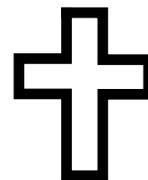




# EP JOURNAL

*A Newsletter of Ezekiel's Place Retreat Center*



Issue No. 13 – Fall 2013

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

## EP VISION, MISSION AND CORE VALUES:

- 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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## Highlights of Ezekiel's Place Events in 2013:

### January – December:

- *Various retreat groups*

### March:

- *20 – 21: Nigerian Presidential Summit on Ethics and Values (Abuja, Nigeria)*
- *23: Service Forum & Job Fair (held at American University, Wash DC)*
- *Planning for Placements of Summer Volunteers*

### July - August:

- *Morocco Peace building Trip*  
*University student performed volunteer work (in Ethiopia):*

### November:

- *2: Integrity Retreat (Nairobi, Kenya)*

*Dear Friends of Ezekiel's Place:  
Journeys Toward Peace.....*

*This marks the end of the twelfth year, by the grace of God, of Ezekiel's Place, of the programs and of the journeys of participants who have come. We believe, as Christians, that our journey with Jesus our Saviour and Redeemer, embodies the path to inward and outward peace.*

*We hope you receive insights from the reflections prepared by participants in the various programs we guide and/or support. We ask for your prayers for their journeys and for ours. We live with joy and thanksgiving for God's grace, offering guidance, encouragement and the way to justice and peace...as without justice, there will not be durable peace.*

*May you celebrate the blessings in your life during 2013, and look forward to a new year, listening for God's callings, recognizing that each of us is on a unique journey.*

*Blessings and God's Peace,*

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

*Autumn at Ezekiel's Place*



*"Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10)*

*"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the sons of God" (Matthew 5:9)*

## Our Journey

(by Barbara Anson, Co Director of Ezekiel's Place)

*Our journey through this life on earth*

*So brief, and yet profound,*

*It matters who we can become*

*In Christ's redeeming selfless love.*

*Such a Love, given to us*

*A gift from our caring God,*

*Should we not ponder our place within*

*The Love of Christ that has no end.*

*May our eyes be opened to this amazing grace,*

*From the One who so freely provides*

*A life of purpose, joy and giving*

*The path to peace, to fruitful living.*

*On this journey of life so brief*

*May we reflect on things eternal*

*Reaching out in Love to one another*

*To share our gifts as sister and brother.*

*Let us not, in this life, be bound*

*By earthly things or a sense of fear,*

*But become who we are meant to be*

*Children of God, who has set us free.*

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*"Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light  
to my path." Psalm 119:105*

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## Engagement with Student Service Leaders

(by Matt Clausen, Chairman, Building Bridges Coalition, & VP for Partners of the Americas)

In March 2013, I was honored to receive an invitation from Richard Anson from Ezekiel's Place to engage directly with student service leaders at a service forum held at American University. This was no low-level panel. Rather, I found myself sharing the stage with the Acting Director of the Peace Corps, the Chief of Staff for the Corporation for National and Community Service, and the Senate leader of the West Virginia state legislature. But the most important aspect was that this was a direct engagement opportunity with student service leaders who, despite the pressures of time, academic rigor, and all other things that can capture a young student's life, had prioritized sharing and learning about their commitment to service. On behalf of the Building Bridges Coalition and Partners of the Americas, it is an honor to be surrounded by such forward looking students in our community. Thank you for the opportunity to engage.

## Valuable Insights from Leaders of Major Service Organizations

(by Gianna Maita, Justice & Peace Major, Georgetown University)

The Transformative Leadership through Service Forum was a great way for university students to understand what options are available to someone considering a commitment to a vocation of service. It was helpful to hear from the presenters, all leaders of major service organizations (Peace Corps, MCC, CNCS/VISTA, Partners of the Americas), their views on service to different communities—be it our local community, the national community, or even the global community. Their insights on the valuable skills students learn from serving those communities made the event quite informative for many participants; the speakers helped us understand how service can be more than just “a summer off” or a post-grad year “delaying a real job.” Service can make an impact on resumes and how employers see a candidate for a job. But more than that, the speakers made it apparent that service can change lives. It can alter our worldviews and the way we perceive those who are less economically fortunate than ourselves. Essentially, service can be transformative.

The second portion of the forum included networking and learning about different organizations looking for volunteers, like the participants. This was particularly helpful for us to see what kind of work we would be interested in doing, which populations we would like to serve, with what organizations, and where. It became clear that no service experience is the same, and that there are many options for those interested in seriously investing in a community for a long period of time. This part of the event broadened our vision of not only what service is and what we can get out of it, but also of the choices we are able to make when deciding to do service work either over the summer or following graduation. Next year, I intend to recommend this event to my friends who may be considering post-graduate or long-term service.



**Speakers at Service Forum (see EP website for podcast) (C. Hessler-Redelet/Peace Corps; Senator J. Unger (WV); R. Keidel/MCC; A. Mishra/CNCS).**

## Re-Passioned for Service Work

(by **Helen Conway**, student at Georgetown University)

*This past spring, I had the pleasure of attending the “Transformative Leadership Through Service” Forum and Service Fair. Service has always played a role in my life. My love of and desire for a life of service has been strengthened and changed throughout my time as a student at Georgetown University. The prospect of a service project following my graduation has always tugged at the back of my mind. But so have concerns of a more practical nature: the current state of the economy, gaining financial independence, graduate school.*

*At the time of the Forum and Service Fair, I was feeling disenchanted with my service work at Georgetown and had almost given up on the idea of pursuing service work after graduation. However, this event provided me with a new perspective that allowed me to reflect and reconsider. All of the speakers were clearly passionate about their particular life path and work. It was refreshing to be in the company of such passion. I, so often, get caught up in the day-to-day at school and lose sight of the bigger picture. This event reminded me of the bigger picture: if service is something you feel called to, you should answer.*

*The speakers also allowed me the chance to reconsider my options for service work. I was already beginning the process of reevaluation that is very typical of a college sophomore. Their stories and advice served as a reminder to focus on discovering and pursuing my authentic path. People do the most good if they are pursuing a path that is meaningful to them.*

*This event is a great opportunity for students and the like who are interested in pursuing service. As a free event, it is accessible. I hope to see this event happen again and grow to bring more opportunity to its participants.*

## A Shared Bond Among Volunteers

(by **Kimberly Williams**, Ex. Director of Good Shepherd Volunteers \*, & Resource Person for the Forum)

*As an alumnus of American University it was so encouraging to be back in Kay Chapel surrounded by university students who were interested in learning more about post-grad service. I wish there had been a forum like this a decade ago when I was trying to figure out what to do after graduation. It was only by chance that I had stumbled across a volunteer program. After graduation I participated in Mission Year in Oakland, CA.*

*My placement was as a counselor at a drug recovery program for women. The women at the center quickly broadened my understanding of the world and urban dynamics. It was a year of life lessons and significant reflection. Looking back, I appreciate how that year allowed me some time to figure out what I believed and my values before I launched into my career. Which incidentally has been dedicated to supporting young people in faith-based post-graduate service opportunities through Mission Year, the Lasallian Volunteers, and now as the director of the Good Shepherd Volunteers in NYC.*

*As I listened to Carrie Hessler-Radelet (Director) speak about Peace Corps, Ruth Keidel (Director) speak about the Mennonite Central Committee, Matt Clausen (CEO) speak about Building Bridges and Partners of the Americas, and Asim Mishra (Chief of Staff) talk about domestic service opportunities through the Corporation for National and Community Service I felt connected to each of them. I was reminded that while each of our programs and experiences are unique there is also a shared bond among long-term volunteers.*

*Volunteer experiences like the ones shared by the speakers don't just impact the communities that are served, but they shape the volunteer for a lifetime. A recent study, of more than 5,000 former volunteers, sponsored by the Catholic Volunteer Network\*\* found that, in general, former volunteers are more engaged in their communities and churches, are more educated, and report a higher level of happiness than those who did not complete a term of full-time service.*

*I sincerely hope that the students in attendance were inspired to make a commitment to service, and to open themselves to be transformed in the process.*

*\*For further details on GS Volunteers, see: [www.gsvolunteers.org](http://www.gsvolunteers.org);*

*\*\* <https://catholicvolunteernetwork.org/volunteer-introspective-survey-former-volunteers-catholic-volunteer-network>*



**Kimberly Williams (rt.), provides volunteer advice to one of participants.**

## Strengthening my Resolve for Peace building

*(by Liz Reitman, Graduate from James Madison University)*

The email from the Community Service Learning office described Global Jubilee Village as a poverty and cultural simulation experience, just the sort of thing to cap off my senior year at James Madison University. I added my name to the waiting list. A few weeks later, I learned that I would spend my weekend as a Palestinian refugee, exploring a situation where, as in most cases, peace seemed unattainable.

Fortunately, our Israeli and Palestinian native resource persons felt otherwise, and over time their stories of reconciliation led me to agree. What I remember most from GJV were the routines that brought individual families together, drum circles and meal preparation. Our family was given the same amount of food and water that a typical Palestinian family would consume over a three-day period, yet regardless of what side of the conflict you were on, our families still managed to enjoy some rhythm, and a Clementine!

Role-playing activities with our Israeli counterparts intensified the experience. As much as I despised the checkpoints and occasional house raids, our temporary occupation prompted rich dialogue about having empathy for victims and perpetrators alike. My weekend retreat reinforced the notion that peace is a process, not a static event.

In order for all of this to resonate, let me tell you about my vocational journey and why I ended up at Ezekiel's Place. Until a few years ago, I associated nonviolent resistance with hippies, granola and Ben Kingsley. That view changed when I traveled to Central and South America. I saw firsthand why traditional methods of charity could never outrun the cyclical, long-term impacts of war. Despite decades of violent conflict, I also saw tremendous resilience. The two churches I worked with had outlasted the wars in their respective countries. Even in the most deeply divided communities, these churches served as a place to find shared ground.



**Liz Reitman (far left) enjoys a moment of reflection and warm fire with her “Palestinian family” members.**

I returned to the States and found a student-editing job at a small NGO focused on alleviating post-conflict trauma and the negative effects of war by assisting those injured by landmines. The organization and others like it used theater improvisation and peer support recovery groups. I was passionate about creating a similar network, one that would emphasize psychosocial healing and vocational training. Still skeptical about whether a similar program could succeed, I enrolled in a trauma awareness and resilience-training program. Throughout the course, we were each asked to bring in a symbol of trauma and a symbol of hope. With participants hailing from Iran, Afghanistan and Japan, spirituality became a central theme in each individual story. The training program served as my first holistic learning experience, one of many to come.

At GJV, my perception of global poverty was expanded, challenged and reinforced. These realizations only strengthened my resolve. After I graduated from college, I enrolled in the two separate programs to learn more about peace building and sustainable business practices. I have been working as a nonprofit consultant ever since, gaining additional insights into organizational management. Propelled by the overwhelming support and affirmation from GJV, I anticipate seeking additional opportunities to build upon what I have learned. After all, peace is a process.

## The Magic of a Genuine and Learning Dialogue

*(by Carlos Romo, Mexican family resource person and Restaurant Owner/Manager)*

In April 2013, I was so fortunate to participate in the 3-day Global Jubilee Village (GJV) Experience, and it was memorable! As expected, at the beginning, the attitude, behavior and the expectations of this awesome group of students were hesitant, and questioning as to what all this was about, what to expect and look for. As the program unfolded and the first hours went by, the transformation and the magic of each of these great university students started to glow. The attitude was positive, the level of enthusiasm and energy among the students was taking over and starting to grow. Even though their daily “way of living” was compromised with only minimal basics, the human aspect was resilient and positive.

During the next couple of days, the magic of a genuine, true dialogue was starting to show. Their willingness and pride in representing their assigned country, and making an effort to look at their country’s problems, through political

and socio-economic scenarios, completely engaged them! I, as a native facilitator from Mexico, felt the pride of my childhood roots, but foremost the magnificent opportunity that our country, the USA, can encourage in those who have the passion, love and understanding for others, without prejudices of religion, race or ethnicity. Love is God, God is peace! What a moment of life!!!!



Carlos Romo (center), and border “militia” facilitate discussion following role-playing activity of Hispanics being caught by “Border Patrol militia” for illegal crossing.

### **Morocco as a Hub for Regional Peace building** (Dr. Adina Friedman Visiting Scholar, School for Conflict Analysis & Resolution George Mason University)

When I first set foot in Morocco, back in the summer of 2005, I knew instantly that it was a “gold mine” that needed to be further explored. Not only did it offer a fascinating mosaic of cultures, religions, languages, landscapes, and people; for me, as a Jewish Israeli, Morocco’s history and society held the key to understanding other important issues, such as the dynamics between Arab Jews (Jews from Arab lands) and European (Ashkenazi) Jews in Israel, the relationship between Jewish and Palestinian citizens of Israel, and Israel’s struggles to understand and define its identity and its place in the region.

Morocco constitutes an “anomaly” in the regional context for a number of reasons. First, it is the only Arab/Muslim country in which Jews have existed for millennia, and in which they continue to hold a relatively prominent role. Moreover, despite Morocco having no official diplomatic ties with Israel, in reality there are many relations – social, business, political – between the countries. The yearning of many Israelis of Moroccan descent to renew ties with their past and country of origin, and Morocco’s encouragement of such relations, greatly contribute to relations between the countries.

Second, the Arab Spring was experienced in Morocco in a fairly mild way, which makes it an interesting case study and an attractive destination. Third, Morocco’s relative marginality in the Arab-Israeli conflict may be the secret to the key role it can potentially play in the conflict’s settlement.

Though it is on the conflict’s periphery, Morocco is not negligible: the Moroccan King holds the official and eternal title of Chairman of the Jerusalem Committee of the Muslim states. Like other Arab states, Morocco recently renewed its commitment to the Arab Peace Initiative, and it continues to nurture its good, years’ long relationship with the United States.

Morocco, therefore, is an excellent place in which to cultivate new understandings, new relationships, and new leadership. Over the past year I have taken Israelis, Americans, and other internationals to Morocco for immersion, intensive study tours. We have met with academics/ students, policy makers, activists, religious leaders, and community members in Morocco, all while traveling through diverse landscapes, and visiting different cities and villages, organizations, and historical and cultural sites. Together we have explored the social and political issues concerning Morocco domestically (poverty/development, gender, conflict, identity, etc), as well as dynamics of Jewish-Arab-Amazigh, and Jewish-Muslim relations in Israel and in the region; the relationship between “Arabness” and “Jewishness;” broader notions of and relations between “East” and “West”; and the potential for a different kind of regional relations based on positive historical precedents.

Our participants, along with our resource people, shared their knowledge, insights, and personal stories, enriching and enhancing the experience. One of our main partners has been the Mimouna Club, an NGO (founded by Moroccan/ Muslim students) dedicated to learning about Judaism and the history of the Jews in Morocco, and emphasizing the Jews’ integral role in Morocco’s culture and history. Such a group in the Arab/Muslim world is rare and important to encourage. Throughout the program, my co-leader, Einat Levi, and I greatly emphasized process and reflection – as individuals and as a group. Thus, we were all embarked on personal and collective journeys simultaneously.

This project is a natural offshoot of work done at, or by, Ezekiel’s Place. For many years I, along with partners, have run intensive dialogue retreats for parties to the Arab-Israeli conflict. For many participants these have been transformative experiences, and many of the relationships formed have gotten wider and deeper over the years. Ezekiel’s Place has supported these projects, as well as our recent Morocco trip, in both material and non-material ways. The workshops and trips (to Israel/Palestine/Jordan in the past, and now to Morocco) are all part of the overall program: nourishing a comprehensive, multi-party, bottom-up approach to peace building in the MENA

region. Continuing and intensifying these people-to-people interactions, building sustainable relationships, cultivating new leadership, and, together with our partners tackling issues at the core of our conflicts, identities, and futures, is the only way to move forward.

I thank Ezekiel's Place for their support and for being part of these efforts, and I invite others to embark with us on our upcoming peace building journeys!

For more information about upcoming trips to Morocco, please visit <http://scar.gmu.edu/field-experience/morocco/home>; For non-credit options or other information, please email [afriedm1@gmu.edu](mailto:afriedm1@gmu.edu).



**Morocco peace building group crossing the desert in Morocco (with Adina and daughter Illi in front).**

## **My Joy in Working with Connecting Hope in Ethiopia**

**(by Selamawit Mathewos, senior at Trinity Washington University)**

My Experience at Connecting Hope was motivating, to see powerful women working together to provide a better life to their family, also to be able to see how they were trying to manage working and raising kids on their own. Connecting Hope works with Former Women Fuel Wood Carriers. They are given jobs, sewing and making scarves to sell in the states, online and also at a market in Ethiopia. They work together to provide warm and comfortable scarves for others, instead of begging for money on the side of the road, or carrying wood from a mountain, up and down in rain and cold. The kids at Connecting Hope center are the children of the ladies who make the scarves and also sell and work at the center. Not only are they provided a job, but also day care or a school for their children, while they are working. I enjoyed meeting and working with the ladies and children at the center, at Shiro Meda.

I worked with Nabiab who is the director of Connecting Hope in Ethiopia; we worked together with the school they are planning on opening in next fall. Connecting Hope will be providing childcare for the community and also for the children whose mothers work with Connecting Hope. We would get together with other professionals to get information about the school and also come up with ideas that will help the school on what they should expect from their teachers and students, the school setting and what their goals would be for the year, and planning lessons for the school year. I enjoyed helping set out the idea of the school and also brainstorming on lesson plans for the school year coming up, providing the knowledge I was taught at school and my experience from working with other organizations and with children in the past.

Not only does Nabiab Bezebeh work hard shipping out scarves and providing the needs for the women at the center and for the children, he takes time to deliver kids' formula for an orphanage. I was very proud and happy to see a young man work so hard to help struggling women, wanting to see them achieve their goals. When I first saw him with the ladies, it was as if he was one of their sons. They treated him like he was a relative and could ask him to do them favors with no hesitating. I was proud and motivated to be able to have the opportunity to work with and for Connecting Hope with Nabiab Bezebeh. He is humble to the women and also to their kids. He is one of the people in Ethiopia who is working hard and encouraging a changing Ethiopia. He has encouraged me with his work and his relationships with the women at the center.



**Ethiopian women sewing scarves for their livelihoods.**

## The Challenges and Opportunities of Promoting Enhanced Ethics and Values in Nigeria

(By Dr Sunday Ekele Uhiene, National Coordinator, Ethics and Values)

There are already numerous laws present in Nigeria that focus on combating corruption, as well as institutions dealing with it on an operational level. However, the level of corruption remains high, due to numerous underlying causes. There is also a lack of engagement with Nigerian citizens in order to foster a culture of intolerance to corruption. The Office of the Special Adviser to the President on Ethics and Values (OSAPEV), in collaboration with relevant agencies of government, civil society, private sector and development partners organized a Summit on 20 - 21 March, 2013 with over 3000 participants drawn from all over Nigeria to develop the National Strategy Framework on Ethics, Values and Accountability. The overall objective was to raise awareness of and support on-going efforts as well as to mobilize coordinated strategic actions on the vital role of enhanced ethics, values and accountability ("EVA") which could contribute to Nigeria's overall goal of socio-cultural-political-economic transformation agenda. This includes improved stewardship of its bountiful human and natural resources to improve socio-economic well-being of all Nigerians. Dr Richard Anson, Co-Director of Ezekiel's Place, whom I had met at another regional workshop, was invited to co-facilitate and back-stop the Core Team members with respect to content and general organization of the Summit.



***Sunday Uhiene presents the Nigeria Strategic Framework on Integrity and Values.***

The Summit identified four follow-up steps/processes that should be focused on in order to achieve the desired goals as follows: the prevention of corruption; more inclusive engagement with the public on corruption issues; effective enforcement of sanctions, hence the proposed Ethics Bill; Enhancing transparency and accountability. We are

already having the cooperation of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation who is currently championing the implementation of the Ethics and Compliance Units to be established in all Federal Ministries, Departments and Agencies in Nigeria. I have faith in this process, and with the support and goodwill of all stakeholders, Nigeria will emerge as a great nation by the example of its leaders. While this is an ambitious agenda, its implementation is urgently needed. My faith in God enables me to faithfully persevere, while working with other like-minded persons/groups in this diverse nation.

## “Being Encouraged to Live Out Integrity in Kenya and Beyond”

(by Dr. Ole-Ronkei, formerly from Compassion International and Entrepreneur)

On Saturday, November 2nd, 2013, Dr. Richard Anson, facilitated a morning “dialogue” in Nairobi, Kenya, on the subject of Integrity. The half-day retreat, at Garcia Gardens Hotel, was attended by 15 participants drawn from different sectors within the Kenyan society. Virtually everyone in attendance had a personal story to tell on the subject of integrity or the perpetual challenge within the broader realm of seeking to “live out integrity in the work-place.”

A dialogue on the subject of integrity in Kenya is almost the equivalent of “flogging a dead horse”! There seems to exist a certain bewilderment that if Kenya claims to be approximately 85% Christian, then it should, by extension, be a nation displaying the highest levels of integrity in all sectors of society. Yet, it is ranked among the most corrupt of the nations on the continent. Is there any added value in having such a discussion or have Kenyans simply grown immune to such matters as integrity.

The morning retreat, however, brought out some highlights that are worth noting and that, in my opinion, could form the basis for future discussions and other forms of follow up on the subject.

In a very reflective mode, one participant shared that “I have been there, I have taught, I have mentored, I have written books about it, I have given lectures on the subject, and now, I simply just feel tired.” This was echoed by a number of other participants – a sense of resignation. Pursuing a conversation on the topic is simply not tenable in Kenya. Is there any “new generation thinking” on the subject that one can bring on the table?

Kenyans appear to have split personalities when it comes to dealing with various issues. It was observed that there is the home personality, the work personality, the church personality, among others. The Kenyan person will adjust accordingly and fit and blend as needed in the prevailing environment. The idea of observing certain integrity standards merely becomes situational.

Speaking up has consequences: Should I speak up or play “dead” by doing nothing and saying nothing, or “looking the other way”, thus, remaining safe, knowing full well that speaking up has consequences? There is sufficient evidence of what has become of those who have dared to speak up in the past. Being a whistle-blower in a country like Kenya is not a lucrative enterprise. It is the equivalent of signing one’s own death warrant – emotionally, spiritually, psychologically, socially, economically ... or physically.

Defining Integrity: There was a sense within the group that spending time trying to define the word integrity would not amount to much, rather, the time should be spent sharing individual practical experiences, struggles, and dilemmas. This led to an interesting time of sharing that brought out issues that participants currently are struggling with. Undertaking a forum where real life experiences and struggles as the key focus would serve to answer the integrity question more effectively and clearer than any theoretical conversation on the same.

The conversation on integrity is not all-together dead in the Kenyan psyche! It was observed that while the general public has a tendency to look up to its leaders for direction on such matters, and subsequently to behave in a manner similar to that of their leaders (including Governors, and Members of Parliament), there is room for dialogue on integrity. It is not totally a lost cause – not yet!

The retreat had one agenda – integrity. In the course of that conversation, many other issues were raised about

the practicality of integrity. Practical applications should be the main focus on future conversations and follow up on the subject of integrity. Overall, each individual felt encouraged and re-energized to tackle the integrity challenges and dilemmas in our daily lives.



*Ole Ronkei intently listens to a reflection shared by David Omambia at the Kenya Integrity Retreat.*



*Autumn reflections at Ezekiel's Place.*

*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith”.*

*2 Timothy 4:7*

*And if you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.  
(Isaiah 58: 10 - 11)*

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