

# The 2017 Nurturing Communities Project Gathering: Radical Hospitality: Light in a Darkening World

One hundred twenty guests from thirty communities converged on Spring Valley and New Meadow Run, two adjacent Bruderhof communities in southwestern Pennsylvania, for a lush fall weekend, to learn from each other's experiences with Radical Hospitality -- the theme of our October 13-16 Nurturing Communities Gathering. Here are a few quotes from our wrap-up session and photo highlights of our deeply moving time together:



*Those who arrived early got to join in a lantern festival where children and adults lit up the night with a long hike and songs of Jesus, the light of the world — followed by a feast of donuts. This Bruderhof tradition, a Halloween alternative, has been borrowed by many*



*Allyson Polman, one of many volunteers, welcomed guests over the registration table, helping them find name tags, hosts, and meeting spaces for our weekend together.*

**A Few Quotes from our Wrap-up Session:** Joe Gatlin: "Welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you to the glory of God." This kind of welcome has nothing to do with compatibility. Paul was writing to Jews and Gentiles struggling to find a common way together. It's the right struggle for us to have.

Tatiana Fajardo-Heflin: "I agree. The body of Christ is not about compatibility. Kaneisha and Jacoby [our foster kids] have had a blessed weekend here in a society very incompatible with Ford Heights, on the south side of Chicago, where they come from."

Jon Stoll: The best way to ruin a child is to protect him from being hospitable.

Charles Moore: We need each other. It is a gift to experience NCP hospitality. The work

of nurturing communities is all year long. It is a blow to the powers when we welcome each other and build up this network. It is a quiet revolution from below. I look forward to how we can serve one another.

Bren Dubay: Jesus says, you are the light, the light of Christ in a dark world. These days take me back to college years when I studied what was happening in



*We all joined our hosts for a couple hours of common work. Here's how winter lettuce is transplanted.*

the darkest times of church history. They were also times when the saints carried on and radical communities were born.

Sarah Howard: I told Andrew I didn't want to come and get exhausted driving seventeen hours with three kids. I asked God to change my heart. It's been good – people from lots of different backgrounds, doctrines, theologies. It's easy to unite against common enemies, but we're united without a need for conformity. We're to be the hands and feet of Jesus in our time. The most beautiful hospitality is to offer Jesus.

Toby Mommsen: The people here are so grateful for this gathering. We've become something like the frame of a lantern. The light is not ours. It comes from God.

Sally Youngquist: I'm surprised to find folks at the Bruderhof who came as adults who used to be hippies. My generation built a counter culture on sand. It was different from the empire, but not sustainable. The Bible tells of people swept over by empires. Our communities are



*Nighttime conversations over the campfire.*



built on practices Jesus gave us. Jesus is the rock that will shatter the empires that Daniel wrote about.

Pastor Jin S Kim: Thanks to the Bruderhof hosts. They are amazing. So damn humble. We crashed into their event. We are challenged by this bunch of Germans who were kicked out of Germany by the Nazis. What would that kind of radical community look like in our time? At Church of All Nations (CAN)

we had a deep and painful discussion over what happened in Charlottesville -- raw racism condoned by the highest commander of this country. In Germany the whites let it slide as various minorities were hauled away. What would it look like to be a city of refuge for people so threatened? At CAN the people of color immediately felt threatened by Charlottesville. Our nation went through a shock not felt by our white members. We need to feel that threat together. How can we be a radical community of communities in these times? What does it mean to be like the Bruderhof in England where people joined, English and German together in time of war?



Leslie Moore: How grateful we are for you to be part of this gathering in our day and age. Thanks for the consciousness you're bringing us.



In a conversation with a car-full of millennials on the way home and afterwards, these observations from our weekend rose to the top:

—We resonated with Rev. Kim’s (Church of All Nation’s) cultural assessment that millennials have been educated to be elites of privilege in a racist empire, but this privilege has made them sick and lost, unable to find the cure on their own. They long for community but are unsure whom to trust with their healing journey. Radical Christian community is a ray of hope.

—We talked about the elephant in the room — and it’s a white elephant. Most of us at the Gathering were white while the church, world-wide is increasingly people of color who are generally closer to their community roots. White people need more intentional structures to make community work because of what they have lost. But some communities among us are finding a humble partnerships with minorities who can teach us a new way. The Church of All Nations (Columbia Heights, MN), who had twelve members present, caught our eye.

—We were rural plain people, casual dressing urbanites, old and young, evangelical and liberal,, Anabaptist and Catholic Worker, who found that our differences made us interesting and enjoyable company rather than threatening. Love and worship of Jesus was the bond that held us all together.

—The Nurturing Community Project is evolving from a project among strangers into a network of people and communities who are learning to know and bless each other. Thanks be to God.

**And now, a few announcements of upcoming NCP plans:**

—In 2018 we hope to host a fall leadership retreat that will involve both an elder and a younger member from interested communities.

—In 2018 we are encouraging regional gatherings of intentional communities, some of which already have a tradition of meeting, and others who are still talking about it.

—In 2019 we expect to host a “Y’All Come” kind of gathering/ for both community folks and seekers similar to the fest we just enjoyed at Spring Valley and New Meadow Run.

—In the mean time, you are encouraged to visit one another, to keep learning and growing in the gifts that God is giving to us in these perilous times.

Yours in His Service,

David Janzen

P.S. Thanks to Toby Mommsen and Andrew Howard whose photos filled out what my camera missed in the above report. For more photos of the 2017 NCP Gathering see <https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B1kEdxTcrk7mUI85MVVKZ2x4OVk> and <https://drive.google.com/open?id=0Byfvh6SbYahGZXAtM3NWaXdZa2M>. For another personal report on the NCP Gathering, see Tim Hochstetler’s essay: [www.facebook.com/TheBruderhof/posts/1459843037385116](http://www.facebook.com/TheBruderhof/posts/1459843037385116)