surprised by the question, 'So how much did this tan cost you?', dropped casually by a fellow surgeon during a morning visit. I really didn't want to go into the details of how my wife's ingenuity and resourcefulness made our holiday possible. The vacation had cost us a Zenit camera, a used gas bottle, a two-ring gas cooker, my father-in-law's four old suits, two brand new vacuum flasks, two sleeping bags and a camping set of four chairs and a table. Yugoslavians would queue in front of our tent to buy those goods. Due to the complexity of the problem, I thought it best to leave the question unanswered.

Yugoslavia, which did not yet see the tragic and fratricidal war coming, appeared to me as paradise on Earth. Especially when compared with the dullness and hopelessness of the Polish People's Republic.

One sunny day I was sitting on a rocky beach and chatting with a Pole, whom I met on the campsite. He might have been one or two years younger than me.

'What do you do for a living?', he asked.

'I will name some of the tools that I use at work and you try to guess my profession.'

'Sounds interesting.'

'A hammer and a chisel...', I began.

'A sculptor?'

'No.'

'A carpenter?'

'No.'

'Not a carpenter? Go on, then.'

'A screwdriver, forceps, and a drill...'

'A lock smith?'

'No.'

'An electrician?'

'No, I'm not an electrician.'

'Go on.'

'Needles and threads', I added, just to make it a little bit harder for him. He got confused.

'Why don't you tell me what material you work with?'

'Well, it's mainly skin and bones', I replied truthfully.

'I know!', he exclaimed triumphantly. 'Craftwork!'

'Close, but not quite there.'

I finally had to explain to him that I was a bone surgeon. Then I was asked a revenge riddle about my fellow camper's job, which I also failed to guess. His profession was connected with extreme sports, huge risk and car racing... he was an ambulance driver.

So how do you become a bone surgeon? It probably begins with a vocation to be a doctor, then there comes the passion for a particular specialty. Well, my story was slightly different. I could probably say that I was prompted to choose my career by the government of the People's Poland. In the course of my studies, I was repeatedly haunted by doubts concerning my choice of profession. I experienced a number of vocational crises, which increased proportionally to the amount of alcohol that I was consuming rather too frequently at that time. I didn't feel comfortable in the company of medical students; I thought that they took their lives and their future far too seriously. My 'party gang' were three students from The Technical University of Kraków: my old school friend, Kuba and two indigenous residents of Kraków, Jasiak and "Little" Jurek.

As I was going through one of my vocational crises, a great opportunity came my way. Thanks to some family connections, I had a chance to find a job and to settle in Norway.

Drilling platforms on the North Sea; here I come! Behold a new life! When I earn enough money, I will buy a recording studio and will earn a living by making my own music and selling millions of copies of my albums.

All I needed was a passport...

And how could you get a passport back in 1976?

You had to fill in two enormous sheets of paper, substantiate the reasons for your trip and present an invitation from Western Europe. You also needed to submit 'a permit' from a workplace or a university and a few other documents. Then, you had to queue your way to the headquarters of the Citizens' Militia. After a month-long, thorough analysis of the citizen's life, the People's Government would either appoint the date of issuing the passport, or turn down the application. Students had their best chances of going abroad during their summer holidays, as the People's Government was highly supportive of young people who wanted to see the world, preferably as part of the Polish Socialist Youth Union. Private invitations also worked most of the time.

I had two options: I could either wait eight months until the summer (which was an eternity), or I could try to get the invitation and present a convincing justification for my trip, which was more risky, but worth giving it my best shot. I managed to get an invitation from West Germany and then I had to lie about the reason to leave in the middle of the academic year. I can't remember if I came up with a wedding or a funeral that I had to attend in West Germany, but it worked – I got the dean's stamp! I submitted my passport application in Nowy Targ, the nearest Militia Headquarters to my home village of Rabka. After about a month, I was on my way to Nowy Targ to receive the passport. When the 'blue bus' was crossing the Rdzawka River, I gazed up at the mountains and said goodbye. Then I thought about my medical career and said goodbye to that too, only with no regret. Two hours later, I was on a similar blue bus, heading in the opposite direction. I gazed at the mountains and said 'hello again'. My application had been turned down! My world had ended!

Drilling platforms—'goodbye', Medical Academy—'I'm back.' It took me several days to recover from my disappointment in the company of my faithful friends from The Technical University. Eventually, the crisis passed and I continued studying medicine.

Could the People's Government have known what was best for me?

My wavering vocation was finally solidified by my wedding vows to a medical student, Julitta and by the birth of our son Wojtek. We both wanted to settle in Western Europe after graduating from the academy, which made the choice of specialty obvious for me; it would be anaesthesiology. A degree in that field could easily be granted recognition abroad and there were a lot of jobs for anaesthesiologists in Western Europe. I started working at a Children's Intensive Care Unit and it caused me an indescribable amount of stress. I found it hard to work out the dosages of tiny portions of strong drugs, I couldn't get used to watching children die, and the worst thing was frequently having to inform the parents of their child's death. On the other hand, the operating room made me feel like a 'fish in water'. I considered anaesthesiology the queen of medical sciences and started to grow more and more big-headed. I learnt to anaesthetize in no time and quickly became very confident. Whether the surgery was going to happen or not was up to me! I had only been working for a year, and yet the experienced surgeons, not to mention the head of the ward himself, had to ask me if they could start operating. It was a gratifying feeling which compensated for the stress that damaged me in the ward.

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The Bone Surgeon: A personal story of a life-changing revolution

by Andrzej Solecki



illustrations by Grzegorz Gryś

Chapter 2

Communism and the Trouble with Grazyna

In order to describe the affair of MGR (My Great Revolution); I need to go back to my student years. Julitta and I had been happily married since my third year of university. My wife's only flaw was that she would not drink with me as much as my buddies would, and even though I did succeed in teaching her to smoke, it never became a habit for her. My shortcomings on the other hand were revealed on the ski slope. When Julitta's friends, the members of the Polish National Team in Alpine Skiing, saw my bizarre moves on the snow, they looked at her with compassion, pitying her for tying the knot with a "peasant" (which for the professional skiers meant as much as a "landlubber" for sailors).

We got involved in the Independent Students' Union for a short time and participated in students' strikes. At one of the strikes I met some people who were part of a student ministry led by the Dominican priests and once I participated in a mass which they held in the assembly hall of the Physiology Department at Grzegórzecka Street. One of the students was playing the guitar. Whilst they were nice people, I didn't really get along with them. I thought they were a bit strange. Little did I know that the major breakthrough in my life would have its source in this very group of people.

When martial law was declared in Poland in December 1981, our son was 7 months old. We lived near the Main Market Square in Kraków, where demonstrations accompanied by "truncheoning" of many participants took place each year for the Martial Law Anniversaries and the then illegally celebrated Independence Day. Our staircase as well as our flat at the corner of Szpitalna Street often served as a hiding place for demonstrators chased by the Militia with truncheons and water cannons. One time the elderly lady who was a caretaker in our tenement house was attacked by a ZOMO [Motorized Detachment of the Citizen's Militia] officer. She managed to shut the heavy door in the nick of time, but another officer had already thrown in the tear gas which spread all over the house very rapidly. Everyone in our flat had tears flowing down their cheeks, except for our son, Wojtek, who was sound asleep, his eyes closed the whole time.

Another time, which I think was sometime in 1982; I was visiting my aunt Jania at Sołtyka Street and observed the following scene from the window of her flat. At dusk, three young demonstrators ran down Blich Street. At the junction of Sołtyka and Dwernickiego Streets, they split up and two of them ran into a courtyard through an open gate. One of them was carrying a wet Polish flag on his back. In almost no time, a militia van, called a "Nysa", arrived at the gate. Some faces appeared in the open windows of the tenement house. Four civilians got out of the van. Two of them ran towards the open windows, ordered us to close them and threw tear gas into the courtyard. The other two rushed towards the gate. A moment later, one of them dragged the young demonstrator out of the courtyard into the street and the other one kicked and beat him with a truncheon. The boy was crying with pain. When he was kicked on the neck, the crying stopped. All four of them picked him up and threw him into the back of the van like a bag of potatoes. Then they left with the siren on. All of it took no more than a minute and a half. The area was peaceful and it had never been at the forefront of the fighting line with the Militia. There must have been an informer among the residents who had revealed the hideout.

After the "Solidarność" organisation was suppressed in 1981, the Students' Union disbanded and its president, Bogdan Klich arrested, I was like many others, dejected by the general despair and I lost all hope that Communism would ever fall. The only person who could keep a spark of hope alive for me was my aunt Jania – my grandfather Bolesław's sister, who was a painter. Born in 1894, into a partitioned country, she grieved for the oppressed Poland. As a teenage girl she had cried over Sienkiewicz's novels.

'Andrzejku', she used to say, 'the iron trident—Russia, Prussia and the Austro-Hungarian Empire—which held the Poles in bondage, existed unswervingly for decades. It was a political system so firm that no one believed it could ever be crushed. And yet, World War I broke it; Piłsudski's Legions were formed and Poland rose to freedom.'

Although I did find some solace in what she said, it was still hard to imagine the world without the Soviet Union, or Poland without PZPR and ZOMO. My wife and I then started to talk more and more about moving abroad. The job at the Intensive Care Unit was supposed to be transitory. I wanted to gain some hands-on experience before departing to the West.

Around that time, my wife's younger sister, Grazyna moved to Kraków to study English Philology. It didn't take her long to fall into bad company...

When she was still living in Bielsko, I helped her deal with her adolescent worries a few times. I told her what 'the best remedy' was for me and then poured 'it' into glasses. But after she had spent a few months in Kraków, we noticed a peculiar change in her behaviour. First, she was not being troubled by anything, second, she was not interested in alcohol, third, she pointed out to me that my life was meaningless. We were seriously worried. Grazyna introduced a completely new element to our conversations, namely the religious note. During one such conversation, she stated that my life had no meaning whatsoever. She told us that the lives of all of us have no meaning until we give them to Jesus. Grazyna herself, after joining a Christian community in Kraków, called Beczka, had established some kind of special relationship with Jesus, and that all our family should do the same.

I tried everything to talk some sense into her, but nothing worked, not even my best 'remedy', which had never failed me before. I felt like I was losing my sister-in-law to some kind of religious fanaticism. I found her criticism of my lifestyle more and more irritating. I was a young, handsome doctor, the life and soul of the party, musically talented, basically a great guy, who had life by the 'short and curlies', and this bigheaded kid dared to say that the way I was leading my life was "wrong and stupid"! And if that wasn't enough, she lent me religious books (I angrily read the entire book titled, *The Happiest People on Earth* by John and Elizabeth Sherrill and underlined all the absurdities I could find written there) and invited her new friends to talk to me. A visit from her "sister", Ewa was more than I could take.

'The Holy Spirit works in our community in Kraków', she explained with a kind smile. I passed over the remark with silence, hoping for a change of subject. But it didn't work. Ewa was making her point very precisely.

'The Holy Spirit with whom I am anointed', she went on, 'allows us to sing beautifully in new tongues.'

'Ok, that's great, but if you excuse me, I must go now, as I have something very important to do, but I'm sure we will finish this some other time,' I said.

'Would you like me to sing in a new tongue for you?'

'No, really, that's all right, maybe some other time', but this didn't help either.

'I'll sing for you anyway!' Ewa said and, looking deep into my eyes, she started to sing strange melodies with a strange voice.

At that moment I knew that they were both lost...Why did this have to happen to our family?!

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Notes

1. Henryk Sienkiewicz (1846-1916) was a Polish novelist. In his most famous novels he praised the virtues of Polish chivalry of the 17th century, in order to keep up the spirit in the oppressed nation. He received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1905.

2. Polish United Labour Party

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illustrations by Grzegorz Grys

Chapter 3

Intuition and Resuscitation

A two-month-old baby girl was brought to our hospital by an ER ambulance one day. Her name was Agnieszka and she was suffering from the Wolf-Parkinson-White syndrome. She had already gone through four heart attacks and four resuscitations. I remember that she was given a drug called Cordarone, which was difficult to get at that time. I was the youngest on the anaesthesiologists' team and my more experienced colleagues explained to me that the prognosis for a baby with such a syndrome is usually unfavourable. Her chances of survival were slight.

Shortly after the baby was admitted to the ward, her heart stopped. It took us one hour to get her back. However, her pupils had widened and hadn't reacted to light since she had arrived at the hospital. A moment later, two more stoppages of blood circulation occurred. The last resuscitation that we attempted took about an hour and was not successful. The monitor was mercilessly showing a 'flat line'. The team looked at one another and refrained from further action unanimously, which was in line with the principles of our medical training. So far more had been done than was required in such cases.

When they had left the intensive care room, I ordered the nurse to dose Cordarone again and attempted cardiac massage and ventilation. I guess I was following my intuition, which is often helpful (or even indispensable, as some people would say) in the profession of a doctor. As I was carrying out the resuscitation I entered into a rather arrogant dialogue with God.

'Very well, Lord God, if you are so good and almighty, as Grazyna says, here is a little chance for you to display your power', I challenged Him in my thoughts.

About ten minutes later, her heart started beating again. I went to the staffroom and announced to my colleagues: "Agnieszka is back!" They did not go into raptures. Everybody knew that even if her heart did not stop again (which it probably would), she would be a plant. Well, not only did Agnieszka's heart keep going, but two days later, her pupils started to narrow and became sensitive to light; four days later, she was taken off the respirator and within a week her

condition was so good that her mother could take her home. What I had learned from that experience was that ... at the end of the day, medicine can do miracles in difficult cases, especially through the hands of a particularly gifted doctor. My conversation with God was soon forgotten.

A few years later, already as a bone surgeon, I received a phone call from Inka M, a senior registrar at the Children's Intensive Care Unit, who asked me to come to the ward and meet somebody. It was Agnieszka with her mother. She was a healthy little girl and apparently one of the best pupils in her class.

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Chapter 4

Post-Wedding Bash

There was almost no social event that I would allow myself to miss at that time. I'm shy by nature, but I would undergo a miraculous transformation at every party. My reserve disappeared after the first two shots and I morphed into the heart and soul of the party, which was the reason I was often invited. Basically, any social event that involved alcohol trumped all the other leisure activities, as far as I was concerned. Sitting at the table with empty glasses was a waste of time—I could not relax, the conversations were strained, my jokes weren't funny. Two or three quick rounds, however, always worked unfailingly. Therefore, I would set a quick drinking pace and I was anything but tolerant of those who drank a little less than me. I was vexed by people's moderation in drinking and the arguments like: 'I'm taking antibiotics' or 'I'm driving tonight' led me to ultimate irritation. There was no room for such pseudo party people in my company. Only those who could keep up with me in drinking could enjoy the position of my faithful companions.

I remember this guy who would not drink at one of the parties. My nagging questions, 'What's wrong with you? Why aren't you drinking?', were answered shortly: 'I'm not drinking, because I don't drink at all'. I was flabbergasted and left him alone. Another time we could not make it to our friends' wedding, so they invited us to a post-wedding bash in their garden near Bielsko-Bia?a. I got drunk fast and became aggressive. When I started looking for trouble with a group of well-built members of a rowing club, one of the guests intervened and prevented the fight. I ended up having a conversation with one of those guys. He told me that he worked as a miner and after work he sculpted. As an unfulfilled musician, I had a lot of respect and a bit of a soft spot for artists, so a thread of understanding was established between us immediately. He offered to show me his sculptures, which he kept in his flat. We got into his car and a few minutes later I was looking at

some unusual wooden carvings. He told me about the meaning of the scenes carved in the low reliefs. In the end he reached into a cupboard and took out a large crucifix made of dark wood.

‘Here’, he said, ‘This is for you; a gift from a worker.’

There was something stunning about it.....

I didn’t drink anymore that night. Julitta drove on our way home. As I was sitting in the passenger’s seat with the wooden gift on my lap, I found myself in a strange state which I hadn’t known before..... but after two days everything went back to “normal”.

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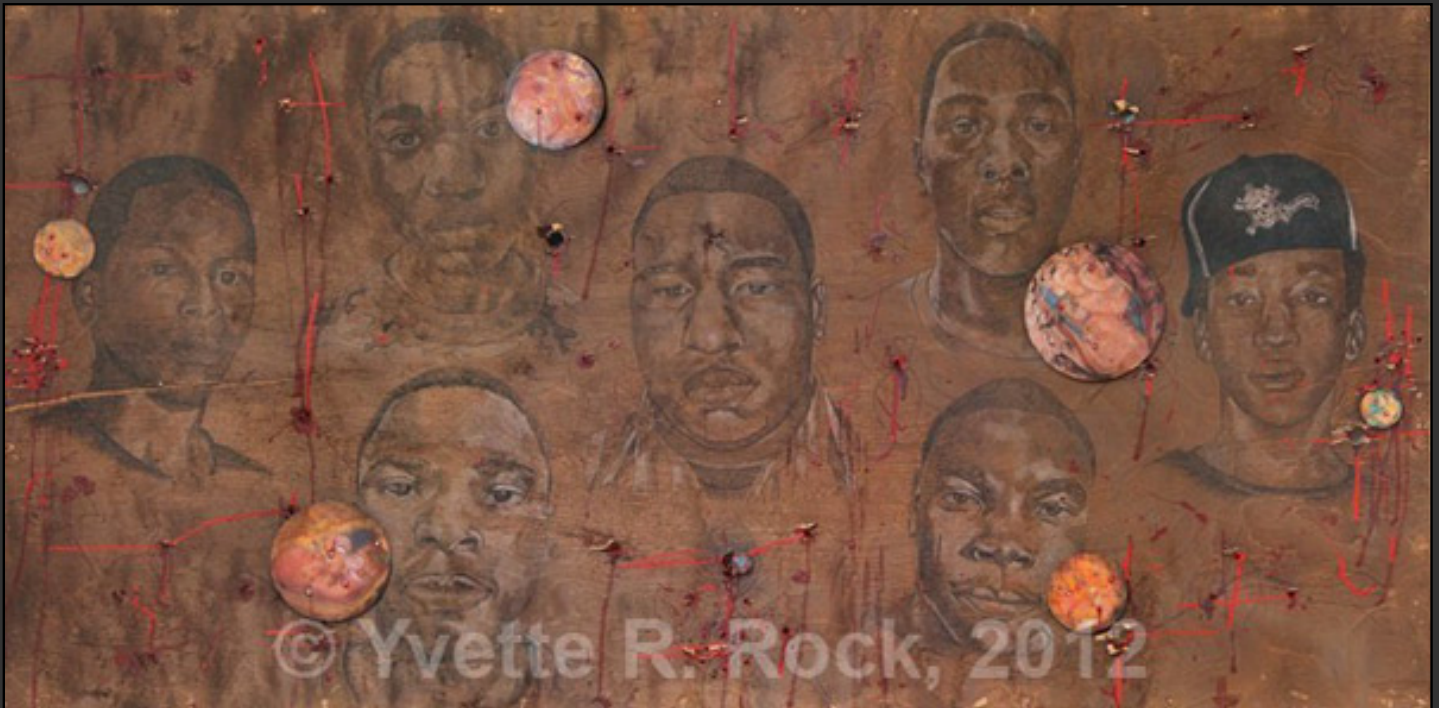
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mixed media, 72" X 36"

Plague of Violence

recent art work by Yvette Rock

Artist Statement

As an artist, I have worked in a variety of media, including: mixed media, photography, painting, drawing, and collage. I use art to tell the story of universal human experiences such as life, death, love, anger, compassion, violence, and hope. For the past nine years I have been working on a three-part mixed media series on paper and wood dealing with plagues from ancient times to plagues found in my own lifetime. My recent work, *Ten Plagues of Detroit™*, deals specifically with the atrocities and afflictions found in Detroit – past and present. Some of the afflictions I am basing my mixed media pieces on are: “Plague of Violence”, “Plague of Arson and Fire,” and “Plague of Addiction and Poverty.” As an artist, I want to reflect the reality of Detroit’s condition back to its citizens and sojourners as a way to show its devastating realities, but also as a way to stir up hope and change. In spite of urban blight and blare, I see those in the city whose very lives claim that Detroit is “rising from the ashes.” I plan on capturing these gestures of restoration in the third part of the mixed media series – *Redemption of the Plagues*.



Plague of Violence (detail)



Plague of Violence (detail)

Artist Bio

Yvette Rock received a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art in New York City and a Master of Fine Arts in painting from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Between 1999-2004 she served as Artist-in-Residence for the Detroit-based non-profit organization InsideOut Literary Arts Project, teaching art classes to Detroit Public School children.

Rock has also been involved in several community-based mural projects. Some sites include: Neighborhood Service Organization, Qualicare Nursing Home, Ann Arbor Academy, and Neutral Zone. From 2001-2002 Rock served as Adjunct Assistant Professor at UM School of Art & Design, creating and co-teaching "Detroit Connections". In 2003 she founded an after-school program called Bezalel Project, a ministry of YouthWorks-Detroit. The program engages Detroit children from grades 2-8 in academic, arts and leadership training.

Rock has recently exhibited her piece, "Magalys" in the Detroit Artists Market's juried Biannual Exhibition and her photographs of flora and landscapes will be on exhibit at Oakwood Hospital in Dearborn, Michigan from June 25-September 21, 2012. Her upcoming solo show opening November 4, 2012 at Michigan Women's Center and Hall of Fame, "Tenuous Equilibrium," will feature over twenty photographs of Detroit's people and spaces.

Rock is also the owner and founder of future Detroit art museum, Live Coal Gallery. Live Coal Gallery fosters a passion for art, community, and learning by connecting aspiring, emerging, and established artists. Visit www.livecoalgallery.com for more information about the museum.



Yvette and Joshua with their children - photo by [Melanie Reyes](#)

Yvette Rock currently resides in the inner city of Detroit, Michigan with her husband Joshua and their four children. They are members of Word of Life community and Detroit Community Outreach. Joshua is the Director for [Youth-Works Detroit](#), an inner city youth outreach of the Sword of the Spirit.

To see more of Yvette's art work, visit her website: <http://www.yvetterock.com/>

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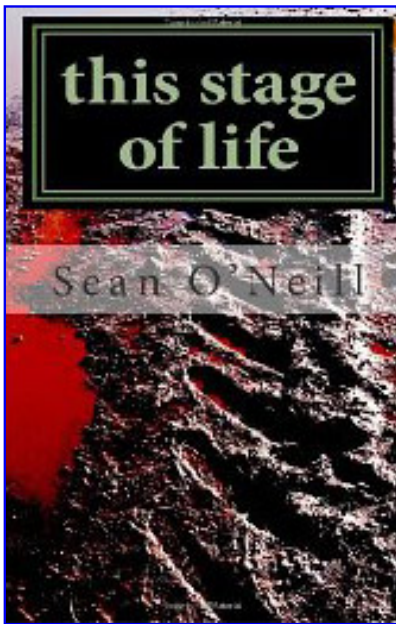


The Miraculous Insistence of Life

poem by Sean O'Neill

While the sad flat atoms of carbon and calx
Crow up their dreary prose in black tar,
A tulip burns through the hardcore of the alley
And bloods its secret heart with inky sap and melody.
As fragmentary ceiling plaster and dirt
Waste over the the plate silver of drawing rooms,
A stout and terrible ash flames up from the dew
And seizes the loud harmonic of the lawn's dominion.
When the bitter files of the cobble and the coping stone
March their biting patterns down each intersected byway,
Brute green life boils below the severality of sight
And surges out of every careless pore of earth.
Men cannot quench love,
Nor smother it with feeble block or brick above.
And street and town and tar and turning strife
Are swallowed in the symphonies of life.

> See other poems in Living Bulwark by [Sean O'Neill](#)



This collection of Sean O'Neill's poems is his first. The poems cover periods when the poet lived or worked in London, England; Milan, Italy; Drummore, a small fishing village on the West Coast of Scotland; and St. Paul, USA. The subject matter of the poems therefore varies from the grittily descriptive 'Bridges' and 'Sweet Thames', which are set in London, to the pastoral 'The Hill' and 'in this atlas of headland' set in the South Rhins peninsula. The poems cover several years and a multitude of situations and yet a consistent voice emerges finding meaning in apparently insignificant details, and clothing mundane events in a tapestry of rich wordplay. Several poetic sequences are contained in this collection including the four-part 'this stage of life' a wry commentary on modern life and 'Winter 2011' which centers on the view from a window during the harsh weather conditions of that year. Some of the poems are satirical; others celebrate the joy of simple things. Some are dark while others are full of hope. Whatever the reader's disposition he or she will find something valuable in this volume that echoes the mood of the moment or the season of life. Book available at [Amazon](#).

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