



# EP JOURNAL

*A Newsletter of Ezekiel's Place Retreat Center*



Issue No. 9 – Fall 2009

Please visit [www.ezekielsplace.com](http://www.ezekielsplace.com)

## EP VISION, MISSION AND CORE VALUES: Dear Friends of Ezekiel's Place:

**Vision:** The achievement of justice, peace, renewal and reconciliation for all.

**Mission:** Ezekiel's Place is a Christian retreat center with a mission to provide a serene environment and responsive programs promoting justice, peace, renewal and reconciliation to affirm ethnic, national, religious and economic diversity.

**Core Values:** Faith, Justice, Peace, Renewal, Reconciliation, Integrity, and Accountability

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### Proposed EP Programs/Events in 2010:

- Jan – Dec: Various retreat groups  
March: Biblical Justice and Peace Advocacy: Workshop for Practitioner Community Groups  
Integrity in the Workplace Workshop: Challenges and Principles (in Vietnam)  
April: 12th Global Jubilee Village Experience  
May – August: GJV Experience "graduates" perform volunteer work  
October: 13<sup>th</sup> Global Jubilee Village Experience  
November: Justice and Peace Academy Forum: Topic to be determined

*As the season changes and trees shed their leaves, the wind blows, announcing the coming of winter. During these coming days, we are reminded of people in our world who need an advocate.*

*The Holy Spirit of God came to us in the rush of a mighty wind, to be our comforter and guide. We know in the cold days of winter, many people lack adequate shelter, food and clothing. Let's encourage each other to be their helpers and advocates, seeking to address together the underlying causes for their plight. Both compassionate and purposeful advocacy responses are needed, supported by working together, at different times and in complementary ways.*

*In the following reflections on this year's programs organized by Ezekiel's Place, and increasingly, in partnership with other community groups, you will read how participants are becoming advocates and organizers for people in our world who need someone to walk alongside them and to help address some of the underlying factors as indicated above.*

*We encourage you to reflect on your role as advocates for those whose lives are heavy with burden.*

*May God's sustaining peace and love be with you during this Advent season,*

*Barbara and Dick Anson,  
Co-Directors of Ezekiel's Place*



*"For I will proclaim the name of the Lord. Ascribe greatness to our God!  
The Rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are justice.  
A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and right is he."*

*Deuteronomy 32: 3-4*

## Highlights of Ezekiel's Place Events in 2009:

Jan. – Dec.	Various retreat groups
March 28:	Community Forum: Africa's Challenges & Hope
April 11-13:	10th Global Jubilee Village (GJV) Experience
June 23-26:	6th Annual Youth Servant Leadership Camp
June 29-July 3:	7th Annual Youth Creation Care Camp
October 9-11:	11th GJV Experience
October 31:	Integrity in the Workplace Workshop (El Salvador)
November 6-7:	Forum on Biblical Justice and Peace
November 12:	Community Forum: Hispanic Immigrants and our Food

### ***The Christians' Call to Advocacy: "Loving our Neighbor"***

*(By Dick and Barbara Anson, Co-Directors of Ezekiel's Place)*

The two greatest commandments are clearly and emphatically stated by Jesus (see Mark 12:28-31): 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'

While we are each called to work out our personal relationship with God, Jesus' Sermon on the Mount provides us a powerful "roadmap" to the implications of loving God and our neighbor: (from Matthew 5:7-10): ...blessed are the merciful; ....blessed are the peacemakers.....blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness sake.....

So, who is my neighbor, and why and how would God call me to respond by way of being an "advocate" for my neighbor? In short, our neighbor is anyone who is in need, including social outcasts, with whom Jesus spent most of his time. While the Scriptures do not mention the word "advocate" very often, its deeper meaning, in both the Old and New Testaments, suggests a strong linkage to understanding who is my neighbor. One such scripture is the powerful story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25-37).

The word "advocate" has its Greek meaning in being a parakletos, counselor, comforter, supporter, and helper, as the Holy Spirit is given to believers in Christ, to be our counselor, helper and comforter (John 14:26). An advocate is one who pleads the case or the cause of another. An advocate in the fullest sense is one who not only consoles, but also strengthens, helps, and counsels, with such authority as a legal advocate has for his or her client. While Jesus is our advocate with the Father (1 John 2:1), the life and message of Jesus also implies our actively seeking our call to be advocates for justice and peace, as this brings wholeness (shalom) to our "neighbors" and to us. Some of the scriptures which speak of being an advocate for justice and peace include:

The evangelical meaning of "advocate" is best summarized in 1 John 2: 1 – ".....we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous";"

Proverbs 31: 8-9: "Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute. Defend the rights of the poor and needy."

Isaiah 58: 6-10: "Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the

bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? If you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday."

The prophets insisted on justice for everyone. Amos, for example, denounced those who trampled on the needy and destroyed the poor in order to gain wealth. He railed against those who lived in luxury while the poor were being crushed. The prophets' main judgments were leveled against idolatry and social injustice. The living God insists on personal morality and social justice, while idols offer prosperity without social responsibility.

Jesus said at the beginning of his earthly ministry, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." (Luke 4:18-19)

The gospels depict Jesus repeatedly reaching out to those at the bottom of the social pyramid--poor people, women, Samaritans, lepers, children, prostitutes and tax collectors. Jesus was also eager to accept people who were well placed, but he made clear that all, regardless of social position, needed to repent. For this reason, he invited the rich young lawyer to sell all of his possessions and give the proceeds to the poor. The rich who cling to their money and possessions create in those a barrier to breaking through into the freedom Jesus offers.

Micah 6:8 also encourages us to be advocates for justice: "He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"

While Jesus calls us to carry out acts of compassion, the implications of the scriptures also suggest that we are called to be transformative agents and Kingdom builders on this earth, to help demonstrate God's love in a suffering world in a manner which addresses the causes and ill effects of injustice and conflict. It is estimated that religious congregations donate \$7 billion each year (about 1/7 of their total revenue) to people in need (NY Times, 1995). It is our observation that a much smaller level of effort and resources by the Christian community are being placed in addressing the underlying causes of poverty and social needs. We should not assume or expect that our Government and secular organizations will do this by themselves.

We believe that the deeper messages of the Bible are encouraging and admonishing each of us to get engaged in our communities, nation and world; we are being called to be prophetic and pastoral advocates for addressing the causes of injustice and conflict, in

accordance with the specific “call” to which we feel God is leading us, and identifying and exercising our gifts for Kingdom building.

We have found numerous useful resources and organizations that practice Biblical or often called faith-based advocacy. Ezekiel’s Place has collaborated with three organizations which have a national and global outreach in their advocacy work. Each of them provides valuable resources for enhanced understanding of the specific issues, extensive advocacy networks, and opportunities for getting involved in communities, wherever they may be. These three organizations are: Sojourners ([www.sojo.net](http://www.sojo.net)), Bread for the World ([www.bread.org](http://www.bread.org)) and Churches of the Middle East Peace ([www.cmep.org](http://www.cmep.org)). Each organizes advocacy days in Washington D.C., bringing together Christians from all denominations to be equipped and to spend a day of advocacy with our Senators and Congressional representatives. Depending on your interests, we encourage you to explore the valuable information they generate and opportunities for more direct involvement, including establishing collaborative and partner linkages between your local organization(s) and/or churches with these national level faith-based advocacy organizations, and participating in their advocacy days during 2010.

Finally, Jim Wallis, who is the co-founder and Executive Director of Sojourners, outlines in his recent book (“The Great Awakening”, 2008, p. 60-66) 7 basic Biblical-based principles for Christian involvement in the world, in the spirit of loving thy neighbor, loosening the yoke of the oppressed, and being peacemakers.

- God hates injustice
- The kingdom of God is a new order
- The church is an alternative community
- The kingdom of God transforms the world by addressing the specifics of injustice

- The church is a conscience of the state, holding it accountable for upholding justice and restraining its violence
- Take a global perspective
- Seek the common good
- *So, for whom are we called to be advocates, now?*

## **Africa Forum: An Opportunity for Africa Diaspora & Friends of Africa**

*(by Jeff Thindwa, Governance and Accountability Team, World Bank, from Malawi)*

The conferencing of people with an interest in Africa, from global institutions, government, university students and faculty, policy/research groups, foundations, civil society organizations and faith institutions, and indeed ordinary folks – in work or retired, always has a certain energy that makes it a special occasion. Such was my experience at the 2009 ‘Africa Forum’ on March 28 at Shenandoah University in Virginia. This was the second Africa Forum I had attended, representing the World Bank and myself.

But my interest has always been beyond institutional representation. As an African (from Malawi), I am attracted to spaces that are dedicated to fostering a better understanding of Africa’s development challenges and opportunities. Indeed, I find it humbling to encounter ‘strangers’ who are consumed by a passion for Africa’s welfare. I have worked in development for 27 years and seen both successes and failures in the continent’s struggles to improve the lives of its people. The Africa Forum has always reminded me that these struggles do not take place only in the micro-spaces where development projects are taking place; or in the macro-spaces where policies are shaped. They are shared by people in the far-flung corners



*Changing beauty of the seasons at Ezekiel's Place*

of the world, beyond the continent, by friends of Africa who contribute through education, vigorous analysis and debate, and the ensuing policy recommendations that find their way to institutions that have an influence on Africa's development.

Perhaps the most attractive feature of the Forum – for me at least - is the visible (and dynamic) presence of students from Africa. Their energy and zeal, and, yes, optimism, are absolutely inspiring. The Forum is hence, not only a platform for discussing Africa's development; it is an important catalyst for solidarity, for these brothers and sisters in the Diaspora to express their commitment to the cause of Africa, to 're-charge', and to engage, in a small way, in shaping attitudes and policies relating to the continent.

Themed 'Africa Forum: Continuing Challenges and Hope', the March 28 event crammed many topics in a single day through plenaries and breakout sessions where these topics were dissected a little more. I spoke on 'Improving Governance through Civic Engagement' in plenary, discussing the work of the World Bank, and proposing innovative approaches to improving governance in Africa which involve citizens. While broadly acknowledging the value of these efforts the audience, mainly the students – African and others, did not pass up the opportunity to protest my institution's policy prescriptions on African governments, which they argued were not always helpful. There was a refreshing difference at the Africa Forum: debate was civil, and we disagreed where we had to, but respectfully. Not long before, I had spoken at a conference at a Canadian university where students were disrespectful in their disagreement.

It is easy to see a forum like this as just another, talking "shop". The Africa Forum has a special place in my heart. Perhaps the organizers will get a grant some day to assess the impact it is having – in shaping attitudes and even policies relevant to Africa's development. Even if they don't, there is a solidarity created by the Forum among African students in the Diaspora and Africa's friends, that may well be developing the leaders of the future, who will help transform Africa's development trajectory.



*Jeff Thindwa, one of the speakers at the 2nd Africa Forum, shares experiences from his native land of Malawi, and many years of development and advocacy work in Africa.*

## **Shenandoah University Partners with Ezekiel's Place To Host the 2nd Africa Forum**

**(by Jona Masiya, Adjunct Professor of Music/SU, Forum Co-Organizer, from Zimbabwe)**

The convergence of about one hundred delegates on March 28, 2009 at Shenandoah University marked a successful event devoted to discuss Africa. Behind the scenes, Dick Anson, Dr John Copenhaver and I spent several months of meetings, consultations and marketing to make sure the forum came to reality.

We benefited from a couple of lessons learned from the previous Africa Forum held at Shepherd University in 2008. A major shift in the program was that we decided to hold the 2<sup>nd</sup> Africa forum for one day instead of two days as we did at Shepherd University in 2008. We chose to continue with the theme of hopes and challenges for Africa, but this time narrowing our pool of speakers to allow for intensive panel discussion times.

The forum brought to attention the fact that Africa is a strategic development partner of the United States. Therefore, United States foreign policy should promote cooperation and partnership between the two continents. Presentations done by Church mission representatives and NGOs showed that there are on going development efforts in Africa to date. Presenters noted that African countries may accomplish their millennium development goals if the three areas of good governance, democracy and food security are addressed by African leaders.

It was interesting to see the enthusiasm that African students embraced as they discussed matters of their motherland. At an informal briefing with African experts from the World Bank, African students admitted that this forum was an eye opener and a catalyst for decision-making and involvement with development issues on the continent. This forum helped African students connect with others from various colleges.

As we approach 2010, we are pleased that African participants from James Madison U. were inspired to organize a 3<sup>rd</sup> Regional Africa Forum on their campus in April 2010. So, the bridge-building process continues, as we work together on a common agenda.



*Students from and friends of Africa listen, learn and dialogue on the challenges and hope of a great continent.*

## **Servant Leadership Camp: Building Life Skills and A Good Transition to College**

*(by Mason Walling, Participant/Helper at SL Camp, and Freshman at W. Virginia State University)*

I first learned of Ezekiel's Place retreat camp when Mr. Anson came to speak at my high school one Thursday morning during our Fellowship of Christian Athletes club meeting. He made the camp sound very exciting, and the part that appealed to me the most was the fact that the camp was open to so many different types of opinions and beliefs that anyone could learn from it.

A typical day involves mostly lecture and discussions at Ezekiel's Place. However, the types of discussions are in no way dull or boring. Everyone participates and pulls their own weight in the conversation so that no one feels left out. We also do several games each day that have an underlying message behind them, but which are also fun. We even take breaks to play team sports like basketball and volleyball. Everyone there is so generous that if you happen to forget to pack yourself a lunch one day, others will give up some of their own so that you can eat too. There is never a dull moment at Ezekiel's Place.

The activities that I was involved in through Ezekiel's Place were very rewarding and inspiring, helping to build life skills and attitudes. I was able to help out in doing community service for both a local Martinsburg church and a senior center. At the church, we all pitched in to weed an entire garden so that the people of the church could plant and harvest their own crops for food. At the Berkeley Senior Center, we helped out by sanding the railings and washing vans that were used to pick up and drop off seniors in Martinsburg. The work wasn't easy, but I was glad that I did it because it taught me to be disciplined and to help others.

Looking back on my experiences at Ezekiel's Place, I realize that every person involved in the camp was an individual, whose role was vital in contributing to the whole camp. We were all able to work together, learn about God, to learn important life skills and attitudes, and even have fun throughout the whole process. As I am now a college student, I can still remember back to some of the messages

we discussed during camp, and I still strive to live my life by those principles. I truly believe that although the camp was only for four days, it made me a better person. I would strongly encourage anyone who is thinking about attending Ezekiel's Place retreat camp to take the plunge because you won't regret it.



*Servant Leadership Camp (SLC) participants meet the challenges (and fears!) of teamwork on the high ropes of Cedar Ridge Adventure course (a partner organization)*

## **Reflections from Servant Leadership and Creation Care Camps**

*(by Brittany Young, Ezekiel's Place Summer Intern/Youth Camp Staff and Law Student at the U. of Miami)*

As the youth finished the final song at the end of the presentation for Creation Care Camp, I was sad to see everyone go. I felt close to this group of youth I had spent a week with, and I already missed the youth who were not able to return from the previous week's Servant Leadership Camp. I drove home contemplating the past two weeks and looking ahead to the next few months of change. Creation Care and Servant Leadership Camps marked the transition point for me from life as normal and a big move to Miami, Florida to go to law school. I could not have asked for a better group of youth and a better experience to give me memories that I would carry with me through this transition.

Servant Leadership and Creation Care Camps (held in late June, 2009) are wonderful programs for teenagers, organized by and held at Ezekiel's Place. During Servant Leadership camp,



***Youth from the Servant Leadership Camp work at the Orchard Community garden during their 1st day of service to the community***

the kids learn what it means to be a servant leader for God. They explore teamwork, problem solving, stereotypes, and integrity, but from the framework of the Bible. I remember when Dan Anson came in to do an activity on diversity. Each person put a sticky note on their forehead with a job, famous person, condition, or stereotype and everyone had to act towards that person according to their label, but meanwhile not knowing their own label. You could see on the faces of the youth just how real some of those stereotypes became as they felt ostracized from the group because of a label. The day we went out into the community to put servant leadership in action, the youth really enjoyed helping others and you could see what they had learned from the camp.



***SLC youth give time scraping and cleaning at the Berkeley Senior Center***



***Teamwork challenge games at the SLC provide fun and interactive learning***

The next week, Creation Care Camp began with a walk through Ezekiel's Place to appreciate God's creation around us. The week continued with great guest speakers and a fun

camping trip. You never know exactly what will sink in to the youth when you do an activity with them. They could get exactly what you want out of the lesson or something that you never even considered. At the end of each day at both camps, we circle up and each person says their favorite part of the day. One day during Creation Care Camp, one of the youth said they really liked the water game. I led a group activity early in the day that consisted of a game like capture the flag, but with water. Then, we talked about the water situation in Africa and the violence that occurs for water, something we don't even think about doing without. I didn't know if the youth were getting my point, but later that afternoon, I know at least one youth understood the message. Moments like that one is what Creation Care Camp and Servant Leadership Camp are about. Taking issues that are very real and sometimes complex, and getting youth to start thinking about them, becoming more aware of the world and its issues and understanding the role God has placed them in as care takers.

One day I hope to work with refugees or indigenous persons as an advocate for their rights. Issues like climate change and stereotypes affect them daily, and I know that God has called all of us to take care of our brothers and sisters around the world. Each of us has our own way of contributing to the family of Christ, and both Creation Care and Servant Leadership Camps helps the youth who attend further understand and develop their role in this family.

### **Fun and Learning at Creation Care Camp**

***(by Sarah Varner, Participant at CCC, and student at Martinsburg High School)***

When my sister first asked me to go to Creation Care Camp I didn't know what to think. I was excited because it was another camp to go to; however, at the same time it just wasn't something I was interested in doing. I did end up going. I'm glad I went because it was a lot of fun learning about how to care for our diverse environment.

Creation Care Camp was a time of learning how to respect our environment. One thing learned is the importance of recycling. To keep our water sources clean we need buffers. One day we identified different trees and whether they were invasive. At this week-long camp we not only learned about caring for the Earth, but had fun doing so.



***CCC staff team member (Brittany Young, center) and participants (includes Sarah Varner, right) doing water quality testing at Back Creek, with Tim Craddock (W. Va. Dept. of Water Monitoring) brings home messages of the importance of ensuring clean streams to help sustain our watersheds.***

Why is recycling so important? One reason is re-using our resources. By re-using, an item can be used several times. Another reason is to help control carbon dioxide in the air. If we don't recycle it goes to a landmass. There it sits, slowly deteriorating, or not deteriorating at all causing more carbon dioxide. Here's how I see it: if we don't recycle we are harming the entire environment.

We didn't focus on recycling the whole week, as important as it is. We learned that there are other things we could do that are just as important. For example, buffers make a significant difference. What is a buffer you might be asking yourself. Well, it helps control what goes into our waterways by filtering whatever is going into the water. We had a speaker come and teach us about buffers. Later in the week, we also had another speaker who actually talked to us while we were at Back Creek. He was showing us how we could test what is in water. This was a really fun activity. I personally did a chemical test on the water.

Another thing we can do is learn about the different kinds of plant life and protect them. There are so many different kinds of plants that

are just being destroyed by carelessness. The fastest way that we destroy these plants, especially trees, is by making paper. What makes it even more harmful is when we don't recycle the paper we use. The one activity we did was walking through the woods at Ezekiel's Place and identifying different plant life. It was an enjoyable learning experience.

We did many activities throughout the week to make the learning more fun. My favorite was the over-night camping trip we did at Antietam Park. This trip was to learn to appreciate our environment more. It also helped us learn to work together. This one night we encountered what some would consider to be perfect camping weather; we also got to enjoy the rain. The rain really made it interesting, for it came while we were trying to cook our dinner over the campfire. Working with the rain and the fire was definitely a challenge, but we worked together and managed to get everyone's hamburgers cooked. I'm glad, however, that the rain came, because it just shows that something unexpected will come up and people need to stop and take the time to still care enough to carry on.

My first year at Creation Care Camp was an experience that will always stay with me. It was good to learn what I can do to have a better environment. Thanks to everyone who made my experience at CCC a good one.



***A highlight for all CCC participants and camp staff was an overnight camp out at Antietam Creek Camp site...it was great fun and learning, even with rain and bugs!***



***Participants from Creation Care Camp learn problem solving and advocacy skills in various role playing activities.....an environmental advocacy group presents to the Berkeley County commissioners a counterproposal to a development plan to reduce the environmental threats.***

## 11<sup>th</sup> Global Jubilee Village at Ezekiel's Place: Transforming Students One at a Time....

*(by JoEtta Deaton, Appalachia Family Facilitator & Co-Director of a College Campus Ministry at JMU)*

On a fall weekend in any university town, there are students who attend football games and concerts, who party, watch the latest movies, eat way too much pizza, and who try to forget about their homework...at least until Sunday p.m. Others head out of town and visit families. Some stick around and give their neighbors reason to call the police - apparently living out the mantra: get drunk, get full, and get loud.

On the learning campus at Ezekiel's Place, however, students jettison cell phones and flat screens, exchange fast food for rice cooked over a fire, live in shanties, work in a sweatshop, and make peace with neighboring nations. Their mantra could be: Get hungry, get attuned, and give voice...as in ... give your neighbors a voice. In this case, their neighbors are Zimbabwe, Mexico, Palestine, Israel, and Appalachia.

Two dozen college students from six universities, armed only with sleeping bags, huts, and a handful of beans, enact a global village on 105 acres of remote farmland in WV. They're aided by sharp native facilitators with first hand knowledge from their countries, and visiting voices who share political, academic and field savvy.

The students live out the identity, the jobs, and the crises of a poor family from their assigned nation, for an intense 48 hours. That's 5 neighboring nations living/working side by side in one large village. They discover their friends surviving in Zimbabwe's 3-walled shanty have only a fraction of the food and wages and equipment of those dwelling in an Appalachian trailer. They experience "death of their babies", illness of their elderly, a flood in the night that routs them from home and destroys a precious hoard of food, militarized checkpoints and border crossings in which they're chased, captured and interrogated. They feel beleaguered and powerless.

At key moments, however, they live out roles of power: they "travel" to global conferences, a US foreign aid distribution, and a peace talk between hostile nations. At each, they carry high-level responsibility to voice and alleviate the critical needs of their home nation and to broker solutions for other nations.

Periodically, this breaks out of mere role-play. For when they trade at a world food market, they are motivated by real hunger. The students they huddle with at night to keep warm, the members of their family, are hungry and weary and cold. They need what others can provide.

What can happen in a mere 48 hours in the life of a handful of university students? Here are responses of several participants from the 11<sup>th</sup> Global Jubilee Village (Oct 2009):

*I've never cared about these issues; I've got a burning to do something.*

*I know so little about international affairs; I want to learn more.*

*I thought I was pretty smart; but I didn't know how to build a fire.*

*I'm getting a good education from a good school; but I don't know how to cook. I'm gonna ask my granny to teach me.*

*I know a great deal about developing nations, but I'm earnestly searching for effective political solutions for their needs.*

*Where's Christ in all this; doesn't He offer some radical solutions?*

*I've decided to go on a mission trip to Guatemala this summer.*

*I want to look into the Peace Corps after I graduate.*

While 5 families live out desperate conditions in the valleys and dales of Ezekiel's Place, there is a parallel village lived out in the comfortable house on the hill. Overlooking the 5 huts, eating roasted chicken and peach pie, sleeping on comfy mattresses, hailing from a variety of nations and religions, a dozen facilitators discuss privilege, power, and world needs. They grace their meals with Muslim, Jewish and Christian prayers, but plan harsh scenarios for the villages below. Some reel from the dissonance; some are touched by the courage and the struggle of those who share their life stories; some are surprised at the international experience and smarts of university students and guests; some are struck by the inability of humans to create peace.

I played the role of a facilitator and received more from colleagues and college kids than I brought. Ezekiel's Place leaves me struck at how fragile yet wondrous our human condition is, how constant the forces of self-advancement and manipulation, how little things have changed, and how desperately we need a force outside ourselves in order to deal with our own demons of greed, consumption and hubris.

It makes me appeal to our Maker and plead for help. It renews my eagerness to take action. In Jesus Christ, I find a model of action that is counterintuitive and challenging, yet holds genuine heart and hope. Modeled by Christ himself, it is a challenge to stewardship, to service, and to sacrifice: a stewardship that involves thoughtful simplicity and unselfish care for all created things and people. That includes joy and tenderness and forgiveness toward others; a sacrifice that involves radical self-denial and recognizes the corruption of power; that refuses to wield power, manipulation, deceit, or greed, against others to grasp goodies for one's own nation or family or religion; a service that is pragmatic and aware, yet humble, humble enough to work in community and not be ashamed of small tasks, as long as there is large vision, a service that uses one's own gifts, together with others, to be an instrument for "God Bless the World" rather simply "God Bless America."



*CCC diverse youth and camp staff (EP Co-Director and university students) learn about the history of Antietam, including civil war, and current day environmental conservation activities.*



*Members of "Israel's family" by their more comfortable hut discuss concerns of Palestinians who live behind the barbed wire fence and wall (to the left). There were many role playing activities for the families of all countries as part of experiential learning at the GJV experience.*



*"Families" (10th GJV group in April) from 6 countries (USA; Mexico; Israel; Palestinian territories; Philippines; Zimbabwe) debate their nation's needs and rationale for receiving increased foreign aid from the USA*



*Global Jubilee Village Experience participants (from 5 universities) for the October 2009 session (our 11th!). Many have committed to perform summer volunteer work overseas, to be facilitated by Ezekiel's Place.*

## **Reflection of My Global Jubilee Village Experience: Penetrating and Inspiring.....**

*(by Lydia Crumrine, Participant at 11<sup>th</sup> GJV Experience and Nursing Student at James Madison U./Va.)*

The Global Jubilee Village Experience was a valuable and eye-opening glimpse into the lives of other nations. When I first heard about this experience, all that I learned is that it would open my eyes to the lifestyles of other nations by living in the woods, eating virtually nothing, and going to the bathroom in a bucket shared by 20 people. I immediately signed up.

I am currently a nursing student at James Madison University and it is my dream to be able to effectively love and care for people in need at home and in other nations. I am planning on serving people who are shunned by society and in need of care. The opportunity to get a taste of the lifestyle of a Zimbabwean family was a treasure that I could not pass up.

Our weekend began with everyone getting to meet each other and settling into our shacks. I was a member of the Zimbabwe family and we learned to love our meager food supply and our shack that was so far away from the other 4 countries. We learned to be creative with our resources and because we thought outside the box, and used the land around us, we never went hungry. In fact, I think we ate better than Appalachia! : )

When I tell people about my experience I always share the two main things I learned. First of all, I learned that being aware of global issues is so imperative! Before this weekend I could compare my blissful ignorance to me, sitting under a box in the middle of a 4 lane highway. It feels safe, and I don't know what's going on around me, but it is important (for obvious reasons) to be aware of my surroundings and to understand what my role is in global relations. The second thing I learned is also radically different from my previous thoughts. I have always heard people returning from overseas trips say, one way or another, "how good it is in America! Those poor

people, they don't live a good life like I do!" GJV helped me to come to an opposite decision. I loved living simply. I loved scrounging around for food and working all day to come home to our shack and eat sweet potato and river water soup while looking out at the setting sun with my "family." I have such a new respect for that lifestyle! America does not have the best way of living. Every nation has a way of life that is unique and something to be respected and valued.

This journey was an amazing experience and I highly recommend it to everyone! We all need a global perspective and a chance to live in another person's shoes.

## The Children of God and Botswana

*(by Jordan Shultz, Nursing student at Shepherd University)*

God's love works in mysterious ways. I have heard that phrase since I was a young child, yet the words ring true to this day. I had traveled three times during my high school career to a little town in El Salvador with a team of Christian workers, doing construction and evangelistic work, and during these experiences, I felt the notion that this was only the beginning of my journey walking hand in hand with my Lord.

I am not quite sure when the idea of going to Africa was implanted in my mind or rather if it had always been there just waiting for the opportune moment, yet upon my first weekend at Ezekiel's Place for the Global Jubilee Village, once the prospect of volunteering in Botswana was first brought to my attention, I knew this was no coincidence. At the time I was not sure how or when I would go, but I knew for a fact that God would provide the means and I would soon be on my way to Africa.

After much planning and the welcomed help of monetary support provided by Ezekiel's Place, my Aunt, parents and church family, I was setting off for the greatest adventure of my life thus far—in May 2009 I left for almost two months in Mogoditshane, Botswana, an experience which has changed my life in ways indescribable.

I was aware that my purpose for being there was to work with the children of St. Peter's Daycare Centre, however my God would not be sending me away from my home and family without precaution. Much to the relief of my friends and family which I left an ocean away, my Lord blessed me with a second family with whom I spent my days while not working at the centre, the Mudereris. I believe one is blessed if she can say she has one wonderful, loving family, but upon my arrival and still today, it is apparent that I was so blessed to have two.

I have always felt it has been my calling to work with children. I had been informed of the backgrounds and homes of the children coming to the centre—between

the ages of three and five, there were over ninety vulnerable children who attended St. Peter's, all coming from homes either infected with HIV or abused and neglected in one way or another. These children had my heart from the first day I met them. Although there was a language barrier at some points, every heart speaks the same language, LOVE.

During the first two weeks of working in the center I became somewhat frustrated that my teaching techniques were not always effective and had a difficult time understanding what exactly I could do to improve my time with the children. The power of prayer is amazing, because once I let go of my struggles, the Lord spoke clearly about my true reason for being in Botswana. It was not to simply teach the children, they already had a whole centre dedicated to education; my sole purpose for being there was so simple, I was there to love them.

I feel I accomplished many things during my brief time in Botswana, both physically and spiritually. With the help of my aunt, father and church family of Darkesville United Methodist Church, we purchased a much needed washing machine for St. Peter's Daycare Centre. This experience helped me to venture out of my comfort zone and truly experience the wonders of God. He is everywhere, we just need to focus in and really see Him. I saw my Jesus' face everyday when I looked into the eyes of those children. I felt His touch when they wrapped their arms tightly around my neck. I heard His voice when they uttered, "Ke a go rata thata!" ("I love you very much" in Setswana.) "I will praise you, O Lord among the nations. I will sing of you among the peoples. For great is Your love reaching to the heavens; Your faithfulness reaches the skies." -Psalm 57: 9-10



*During her service time in Botswana, Africa, Jordan Shultz, nursing student, is surrounded by LOVE given to and received from little ones at St. Peter's Day Care Centre.*

I would like to end with a poem I wrote during my stay which encompassed my feelings throughout my journey. This is for all of my beautiful children whom I miss each and every day.

*"For You", I am a tissue. I am a temple. I am a swingset. I am a lap. I am a shoulder. I am the shoe-tie-er. I am a child. I am a nurse. I am a chef. I am a hug. I am a kiss. I am a hand to hold. I am a toy. I am a blanket. I am a story. I am a chair. I am listening... I am a*

sweater. I am a book. I am a song. I am strength. I am different. I am growing. I am a tree. I am a thought. I am a whisper. I am a scream. I am a voice. I am Superman. I am real. I am imaginary. I am a believer. I am mother, sister, aunt, and daughter. I am "teacha." I am a friend. I am a refuge. I am foreign. I am home. I am a laugh, a smile, a tear. I am warmth. I am comfort. I am "Ke a go rata thata." I am fleeting. I am forever. I am here and now. I am peace. I am an open wound. I am healed. I am blessed. I am everything I am because of You. I am for Your children. They are all that I am.

## **Ay Nicaragua, Nicaragüita!**

**(by Nathan Loda, Summer Intern at Ezekiel's Place, Summer Volunteer with AMOS in Nicaragua, and Art Major at Shepherd University)**

Yo te quiero mucho mas! Spending six weeks volunteering with a health organization called AMOS, in Nicaragua, was one of the most rewarding and memorable experiences in my life. The experience of being a servant to others and learning how a difference can be made in the lives of strangers is an incomparable sensation. I met many strangers who soon became grand amigos and together, we worked to build relationships and support grass-roots self-help in rural communities. I have far too many memorable memories to share; yet I will share a few of the most rewarding and interesting events. As we went into some smaller communities in the countryside, the level of poverty and poor living conditions tended to worsen.

In order for us, AMOS, to find ways to improve both the living conditions and health conditions, we first had to take a census of the community. This meant we went out on foot walking through the communities going door-to-door asking questions about the people's health and living conditions. How many family members are there? What the house is made of? Where the family gets their water? Do they put anything in the water to clean it? How far away is the closest health clinic? Are there any health problems in the family? And other questions that allowed us to understand the needs of the community in order to work to improve the poorest living conditions.

We also worked with a community, El Coyol, to construct a preschool in order to educate the children of the community. I had an intense experience one night after dinner when a boy rode up on a horse in the community of El Coyol saying there was a man in the clinic who had been stabbed and ridden his horse with his brother 40 minutes to reach our health team in El Coyol. We had an American paramedic with us who said he could help the man who had been stabbed, as we drove him through the mountains to meet the ambulance that would take him to the hospital two hours away. Since the paramedic didn't speak Spanish I accompanied him to translate and assist in any way possible. We safely got the man to the ambulance,

which took him to the hospital and two weeks later I learned that the man had returned home and was feeling much better. It was truly a blessing to be able to serve in this situation and super rewarding knowing that I worked with the community of El Coyol to help save a man's life.

The trip was an awesome adventure and the beauty of Nicaragua and it's people is sweeter than the delicious tropical fruits we ate almost everyday. It was amazing to experience such a beautiful culture and to be a part of an organization like AMOS, which works to educate and help people living in poverty, so that the people can learn to help one another and overcome the struggles of living in poverty. One of the most beautiful things I learned is that even among such poverty and lack of necessities, there is a great joy in the experience of life and a great love between communities, families, and friends. My experience in Nicaragua was bien bonito, and I would recommend a volunteer service to any one who is interested in broadening their sphere of interests and activities and working as a servant to others.



*Three "graduates" from GJV experience (April) provided summer volunteer service work to AMOS (a medical Christian mission NGO in Nicaragua). Jenny Baker-Shenk (L), Jess Varner, AMOS staff member, and Nathan Loda (R), relax after a hard day of work in that beautiful land.*

## **Advocacy Work in Action: Why Do Climate Change and "350" Need to be Taken Seriously?**

**By Dan Anson (article published on the editorial page of the Journal Newspaper, Nov. 6, 2009; former Peace Corp Volunteer, and Public Health Specialist)**

Our planet is undergoing rapid climate change. With the Arctic polar ice caps melting at an unprecedented pace, the level of carbon emissions now at 385 parts per million (ppm), and the mounting evidence that sea levels will rise as glaciers disappear, we have an immediate crisis. In response to an editorial that The Journal published on Oct. 27<sup>th</sup>, I refute the author's claim that the climate change crisis is a "myth." The 350.org campaign states that "NASA's James Hansen found that if we let the amount of carbon in the atmosphere top 350 ppm, we can't have a planet similar to which life on earth is adapted." People around the world are suffering from malaria in new places, massive flooding, and malnutrition from droughts. For more info, go to: [www.westcoastclimateequity.org](http://www.westcoastclimateequity.org) & [www.esrl.noaa.gov/gmd/ccgg/trends/](http://www.esrl.noaa.gov/gmd/ccgg/trends/).

Politicizing climate change stalls action on an issue that affects everyone, especially the poor and those living by the sea. Weather extremes related to a warming planet do not care if you are liberal or conservative. We all must pressure decision makers at the United Nations this December to pass policies backed by science. In terms of the local situation, I do not feel that our state needs coal-fired power plants to save jobs.

According to the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy (<http://www.wvhighlands.org>), in 1950, there were 125,000 miners in the state, and in 2005, there were about 15,000. Mountaintop removal (MTR) replaces workers with machines, so stopping MTR is not a jobs issue. MTR is a destructive practice in which thousands of acres of bio-diverse forests are blown apart in order to access thin layers of coal. Less than 5 percent of the flattened mountains have any economic development on them.

Americans emit about 20 metric tons of carbon per person per year and our country has 4 percent of the world's population but consumes 25 percent of the world's resources (see Wikipedia.org). If we harness the power of the sun and wind, which are free and renewable sources of energy, we could break our addiction to coal. Recycling will help reduce our carbon footprint, but we need to abolish the use of coal within the next 20 years and prevent new excess emissions.



*Nearly 100 participants in a local Music/Arts Festival stand in solidarity with over 5,000 global demonstrations of the 350.org campaign to form the critical number representing the upper limit of CO<sub>2</sub> for sustainable life. (Community Garden is off to the left).*

As a part of the Global Day of Climate Action (Oct. 24), I helped organize an event in Martinsburg to call attention to the crisis. Stating it is “manufactured” is a denial of scientific studies. Even families in WV who live near the slopes of blown off mountains know this truth when they suffered from flooding in July 2001 in Raleigh

County. Solutions like a carbon tax and a wind farm on the Coal River Mountain in our state ([www.climategroundzero.org](http://www.climategroundzero.org)) will help us to achieve this goal. We need to implement existing technology and build the infrastructure required to make that happen, which will no doubt supply new jobs. We are nearing the tipping point and the time is now to secure a safer planet for our children before it's too late.

## **Reflections from a Justice and Peace Academy Forum at Ezekiel's Place: Biblical Justice and Peace** *(by Dave Martinsen, Participant at the JPA Forum and Scientist, Washington D.C.)*

Although we have been friends of Ezekiel's Place for a number of years, my wife and I had not found the time to make the 1-1/2 hour trip from our home in Rockville up to Hedgesville, WV. This time, when Dick and Barbara extended the invitation to join in a Justice and Peace Academy Forum, we decided to make time. We have heard about some of the retreats they've held, but still didn't know quite what to expect. While sensitive to social action issues, and interested in what can be done to foster world peace, and while involved in teaching in our church, I wouldn't claim that I have been a leader in this area. On the other hand, a number of recent events have brought me to the point where I am seeking to what God would like to call me next. It was with a little bit of uncertainty that I approached the weekend, not sure how we would fit in with a room full of activists, not sure if I would be open to a call, not even sure if I would agree with the teaching. In fact, as I approached the weekend, and worked through the materials in preparation, I began to question just exactly how justice and peace even fit together in our world. It seemed to me that one of our challenges as Christians is to find an internal peace in the midst of an imperfect world. Yes, we are to work for justice. But in working for justice, it seemed, we would often end up pleasing one side or the other, or neither, and while making a small positive contribution for justice, we would leave everyone with less peace. The more I thought about it, I grew to be skeptical of one of the premises of the weekend, derived from the teachings of Martin Luther King, Jr., that without justice, there can be no peace. My prayer was that in addition to finding a new sense of call, I would also be given some indication of how these two concepts, justice and peace, fit together.

Now that the weekend is over, I can only say how thankful I am for having taken the time, and investing the energy, to participate in this weekend. Our facilitators, Bruce Birch of Wesley Theological Seminary, and Katherine Grieb of Virginia Theological Seminary, were both outstanding teachers, with a gift for making the scripture both interesting and relevant to our situation today. With Bruce leading us in considering some of the teachings in Jeremiah and Isaiah from the Old Testament, and Katherine alternating with teachings from Philippians, Romans, Corinthians, and James from the New Testament, we were given a consistent, yet complementary, picture of how God called the Israelites, and Jesus called his followers, to be faithful to a call to both peace and justice. While we sometimes focus on the concept of chosen, with the Israelites as God's chosen people, and Christians also being chosen by God through Jesus, we were encouraged to think rather as being called, called for a purpose, to share God's blessings with the world. Justice and peace are a large part of that call.

Each of the teaching sessions was followed by a time for personal reflection, and then by small group discussion time. In each of those small group discussions, we dealt with three questions from the lecture. It was in these small groups that I had a more personal interaction with those activists. I found them to be, to a person, very committed, generous, courageous, and thoughtful. I also found some people like me, not quite activists yet, but searching for where God was calling them. Those activists were willing to share their experiences with us, but they were also willing to listen to my experiences, and my questions, and my struggles. After the small groups sessions, we reported back to the larger group, with final thoughts from Bruce and Katherine.

All of these aspects of the weekend combined to provide me with a theological basis for action, some real life examples from people who are involved in justice and peace efforts, some organizations where I could take some next steps, and some new friends, brothers and sisters, whom I can contact for help and guidance along the way.

I must also mention the great hospitality of the hosts. In providing coffee, tea, juices, snacks, lunches, and dinner, and a beautiful place in the mountains of West Virginia, we were refreshed in the midst of an intense period of teaching and study. We were asked to fill out a survey form at the end of the time, with ratings from 1-4, you've seen them, I'm sure: "Did not meet expectations" to "Fully met expectations". I had to add a 5th rating - "Exceeded expectations", because the weekend certainly did that for me.



*Small discussion groups are an integral part of the learning style at Ezekiel's Place. One such group at the JPA Forum provides an opportunity to personalize their calls to being God's people in a broken world.*

But what of my prayer for finding a way toward joining justice and peace? I began to give up hope for that as we approached the end of our time. We had heard a lot about justice, and we had heard a lot about peace. But I hadn't yet seen the connection. And then it came, quietly. Katherine was teaching from James, and being pressed for time, read a verse through quickly, and then moved on. But the text jumped out at me, and I've been thinking about it ever since. From James 3, verse 18, "Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness", and, so I've been told, righteousness and justice are derived from the same Greek word. This is something that connected with me. I can see how starting with peace, the tensions, hostility, and anger which result from injustice, and which also result from correcting injustice, can be overcome. I'm still working on what it means to sow in peace; that is one of the challenges I am taking away from this weekend. I'm also taking away a new appreciation for the mission of Ezekiel's Place and the resources they offer to encourage people and promote dialogue in the area of peace and justice.

### **FORUM ON IMMIGRANTS AND OUR FOOD: "PASTURES OF PLENTY, HARVEST OF SHAME"**

*(By Vivian Headings, forum participant, member of Shepherdstown Presbyterian Church and Co-founder/member of Rolling Ridge Study Community)*

In considering the important issue of how we get food on our tables, we must think of our migrant neighbors who harvest our food. This was the topic under scrutiny during the November 12 forum at Shepherd University, co-sponsored by Shepherd U., the Robert Byrd Center, Ezekiel's Place, St. Joseph's Catholic Church, and Shepherdstown Presbyterian Church. The forum drew a diverse audience: students and townsfolk, young and old, Hispanics and gringos.

The film, "Viva la Causa," produced by the Southern Poverty Law Center, was an important part of the evening. It movingly depicts the struggle of migrant workers in California in the 1970s, under the leadership of Cesar Chavez, to gain their rights to dignity and an adequate standard of living. The struggle of the migrants took three years, at least for this phase. Because of their persistence in striking



*During the Justice and Peace Academy Forum in November at Ezekiel's Place, participants deepen their knowledge, dialogue and sense of call to prophetic leadership, facilitated by two prominent theologians (Professor Bruce Birch and Professor Katherine Grieb)*

and marching, and the rightness of their cause, people across the nation joined in a boycott of table grapes that finally forced an agreement that the farm workers could form a union, thereby giving them the power to bargain successfully for basic working conditions.

This bit of history took place before the personal memory of the students in the forum's audience, but the problems of exploitation of Hispanic labor continue to this date. Naomi Tsu, a compassionate lawyer from the Immigrant Justice Program of the Southern Poverty Law Center, was the guest speaker who shared case studies from her advocacy practice. She illustrated the types of abuses that still abound, and demonstrated how various legal means were used to counteract the abuses, and in numerous instances, secure tangible laborer gains. She also suggested types of legislation still needed to stem on-going kinds of abuses.



The final part of the forum involved a thoughtful and constructive dialogue among community participants, eliciting questions and responses from Naomi and a diversity of listeners. In response to some suggestions by Hispanic participants, it was encouraging that a number of participants expressed their intentions to take follow up advocacy actions in support of our local area Hispanic residents. Delegate John Doyle expressed his willingness to work together to address the needs and rights of local Hispanic immigrants. In summary, the evening's forum certainly heightened our awareness of the continuing need to stand with those who take on the important task of harvesting the food we all eat.

*During the Hispanic Immigrant and Food Forum held at Shepherd University (Nov. 12), Naomi Tsu, attorney with the Southern Poverty Law Center, shares her work, concerns and possibilities for assisting migrant workers seeking economic justice. This dialogue followed a documentary showing the inspiring history of the movement initiated by Cesar Chavez in the 1970s. The struggle continues to this date.*

*Jesus came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; He went to the synagogue...and opened the book of Isaiah and found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."*

*(Luke 4:16-19)*

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