



# The Vine

December 2016

*Becoming a community through which God's healing and hope can flow to the world*

## **First Mennonite Church of Champaign-Urbana**

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## **A Letter From Our Sister Church**

Dear brothers and sisters First Mennonite Church

We cordially greet you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Really , we are secure that the love of God sustains us and strengthens our friendship as well as keeps our lives.

We want to tell you that the last Sunday, October 30, we had a beautiful celebration of the 499th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. We did a beautiful United Worship with the St. Mark Congregation north of the city where Pastor Israel is working, and the assistance of some members of the La Gracia and Martin Luther missions in the town of Giron, where the food program (meal program).

We had a big cake and the whole community brought something to eat to share and after the service we all had lunch.

We had among us the presence of 100 people counting the children. We also had a baptism for a young man who is about to get married.

The boys and girls made a small representation of Pope Leo X and Martin Luther and how the Gospel is spread today.

This day of celebration of a common history filled us with joy.

The liturgical acts of Monday 31 October in Lund Sweden between Lutherans and Pope Francis make us feel the presence of God between us.

A common history that we share as daughter churches of the Reformation and in which we remember the XI Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation in Stuttgart (2010), where we could approach the Mennonite Church and ask for forgiveness for the pitiful events of the sixteenth century.

Moving on to another topic we have organized our Biblical Vacations School from 19 to 23 December and activities will send some pics.

We take you in our prayers and we always thank you for your help.

With love in Christ ,

P. Sergio Talero Iglesias Evangélica Luterana El Divino Redentor IELEDIR

(see pictures on the next page)





## Interview with Sue Biddle

by Kaye Massanari

Sue and I were asked to conduct interviews of FMC attendees and members for the "Vine."

We're starting this month by interviewing each other.

Sue moved to Champaign and started attending FMC four years ago. Prior to moving here, she lived in Nashville, Tennessee for forty years with her husband, Perry. After his passing, she moved to our community to be closer to her son and daughter-in-law, Perry and Mary.

**KM:** Sue, you've told me you grew up in Kentucky. Tell us a little about your family and growing up in the south.

**SB:** I grew up in Louisville, Kentucky. I had an older brother, Sonny, and we were much like Jem and Scout in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. I was the only little girl on our street and I spent a lot of play time with Sonny and his friends. They had certain rules if I was to be with them. I couldn't talk a lot, and I had to "keep up." I was happy with that. My maternal grandparents, Tiny and Topy, lived a block away. I spent a lot of time at their house as well. If my mother was fixing a dinner I didn't particularly like, I would invite myself to Tiny and Topy's for dinner. When I was four years old and Sonny was eight, construction began on the corner of our block for the Beechmont Branch of the Louisville Free Public Library and that was monumental for the rest of my time in Louisville. Not only was I there the minute the new library opened, but I was there most every day after. The librarian was my Best Friend.

**KM:** Where did you go to college and what did you study?

**SB:** I attended Centre College in Danville, Kentucky. It is a small, denominational, liberal arts school. I majored in philosophy and religion. I graduated in 1956 and have just returned from my 60<sup>th</sup> reunion.

Centre College was and remains a pivotal event in my life. This past weekend, I met, by chance the son of the woman who chaired the committee who chose me as the recipient of a full, four year scholarship.

**KM:** How and where did you meet your husband, Perry?

**SB:** I met Perry in Richmond, Virginia in 1957. He was in his final year at Union Theological Seminary, preparing for the ministry and I was attending the Presbyterian School of Christian Education. The two schools shared the library and Perry and I both worked in the library. The rest is history. We married in May of 1958.

**KM:** Where did you and Perry live after getting married?

**SB:** Our first year of marriage was spent in Edinburgh, Scotland. We always looked back on that year as a real gift. We had a nice "flat" (apartment) on the top floor of a lovely old house. Living in a place like Edinburgh gave us many opportunities to see most of Scotland and to also have a nice spring trip to Greece.

**KM:** Tell us about your family...your kids, their spouses, and your grandsons.

**SB:** When we returned from Scotland, we went back to Richmond for another degree and then in March 1960, we went to Memphis, Tennessee for Perry's first pastorate. Lindsay, our daughter and Perry were both born in Memphis. In 1965, we moved to Mobile, Alabama and from there in 1969 to Starkville, Mississippi and in 1972 to Nashville, Tennessee, where we lived until Perry died in 2011. Lindsay is a Presbyterian minister as is her husband, John Mann, and they now live in Glasgow, Scotland where they each serve a church. They will return to Minneapolis in 2019, when John retires and Lindsay will look for work. John's three children and four grandsons live in the Minneapolis area.

You know Perry (3) and Mary and Petey and Sawyer. They are the reason I came to live here. And of course, Penny, their dog, is one of my favorite "people."

**KM:** In the FMC directory it says you are retired from Social Service Administration. Tell us something about the work that you did.





**SB:** In Nashville, I directed a large United Way agency that provided child care for preschool children and before and after school care and summer care for school age children. We had an enrollment of 150 children and were considered one of the best programs in the state. We had a large staff, served really good food and were used as demonstration by the Department of Human Services and the United Way. I wrote grants and budgets, promoted our program, hired staff, led workshops at local and national early childhood conventions and was even proficient at unstopping a clogged toilet! From there, I was recruited to be in a start-up company that provided onsite childcare for corporations for their employee's children. My main job there was to set up a national child care referral service for one of the largest hotel companies.

**KM:** You've shared some amazing stories with me about your extensive travels with your husband. What are a couple of your favorite places you have traveled?

**SB:** You don't want to get me started on this subject. Perry and I did travel a lot. Perry would rather travel than eat and I did get to see most every place I wanted to see and some places several times. Perry still had a list of places he wanted to go when he died!

We did a safari in Tanzania and a bit of Kenya for two weeks and then we went on our own to Zimbabwe to see Victoria Falls – something I had always heard about and wanted to experience.

Flying out of Tanzania, after seeing all the animals – some folks never get to see a panther or cheetah – was in a six seater plane from a grass field with only a windsock to indicate wind direction was so exciting and only the beginning of a three day, three country expeditions to Vic Falls. The Falls did not disappoint. We celebrated our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a hot air balloon ride over the Serengeti National Park.

We also had the opportunity to see a good bit of Russia and China. We spent a lot of time in Britain and Europe where we would rent a car, stay in inexpensive little hotels or B & Bs and go where we wanted – usually for a month at a time...and even longer after retirement.

**KM:** I know that you read a lot. What is your favorite book that you read this past year?

**SB:** Reading is my addiction! My favorite book this year was *All the Light We Cannot See*. What My all time favorite book is *Crossing to Safety*, by Wallace Stegner.

**KM:** How do you like living in Champaign-Urbana? What are some of your favorite things about this area? Is there anything you don't like about living here?

**SB:** I very much like living here. CU is so much easier to do than Nashville. Yet, CU offers a lot things that I like. The Krannert Center is wonderful and has such a good variety of programs. There are good restaurants here. And I've really found great friends and I found FMC! And being near family is special. I can't even complain about the weather. It is not so different from Nashville. I do complain about the closing of Kirby/Florida for football games! And I'll probably never try to fly out of here again.

**KM:** Hmm. That sounds like another interesting story to ask you about later. Sue, thanks for taking the time to let us get to know you better. Is there anything else you would like "Vine" readers to know about you?

**SB:** What I would like "Vine" readers to know is how much I appreciate FMC and the friends I have made here. You are a warm and welcoming congregation with a passion for peace and justice - just what I was looking for in a church.





## FMC LOCAL MISSION: Habitat for Humanity Interfaith Build

By Clark Breeze

Champaign County Habitat for Humanity is celebrating 25 years of bringing people together to help build strength, stability and self-reliance through shelter in 2017. In recognition of this anniversary year, Habitat is building 2 homes in Urbana with the financial and interfaith support from many churches, temples, mosques and houses of worship. Representing all the major monotheistic religions – Islam, Judaism, and Christianity – local faith groups are joining together to provide a “hand up” working alongside two local Habitat homeowners. Each of these faiths has a long-standing tradition of providing shelter to help end poverty. Habitat is providing an opportunity to guild interfaith relations and to build strength, stability and self-reliance through shelter here in our community. Faith is lived, not compromised, when we can join together to provided decent housing for local families. **First Mennonite Church is proud to be one of 23 local faith communities participating in the Interfaith Build.**

On Sunday, September 11<sup>th</sup> (National Day of Remembrance and Service) the Interfaith Build Ceremonial Kick-off was held at 1212 Hill St., Urbana, one of the building sites. Every participating church was given the same assignment for the kick-off. Each was asked to fill a vase with soil from their church grounds and bring it to the kick-off. As a symbol of cooperation and mutual aid, the 20+ vases of dirt from the various faith communities were mixed together and spread over the two building sites.

**The Habitat families will join us in worship on February 19, 2017.**



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## Update from Council – Next Steps Following Retreat Discussions

Thanks to all of you who filled out surveys last spring regarding our congregational life and to everyone who attended the fall retreat and thought creatively together about future possibilities for FMC.

As noted in the Congregational Life Surveys, many FMCers desire greater congregational diversity, more opportunities to connect with those of other backgrounds and faiths, and collective opportunities for meaningful service. As was clear from the retreat discussions and skits, FMCers have also begun to wonder how the apartment building next door might be a part of our mission moving forward.

Council’s discussion of the survey results helped shape the retreat agenda, and during our two most recent meetings, Council has discussed where to go from here with the information collected from the surveys and the retreat. The task of solidifying a specific, communal vision and concrete action plan is difficult, and seems even more so in this uncertain, post-election

era. As just one example (related to an idea generated at the retreat), Council members have wondered whether there will be an increased or decreased need to house refugee families in the coming years.

Council will continue to discuss next steps over the coming months. However, one thing we feel will be helpful in taking any next steps involving the apartment building is ensuring that the congregation has clear information about the building’s finances, including our outstanding balance, projected payoff date and ongoing costs. Phyllis Croisant, Dannie Otto and I will share that information at our annual budget meeting.

This meeting will be held January 22, beginning immediately after a noon church-wide potluck. I hope you will join us!

Sarah Lubienski, Council Chair





# Refugee Family Update

By Jan Sabey

Dusabimana and three of her sons arrived in Urbana on Friday afternoon, October 21, 2016. They arrived with their clothing and a few personal belongings after living in Chicago under some difficult circumstances. Since then, they have been busy getting their state ID cards updated, learning to ride a few buses, finding stores that carry some of their ethnic foods, and many other moving-to-a-new-city tasks.

Dusabimana and Innocent (the oldest son) have been attending ESL classes 4 mornings a week at First Presbyterian Church in Champaign. Patrick and Justin are attending Urbana High School.

Innocent has also gotten a part-time job at The Hub, a campus-town bar and grill on First Street. His employer is quite pleased with his good work and good attitude and has just recently increased his hours from three to four days a week. This is very good news as the family moves to trying to become financially independent in a few months. For the time being, Innocent's income is being supplemented by donations that are distributed through ECIRMAC (the local refugee service center).

Several folks at FMC met Patrick and Dusabimana a few weeks ago when they visited one Sunday. Patrick mentioned afterward that he really liked that we read the Bible in our worship. He also said they did not know any of the hymns that we sang, but he liked the words. The family belongs to the Seventh Day Adventists-Reformed Movement.

Several weeks ago, I asked for some help with watching over the duplex the family is renting from Myles Alexander (former FMC attender) at a very low rental rate. Myles made the duplex available on the condition that someone from FMC would be the contact person for him with the family; for now, I am that person.

I want to thank Jack Paxton, Sam Cox, and Chris Lubienski for making themselves available as consultants and occasional handyman tasks as the family learns how to live in a house. Jack has already been called on to take a look at the bathroom outlet (no lights); we ended up calling an electrician, but I was grateful for Jack's checking some first possibilities.

The family still has a number of continuing needs, including:

- (1) more income – does anyone have knowledge of and/or connections to part-time, entry-level jobs?
- (2) more social interaction – particularly Dusabimana, who needs opportunities to expand her beginning English language skills. Anyone interested in being a conversation partner?
- (3) help to continue learning how to get around by bus – anyone want to be a “bus-buddy” for an afternoon?
- (4) prayer support – to make good adjustments to this community; for good health; good school experiences; financial independence (their budget is very, very frugal, right now)

Please keep ECIRMAC in mind if you are considering end-of-year local charitable contributions; it has been invaluable in providing guidance and advice to the relocation team as we have tried to assist this family.

Thank you for the concerns expressed, the donations of household items, yard work help (Donna Nelson), and your ongoing interest. Thank you for supporting efforts to make Champaign County an immigrant-friendly part of our country.





## Interview with Kaye Massanari

By Sue Biddle

Some of you may know Kaye very well as she has been a member of FMC for a long time. And though I've only known Kaye for about four years, I learn something new every time I'm with her.

**Kaye, you've been a part of the Champaign/Urbana community for a long time. Did you grow up here or nearby?**

I was born and raised in Champaign-Urbana. I went to Dr. Howard elementary school, Edison junior high and Champaign Central (which was the only high school in Champaign at that time).

Throughout high school my best friend, Pam, and I worked in the children's room at Champaign Public Library. It was a perfect job for me, working with books, and working with kids...even though it paid less than \$1.00/hour. Pam and I had this dream of getting our degrees in library science and then somehow purchasing a well-stocked bookmobile that we would drive through Appalachia, spreading the joy of books. Somehow our paths went in different directions and that dream never materialized for us, but the memory of it remains vivid to me.

After I graduated from college, I lived in Oak Park for several years. And I lived in Florida a couple of times, several months each time. But wherever I go, I seem to always gravitate back to C-U.

**How did you come to be a member of FMC?**

Before FMC came into being, my family "commuted" from Champaign to East Bend Mennonite Church near Fisher, Illinois, for Sunday morning, Sunday evening and Wednesday evening services. My parents started meeting regularly with a group of Mennonite students on the U of I campus. At some point the group decided it was time to start a church in Champaign-Urbana. I remember meetings in our living room with my family, my cousin, Cindy, and her parents, talking about this huge change for us. I was fifteen when FMC started, and my membership at East Bend was somehow magically transferred from East Bend to FMC—making me a charter member. Probably not that much magic was involved, but it was never actually explained to me.

**I know you have a lot of relatives. Tell us about your family – your parents and siblings. Where are your siblings now? Who else are you related to...I know you have lots of cousins.**

My parents, Bob and Lila Massanari, grew up in a rural setting in Fisher and Dewey, IL respectively. Dad owned a paint contracting business with two of his brothers. Mom was a homemaker. She was active in PTA and our school activities. And she was the best cook I've ever known. Dad took me fishing with him and taught me to appreciate nature. Mom shared her love of classical music with all of us. They were quiet people, but I know they touched a lot of lives in a positive way.

My oldest brother, Mike, is a retired physician. He lives with his wife, Lois, in Lynden, Washington. My brother, Larry, is a retired Social Security Administration executive. He lives with his wife, Paula, in Exton, Pennsylvania. My sister, Kris, is the youngest. She lives in Chicago with her husband, John. Kris is an RN and works in medical information technology with the Presence Health System.

I'm not sure how Mom and Dad became so involved with international students at the U of I. I'm certainly grateful that they did. It was great to have all these people from exotic, far-off places be a part of our home over the years. Pairat, from Chiang Mai, Thailand, and her husband, Somsook Sethbhakdi, from Bangkok have become an integral part of our family. We consider them our siblings, and they attend our family reunions and special events.

Hmm, who else am I related to? I've heard that there are only two or three degrees of separation between Mennonites, so that could be a long list. But to keep it short, many are aware that Cindy Breeze is my first cousin and we grew up next door to each other. I've spoken to some people from FMC who are acquainted with my nephew Eric and his wife Yolanda.

**Tell us about where you went to school and to college. What were your favorite subjects?**

I graduated from Goshen College with a degree in art





education. In addition to art, I enjoyed math, literature and creative writing classes.

**You and your partner Kristy Rice were married about this time last year. Where did you meet and how long ago was that?**

Yes, Kristy and I got married on October 20, 2015. We've been together for seventeen years. In 1999 she came to me for massage. A mutual friend of ours referred her to me because she was having issues with frozen shoulder. We really enjoyed our conversations, and decided to go out for dinner to Radio Maria's one Saturday. We immediately connected; we have so much in common. So that was it, we've been together ever since.

We've gone through some challenging, sad times with family things. Mostly, though, we bliss out experiencing life together. We enjoy traveling, hiking and just hanging out with each other. I appreciate Kristy's spirituality. I enjoy hearing her mystical reflections and our times of meditation together.

**What lead you to learn the art of massage and where did you train for that and how long have you done massages?**

I've been doing massage for twenty years. I worked as a typesetter for a book production company for about fifteen years. I became bored with the work and at a time when I was exploring other options, a friend told me about a massage class she had taken. I'm not sure why that just clicked for me. I started gathering information about massage schools and tried to figure out how to afford quitting my job and returning to school.

Around that time I saw Bill Moyer's "Healing and the Mind" on PBS. I felt drawn to work with people with cancer and other serious illnesses. I had no experience for anything like that. I choose to believe it was a divine intervention in 1994 that I was diagnosed with Hodgkin's lymphoma. I had surgery and went through six months of chemotherapy. I was blessed to meet Jan Shepardson who gave me massages weekly during that challenging time. Her healing touch helped me immensely.

There were other serendipitous events that led me to go to the Florida School of Massage in Gainesville, Florida. It was a six month program, and a life-altering experience. It was like being in a Buddhist retreat while

taking classes in massage. There was a lot of focus on meditation and being present, in the moment.

It was at FSM that I started doing Qigong. I continue to do those movements as part of my meditations.

**What are your hobbies?**

I enjoy reading and doing crossword puzzles. I like walking especially outdoors, but walk on our treadmill when it's cold or rainy. Kristy and I enjoy hiking a lot.

I gave up doing art many years ago. I've been challenging myself to do art again and have been attempting to draw since I retired from Carle three years ago. I now can say I'm actually enjoying it. When I retire from massage I dream of transforming the massage room into an art room.

I joined OLLI last year, and enjoy the classes I've taken and the lectures I've attended.

**Where are your favorite places to eat in Champaign/Urbana?**

This list changes from year to year. Right now we're enjoying Big Grove Tavern, Miga and V.Picasso in Champaign. Crane Alley and Milos in Urbana. I just read that Kohinoor opened in Champaign. I look forward to checking it out.

**What are some of your favorite books?**

I'm a huge fan of Patti Smith, her music and writing. Her books *Just Kids* and *M Train* are among my favorites. Ann Patchett is a favorite author of mine. I just finished reading *Commonwealth* and really enjoyed that. Her book *Magician's Assistant* is also a favorite.

One other I have to mention is Ted Kerasote's book about his dog, *Merle's Door: Lessons from a Free-thinking Dog*. It's one of my all-time favorites.





## An Interview-Turned-Narrative by Dennie Seaman

I was born in 1952 and raised a Baptist in Arthur, IL. I graduated from Arthur High School and went to Danville Junior College for one semester. In my early working years I painted and hung wallpaper. I had two real jobs, 1976 started at Humko, a stand-alone vegetable oil refinery which was one of the world's largest. I worked three years in the plant processing edible oils and the last 19 years managing the process. I attended Parkland during my employment and received an associate's degree in business management. All of this processing experience educated me of my next career step with Johnson Matthey. In 1998 I was at the top of my career level so I applied for a sales job with Johnson Matthey, a global catalyst company, and to my surprise I got the job. Over next seventeen years I traveled selling nickel based catalyst, both passivated and encapsulated. My 22 years of experience processing edible oils served me well as a sales manager for North and South America.

The products I sold were made in Emmerich, Germany so I travel a bit in Europe. Later in my sales career I also sold an activated nickel products made in Seiverville, TN. I did get to see a lot of places and ate some wonderful native foods in South America. A few of my favorite dishes are Moqueca from Salvador, Brazil, Empanadas from Columbia, steak in Argentina.

Nancy moved to Arthur when I was in eighth grade. We started dating late during our senior year. I suppose I had a taste for refined foods even then, our first date was eating at Wheat's Steak House in east Urbana. I convinced her to order lobster which I later regretted as she always wanted to have lobster. Nancy went to nursing school in Hesston. I moved to Kansas and stayed with her brother Gerry and his wife Vonnie in 1972 to rekindle our relationship. We married in February of 1974; it's been almost 43 years.

We have three girls, Alissa, Arin and Ashley. Alissa sells health insurance, Arin teaches kinder garden at

Country Side and Ashley is a stay at home mother and lives in Mt. Vernon, IL.

We have seven grand kids and of course they're all special as any self-respecting grandparent would say. Four live locally and the other three two hours away. We typically have a family vacation every year. Nancy and I believe it's important that the grandkids to spend time as a family unit.

I have a fishing boat and do a bit of fishing in the area and at Kentucky Lake in the spring. I enjoy a round of golf about every week when I need a good laugh at myself. Cooking is not a hobby like golf or fishing, for me it's something I have to do to keep my weight up. I do enjoy cooking and can make a decent gumbo. Perhaps my favorite dish is a blackened fish fillet on a bed of dirty rice and topped with an Alexander sauce.

This will be our third winter in the Florida panhandle on Okaloosa Island and we really enjoy the three month because it's just us. Fresh seafood, warmer weather and the overall economics is the draw for us and only thirteen hours from Champaign. Our rented condo is on the third floor and right on the beach. I like to say I can spit in the ocean from my balcony which is not true but it is really close to the gulf waters. We typically attend a Methodist church while we're away.

What I enjoy most about retirement is.....not travelling.





## Rough Magic

P. Gregory Springer recently returned from a five-week exploration through the cities, jungle, and mountains of Mexico and northern Guatemala. He kept a log of his travels, available at [pgspringer.blogspot.com](http://pgspringer.blogspot.com). This is the final entry in his journal.

The next morning at 8 a.m., Antonio's father, Francisco, and an older brother, Bernabe, are standing anxiously in the municipal plaza of Santa Eulalia, looking around to find me.



I'm not hard to spot, the only white guy in town and half a head taller than everyone else, munching on some street food and drinking coffee in a paper cup.

Severino, who appears to be about six and the youngest in the family of nine children, has also come along for the ride. He offers a shy smile of curiosity.

Bernabe is the only one who speaks some Spanish. He is also the driver of the truck we will take to reach their home high in the mountains. He grips the steering wheel tightly and navigates with jerky caution and intensity.



I soon understand why. There is no road as such. The three-hour trip proceeds over dirt, rocks, holes the size of wheelbarrows, gullies from previous mudslides, and areas covered with water. Where we are going definitely is not on the map.

The higher we climb, the more beautiful the landscape becomes, stretching out for miles in a dizzying mixture of mountain jungle, pine trees, rocky terrain, and tropical rain forest where bananas and coffee grow freely. You can see for miles through the valleys, towns in the far distance and beyond them, Mexico.

Hours later, we arrive at Francisco's house. He is a vig-

orous man exactly my age, hardy and healthy and surrounded by his family, except for those sons and grandchildren who have journeyed to America.



Using mostly sign language and a few Spanish words, surrounded by some of his children and grandchildren, he welcomes me into his humble house, stacks of wood

outside, a dirt floor, a few joined rooms.

There is electricity, if no running water. I charge my phone, although cell phone reception is limited.

There is a Catholic church across the way and Francisco has the keys, motioning if I want to see inside. His brother Antonio walks over from his nearby house to join us.

Later, when I meet Antonio's son, also named Francisco and who speaks Spanish, do I learn that his father and uncle had been debating when the last time an outside visitor had been in this aldea. They decide that there was a priest some years back, and some coffee buyers, but apparently I am the only white person to be in this community for over 40 years.

At the wood burning stove in the kitchen, Antonio's sister Celia makes me coffee and macaroni shells in broth. It is warming and filling. A younger girl, a neighbor, offers me three bananas.

Every meal that I have here will be the same: macaroni soup, sometimes with chunks of chicken, bananas, tortillas, and coffee. Even the children drink coffee continually.

My phone provides hours of entertainment. I take videos and pictures. Laughing, everyone is thrilled and happy to see themselves, although a few run from the camera.





I arrange a video chat between Celia and Antonio in Champaign. They are two years apart in age and were close growing up. They talk and see each other for 12 minutes, although sometimes the signal gets lost and we have to reconnect. Celia wipes away a tear as they talk excitedly, joking and happy and yet heartbreaking at this reunion.

Later, family and neighbors gather for another video chat with Daniel, another brother who lives in Champaign with wife Victoria and son Franky. Twelve family members and neighbors assemble in front of my phone as I hold up the video image. Daniel talks and jokes and smiles from thousands of miles away. He sticks out his tongue and everyone bursts into laughter.

Every time I try to enter the kitchen, I hit my head on the doorway. I'm too tall. The open air toilet out back has no door and they are amused to see me try to use it as a urinal. The roof is much too small to stand up inside, but it takes a while to accustom myself to going outside like the other men and boys do.

I am staying in what was Daniel's house before he left. There are still his clothes and books and those things belonging to his family. One of the neighbor boys shows me Franky's left-behind pencils, pens, and toys. Some of the older children speak Spanish better than the adults. They do learn it in school. There is school.

At some point, Bernabe and I discuss the mystery of economic disparities, why some have so much and some so little. I think of those in the United States who consider themselves deprived and demanding more

economic equality from our system. They are rich in comparison to what Bernabe has. Should he demand more economic equality with them?

Francisco's grown nephew Antonio, with his son Edgar by his side, gives me a tour of the area, showing me the burro and pigs, naming the various plants and herbs and how they are used, showing me the coffee plants growing wild and those they carefully cultivate in neat rows. It takes two years before the coffee beans can be harvested.

In the breathtaking mountain view, he can point to the town of Barillas in the distance, and further where Mexico lies.

I ask him about the violence in this area in the '70s and '80s, when many were forced to flee. He asks his father, Tio Antonio, who speaks some Spanish, but is illiterate and has never gone to school. Antonio remembers when the powerful came to try to take more of the land from the indigenous like himself, but these days there is calm.

The oldest brother Velasco has his own place, with an actual floor, and a small shop where he sells snacks and drinks and rents to a carpenter. He returned years ago from living in Los Angeles, where he earned enough money to furnish his home here. He has a wife and child, but seems the least content, even though he clearly owns more than the others. He expresses interest in returning to the States some day.

At night, everyone assembles around the kitchen fire. Francisco sits closest, warming himself. They speak in Q'anjob'al. We laugh at times because we don't understand.

Magdalena, Francisco's warm and welcoming wife, tends to the stove and coffee pot. She and Celia have made tortillas throughout the day. They always seem to be on their feet.

I watch and listen and laugh, sitting here and looking around the room and feeling as if I were in a movie or a dream, far from nowhere.

Without being able to converse, I ponder what this communal family is lacking. They have family, faith,





love, food, music, and health. They have telephone service and flip phones. They have scenery that surpasses all expectations. And, yet, they leave.

When I was traveling in Mexico with other Americans, I observed that many had come to confirm their sense of superiority and justify their own way of life. They see misery and poverty around them, often in places where I saw beauty and joy and smiling faces.

The children in this nowhere are smiling, laughing, playing, enthralled to be alive.

The poor in more developed areas in Mexico, battered by reinforcement through American media and tourists who feel good about themselves by offering them a peso or two, are made to feel inferior. It sinks in. Many decide to come north by any means necessary.

Do I see the world through red, white, and green glasses? Sure, a little. But I'm not blind to the problems, either.

Are children selling candy in the streets here? Yes, but children are in the back seats of cars with parents OD'ing on drugs in America.

Are graduate students protesting for being underpaid here? Certainly, but the same could be said back home.

Is there gun violence here? Actually, very little. My friend with me in San Cristobal said he felt safer on these exciting and colorful streets than back home in Urbana, where we read of shootings this week just blocks from our homes.

We are told that few people own guns here. The government offered a trade-in program years ago. Bring a gun, get a big television set. It worked.

And the climate change anti-technology people who want to live sustainable lives without destroying the earth? Why aren't they holding up the indigenous Guatemalans as showing us the way we should live? It may be the way we are forced to live as climate change takes its toll.

But I ask myself, could I live like this? I don't think so.

Yet why should we expect them to live so close to the

earth, without all the extras we have become accustomed to, when we cannot do it ourselves?

Night came hours ago. One by one, the assembled in the kitchen drift off to their places.

My bed is a raised platform of boards, covered with heavy blankets. My pillow is made of hard cardboard.

I'm not sure who is the most pleased and grateful for this visit, them or me. I feel so privileged to have been welcomed into this family.

In the morning, I will leave on that same treacherous drive, Bernabe clutching the wheel, and I'll be taking with me the birth certificates for Daniel's wife and son, which were requested by immigration officials in Chicago.

It rains hard all night, bringing into question whether the road will be passable in the morning. Still, between continual treks in the absolute darkness to relieve myself from too much coffee and the sound of water falling on the roof, I sleep and feel comforted in the world.

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DIA DE LOS MUERTOS  
November 2, 2016

Today is the day of the dead in San Cristobal, just one of Mexico's great traditions of family.

It has been more than a week since I lived with the Guatemalan family in the mountains.

Following the tradition of honoring those who have passed, I make an altar for Lee using her picture, marigolds, fruit, pine needles, and candles.

There were three reasons for this trip.

One was to escape the final month of the election process.

Another was to visit the Q'anjob'al people in lost Guatemala, which turned out to be one of the great experiences of my life. While communication was bare bones, it was a great privilege to be with them, to share with them, to understand what sharing is, yet again.





The third was because of Lee. I had planned this trip a year ago and these weeks have been both in homage to her and also I have experienced in them such love, the journey has been like a gift from Lee to me and I will be eternally grateful.

I am grateful for all the people I met during this time, people I talked to, ate with, shared with, laughed and complained with, slept beside, bartered with, and those with whom I shared dreams.

In Lee's final days, the assembled family – sons and fiancées and sister and pets – sat in the living room while Lee slept in the bedroom. We watched a series of movie musicals. I got *Funny Girl* from the library. For some reason, I'd never seen it. Barbra Streisand sang her signature song, *People*, and we laughed and those of us old enough recalled the phenomenon of the singer and that song. People who need people are the luckiest people in the world, she sang, and I never quite got it.

As the steady stream of visitors came, those who had loved Lee and found it unbelievable and unbearable that she should slip away from us so quickly, I became exhausted at times. I feared that the sheer and constant numbers of people might drain Lee of what little energy she had left.

I asked her, should I tell all these people not to come?

"Let them come, Greg," she said and shook her head on the pillow. Her smile glowed. "Don't you see? It's always been about people. It's all about people."





# Only One Winter Night

Donna Nelson Evans

## Making a Difference -- Emergency Shelter for Homeless Men this Winter

We have been hearing about the need for a Men's Winter Emergency Shelter since there are currently zero beds available in Champaign County. A team including C-U at Home, local churches, businesses, individuals, and other community organizations has developed plans for emergency shelter for three months, January 1 - March 31, 2017. This three-month period will be a pilot for a year-round Men's Emergency Shelter. United Way is serving as the financial overseer.

**Where do we come in?** FMC will be contributing The Arthur Relief Sale monies in support of this emergency shelter.

For more information, <http://www.uwayhelps.org/shelter>



## NEW IN THE LIBRARY



THE FMC LIBRARY

### Children's:

*Mama, If You Had a Wish*, by Jeanne Modesitt ( donated by Marcia Nelson)

*Good People Everywhere*, by Lynea Gillen

### Adult:

*Tongue Screws and Testimonies*, ed. Kirsten Eve Beachy

*Active Hope: How to face the mess we're in without going crazy*, by Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone



# 24th Annual Chrismon Service

November 27, 2016



All ages help decorate the tree with symbols of Christ's birth, life, death, and resurrection as we sing corresponding hymns.



In keeping with our tradition, high school seniors read the scripture passages.

Pictured: Emily, Anthony, and Caleb



