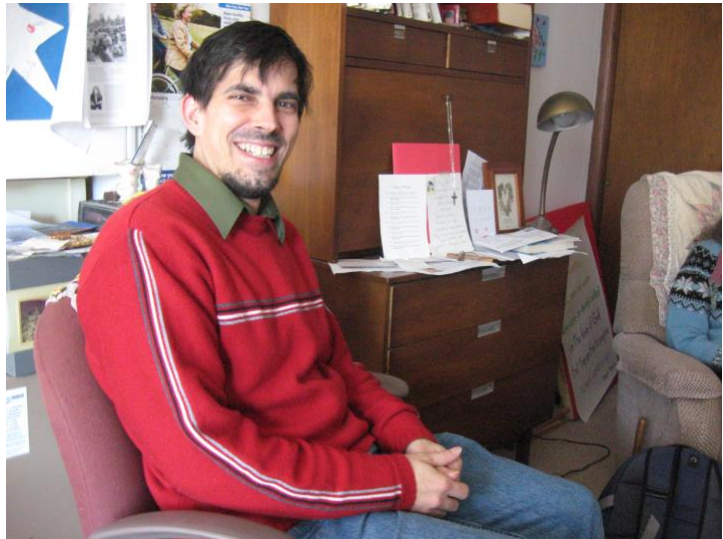


The Spirit Keeps Calling New Communities into Life: A Nurturing Communities Project Report for February, 2013

Have you ever met people who launched an intentional Christian community simply on a word from the Holy Spirit, without any awareness that others have heard a similar call? Well, it keeps happening!

Last evening at the Reba Fellowship meeting (2-19-13) we heard from Mark Klotfelter about the ministry of Capernaum House in Springfield, IL, that's been going now for about three years. The story begins with Mark and his mother (Ginger) both getting visions of a house for community living that God would provide. It would be a place where persons with broken lives could find healing and redemption -- the way it had happened for Mark, now in his thirties. There were only a few obstacles to this vision's fulfillment -- Mark had been unemployed for a month, the owner of his mother's house had no interest in renting to a community, plus they had no security deposit. But in a month all those obstacles were overcome and they began in a house with a willing owner just across the street from his mother. Mark is a good story teller of the miracles that God has done for persons who came to the house from prison, addictions, and homelessness.

However, responding 24-7 to persons with broken lives while keeping a job, was exhausting. For a while Mark and his mother, believed they were the only ones doing this kind of ministry in community, and felt lonely in their calling. Then a friend gave them a copy of *The Irresistible Revolution*, and they heard about a School for Conversion weekend that Reba Fellowship was hosting last year, just three hours up I-55. So Mark and his mother came and discovered that they are part of a vast tribe of others who have been doing the same thing now for twenty centuries.



Meet Mark Klotfelter of Capernaum House in Springfield IL

Since then we have exchanged visits in both directions. David Hovde, a young leader at Reba, has become a friend and mentor of Mark's through weekly phone calls. Capernaum House has gone through some crises and will, doubtless, go through some more, but all of us at Reba, can see the Spirit of God powerfully active in prayer, friendships, and persistent faithfulness, to shine a spot of heaven on earth in Springfield. We're in this together.

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Since there are too many stories to tell, the rest of this report will be a log of recent trips and developments. Thanks for coming along.

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Jan. 18 to 21: I participated in the Shalom Missions Community (SMC) Coordinator's gathering in St. Paul, MN, hosted by Thirdway Community. The high point was hearing that Thirdway has



SMC Coordinators from Waco, Evanston, Tiskilwa, San Francisco, and St. Paul.

decided to join SMC. We made plans for SMC events in the year ahead, and got to know Thirdday Community in their homes, meals, “lack of talent show,” and in their construction plans to build out a coffee shop into a larger café with stage for performing artists and musicians. We also enjoyed hospitality warm enough to counter the -11 degree cold we suffered and brag about back home. In a conversation with community leader, Seth McCoy, we explored the possibility of the Nurturing Communities Project developing a network of community elders available as mentors for leaders in younger communities who might desire this kind of connection and partnership.



Thirdday regales us with a “lack of talent show”

Jan. 21: While in the Twin Cities I met about twenty-five persons at the Green House which is hosting an ongoing study of the *ICCHandbook*.

Jan. 22: The Ekklesia House hosted a dinner with leaders from a few intentional communities who used the time to talk with each others issues and to explore how to build some friendships at before, possibly, convening a summer gathering the communities in the Twin Cities.



Springwater community folks can't stop talking about the visitation report.

Jan. 27: Two carloads of Reba folks paid a return visit to a group on the west side of Chicago, Parkside Community, made up of some Wheaton College alums who live in a large apartment complex of recently-arrived immigrants, many of whom share a strong Christian faith. Several Parkside Community members work for World Relief, involved with refugee resettlement and advocacy. We felt a lot of solidarity in the visit.

Jan 31 to Feb. 3: I was in Portland OR for a visitation with Springwater community where six outside friends listened to the community

members and helped them reflect on the problems of getting too large for worship in one living room, and how to help young adults grow to maturity in a hipster city “where young people to go retire.”

Feb. 4: I extended my stay in Portland so friend Brandon Rhodes could take me visit a couple of other area communities – Adsideo and something else that doesn't have a name yet. Brandon also took me to a meeting in a pub with about fifteen folks from the Parish Collective -- a movement on the Pacific NW involved in church planting efforts that are intentional about making neighborhood connections and living in close proximity. About half of them said they were reading my book -- probably because their friend Brandon Rhodes has two chapters in it.



Witness the brutal winter weather of Portland OR in Brandon Rhode's back yard. .

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What's ahead?

March 1-3: Three of us (Sally Youngquist from Reba, Rusty Bonham from Springwater, *et moi*) are converging on Hope Fellowship in Waco to conduct a community visitation.

March 4-5: I have been invited to join folks at Connexion House in Austin TX to get acquainted with their community and with the seven other groups in a community of communities that has emerged in the Austin area.

March 8-10: Reba is hosting a School for Conversion for which at least fourteen have signed up.

March 21-24: I hope to go with a few younger partners to Detroit where we have been invited to stay in an interracial community headed by Matt and Bev Hale. We want to connect with the wider circle of communities that has emerged in Detroit.

April 17-19: I hope to be at Koinonia Partners near Americus GA, for a biannual board meeting, and then spend some extra time with community groups in Atlanta.

Summer: We plan to participate in the Ekklesia Project Conference in Chicago July 11-13 with a panel representing some of the newer Chicago area communities. Augst 8-11 is the Wild Goose festival where I hope to share about and make friends for the Nurturing Communties Project.

Fall: The Nurturing Communities Annual Gathering at The Catskills Bruderhof is set for October 11-14. A planning group for that event is coming together by conference call in a week or two.

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--Folks have asked me how the *ICCHandbook* is selling. So far I've only got information on the first month and a half of its existence. By that time the publisher had sold 850 books. If we extend that to a year, that would be about 5,000 copies -- which is what Paraclete Press was

counting on.

“Heaven” or “Discussion about Heaven”: In closing I want to share the memory of a pivotal decision in my spiritual journey. But first take a look with me (in your imagination) at a *New Yorker* cartoon in which a pastor is taking an anguished look at a fork in the road with one sign pointing toward “Heaven” and the other pointing toward “Discussion about Heaven.” I remember, in the 1960’s, being in divinity school where folks thought I would make a fine scholar of Anabaptist ventures in community. But I felt God was calling me to **be** in such a community rather than become an outside expert. Clarence Jordan emphasized that you must **be** before you can **do**. Now, many years later, after choosing that road, it seems like God has also given me a passion to study Christian Intentional Community from the inside, beginning with who we are. Some of you have had to choose similar priorities. I can say that I’m still grateful for that choice which has made me a different kind of expert, one who learns from experience with friends of Jesus in community, rather than from books. Thank you for your participation in this same journey in the Nurturing Communities Project.

--David Janzen