

Nurturing Communities - Mid-Atlantic Regional Gathering

Hosted at Lilies and Sparrows community in Harrisonburg, VA

51 adults and 24 children from 10 communities and many towns in 9 states gathered on Saturday September 18, 2021.



Joy of meeting new friends and old at this one-day meet-up of community seekers spilled out in music, singing, laughter and intense discussions on all sides. Grateful for the warm, sunny day to meet outside, we heard from each one around the circle: what brought you here? Ryan DeRamus invited everyone's response to **"What is it that can hold a community together?"**

Pat & Debbie Murray from Springfield MA spoke from 20 years of nitty-gritty experience sharing life at Nehemiah House. "Community can't be the goal! Discipleship of Jesus is first; everything flows from this." Rebecca Whitestone has lived at JPUSA in Chicago: "Being willing to wash the dishes is the most important thing!" David & Rebecca's baby daughter was our youngest attendee, among the 25 children there.



"Clear communication" and "speaking truth in love" were emphasized as crucial for community to survive. Nico said simply "Seventy times seven." JoLeah Gorman of The Hiding Place in Washington DC offered "shared purpose." Ryan concluded "It's impossible to do it ourselves. Only the Holy Spirit can make it possible. We have to pray for it always."





“Grandpa Honesty Guy” from Florida drove 13 hours from a conference in the Midwest to get there, with Daniel Oszczepinski who plans to start a community in Nicaragua, where he’s lived for some years.



Nico Melas crafts artisan bread to sell at the farmer’s market every Saturday, to support the community. We tasted delicious samples.





Oonah slices pears with the sisters in the upstairs kitchen.

Six young people from Spring Valley Bruderhof, joined by 2 daughters from a nearby Mennonite family organized games and childcare while the grownups met.

“Dante” Daniel Bryant had made a gift



★★★★★ 28 reviews
Pillar Candle | Large

basket of [Bee the Light](http://www.beethelight.com) beeswax candles and Castile soap for each family. Their small but growing community business... Anyone reading this may support them with a purchase!
www.beethelight.com

Ryan joined the boys shucking Spring Valley sweet corn >>





After supper, everyone walked up to the hilltop, past the EMU water tower. A campfire with marshmallows kept the kids happy. Song after song with guitars, accordion, while all savored this unique gathering of harmony in these troubled times.

Brian Farrell invited all to learn the dance steps to *Hinneh mah tov umah na'im* ... "How good and pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity." We all joined hands in a dance circle – a youth-movement moment!

Moonrise over distant mountains inspired more music: Quiet harmonies of Taizé songs (we have yet to learn) continued as families with young children said farewells. Finally in the pitch dark we trekked down the hill to tackle the cleanup, all hands on deck. The men of Lilies and Sparrows set off in the bread truck to return the folding chairs for someone's Sunday service.



Sunday breakfast on the porch: huge stacks of pancakes were devoured. A birthday song was raised for Moses Melas... our hof team offered "Ten thousand monkeys say: Happy Birthday!" and learned a new one too.

Then we all sat on blankets on the shady grass below their big house for our Sunday meeting.

Ryan: "Since we talked so much yesterday, let's start with a silence to turn our hearts to the Lord and to listen. Then we'll read 3 passages for us to reflect on." The quiet framed the scriptures we heard. Many spoke, and we taught each other more new songs from various song collections. Daniel Bryant offered a farewell prayer before we parted.

We thank God for this wonderful gathering. Let's keep meeting to spur each other on toward the goal!

Next year with many more, at Camp Loucon, Kentucky!