

COMMON LIFE

NEWSLETTER



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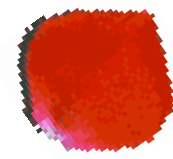
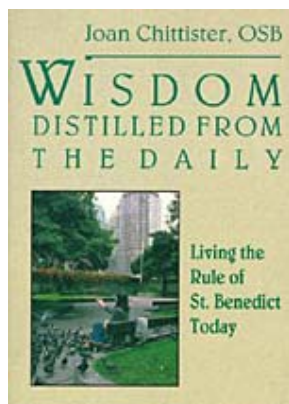
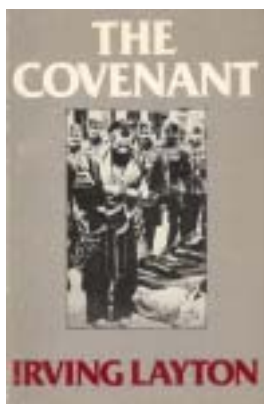
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*The interconnected basics
of restorative justice
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**I am not asking you
to take them
out of the world,
but I ask you
to protect them
from the evil one.
John 17:15**



Common Words

Writing about Common Life as counter-cultural may seem strange when our community emphasizes engagement in daily life in the world. The unexpected impetus to examine this subject arose from encounters with John Bell and Richard Holloway, two Scottish theological thinkers, who challenge us to counterbalance the destructive forces in our society.

John Bell asserted at a recent Five Oaks retreat that our Western society is based on an understanding of the human as consumer. A recent newspaper article illustrates his point. In a photo from her blog, a young woman proudly shows off her most recent purchases – shoes, a purse and jeans. She and the increasing number of people who join her in this online activity seem to be saying, “We are shoppers. Our life story is about what we buy. Our social usefulness comes from saving our economy by shopping.” John claims that it is this acquisitive identity, imposed through advertising and the media, that consumes and destroys the land, the environment, and the common good.

Bell invites the church to offer an alternative identity to young people. In his view, we must turn to our biblical story to find counter-culture images of humanity as co-creators, caregivers of creation, and maintainers of a just social system. As a member of the Iona Community, John finds that its Rule serves to hold the members together in their commitment to live out these images. The Iona Rule consists of these five elements. **1.** Daily devotional discipline – reading the Bible regularly, praying for each other and the world. **2.** Sharing and accounting for the use of money. **3.** Accounting to one another for use of time. **4.** Commitment to action for peace and justice. **5.** Commitment to meet in community and account to one another. Common Lifers will see the similarity to our own practices.

Richard Holloway, former Bishop of Edinburgh and Professor of Divinity, showed up at the Toronto Festival of Authors last fall touting his most recent book, *Between the Monster and the Saint*. He is trying to counterbalance both the fundamentalist religious and the fundamentalist atheist. The last thing he would want us to do is withdraw from the fray. Holloway says, “More misery and disillusionment have been visited on humanity by its search for a perfect society and a perfect faith than any other.” He wants humanity to recognize that we can’t divide ourselves into “we” and “they.” “We” being saints and “they” being monsters. The potential for destructive and compassionate behaviour is in all of us.

Our partisan politicians who see no good in their opponents and no fault in themselves might benefit from this perspective.

Like Bell, Holloway turns to the Bible as a counterbalance, stating that its myths and metaphors provide us with deep insights into the truth of our human condition and offer us the best hope of saving ourselves from ourselves. But also like Bell, he suggests this isn’t easy. It takes commitment to look deeply into ourselves and our society, to sit in silence before the dastardly acts we see in scripture and in our own lives until we are moved to compassionate living. It takes courage to admit our weaknesses and wounds in a society that upholds toughness. It takes strength to refuse steadfastly to collude with force in any form, as did Jesus, in a culture that expects us to forge our way through all obstacles towards success. Holloway doesn’t explicitly recommend a disciplined community like Iona but he does imply that we need a compassion-minded group of people to counter the negative forces that define humanity and creation as objects to be used or destroyed at will.

These thinkers warn Common Life Community to avoid a counter-cultural identity that sets us apart from the world. We must live in the midst of all its “isms” – consumerism, fundamentalism, racism and more. However, our practices can be counter-cultural. Members of AA know about this. They need a community and a discipline to help them avoid the temptation of the addict culture. We live in a culture full of appealing addictions and so we gather together to: practice a spirituality that is not “feel good” but rather disturbing and challenging; learn in order to expand the horizons of our hearts and minds rather than narrow them to the familiar and secure; account for our use of time and money as important moral and social concerns rather than private ones; take time apart to reflect and wait instead of rushing thoughtlessly ahead; do God’s work instead of our own.

Thank you very much to all who contributed to this issue. Each group and each writer has enriched our Common Life. Wilf Bean and Allan Baker add reflective facets to the prism of our “counter-culture” conversation. The Central New Brunswick group shared their souls; Free Spirits passed on their learning; and Tatamagouche detailed their delightful and insightful activities.

Letter to Editor

.....I really look forward to reading each newsletter and have saved them all, often referring back to them. The Newsletter reinforces my sense of involvement with something that is going on that is bigger than me and my neighbourhood.

- Charlotte Campbell

Word from the Common Life Groups



Central New Brunswick

Group members: Charlotte Campbell, Mac Campbell, Heather Donnelly, Cathy Holtmann, Gail Wiley, Norm Whitney

Over the fall and winter our group has been engaged in a 9-session study and action program. Naramata Common Life member, Tim Scorer, has designed a creative and experiential study, entitled *Experiencing Ecological Christianity*. It is based on Bruce Sanguin's book, *Darwin, Divinity and the Dance of the Cosmos*. This study is challenging us to awaken to awe and wonder of this planet and to reshape the ways we share it with our non-human neighbors.

Through this process our group is being inspired, challenged, sometimes confronted "to be the change we want to be." We have made personal covenants, cried laments, shared a cosmic walk, written evolutionary creeds, examined our familiar biblical stories through an ecological lens...and are looking forward to more unfolding as we probe our personal and collective wisdom during these last few sessions. Here is a sample of our reflective writings.

Early in the study we were invited to reflect on several descriptors of the "path of disenchantment". Below is Norm Whitney's response to the statement, "When science and engineering are dissociated from spirit, morality, and ethics, the important questions don't get asked."

My interest in this statement lies in my work in higher education in science, particularly, but also in engineering. Teaching, researching, and attending international conferences have affirmed my notion that the model of education followed is Socratic. This method employs a series of questions to induce thinking followed by predetermined answers resulting in knowing at the level of the mind (cognition). This model contrasts with an experiential model in which learnings arise primarily from experience, which encompasses not only the intellect (mind), but as well one's emotion and spirituality.

In my opinion, the experiential model of education and learning is superior. When it comes to dealing with environmental issues involving life systems and their interactions, I am troubled with an educational system which by and large does not enable us humans to clearly understand emotional intelligence. It is painful for me to hear statements that are directive, i.e., one must do this or one must do that, but which are not then followed by modifications that allow for emotional difficulties or innate spiritual encumbrances. I lament an educational system that facilitates learning cognitively, but not emotionally.

When I consider the suffering of life of all sorts I am anxious to move over and make room for and to share with the other lives. In my silence, I cry for learning more about emotional intelligence and the nature of spirituality. I want God to know that I try to listen for encouragement and direction in life. If only God would tap me on the shoulder, as it were, for direction to help facilitate our understanding of spirituality that guides and comforts life!

The following two poems were written in response to the invitation to write a statement "in which a cosmic reality is juxtaposed with an intimate moment from you're here-and-now 21st-century living."

*The magnetic force of a star begins to draw
other bodies into orbits around it.
Billions of years later a fungus spore
draws the nourishment and moisture for growth
from leaf mould on a forest floor. ~Heather Donnelly*

*Drinking this water mindfully,
feeling it swish through my mouth
and slide down my throat,
I am reminded that it has been lifted up
from Earth's inner body.*

*There it has been circulating though unknown streams,
underground rivers, deep aquifers,
and islanded pool encircled by wombs of rock.*

*An underground world -
invisible to me,
formed over the eons
from the boiling fiery,
explosive body of young Earth.*

*Sometime eons later she cooled.
Hydrogen met Oxygen.
Water formed
immersing Earth's body,
bubbling up life.*

*And I, four billion years later
am alive because she gives me drink.
And I am grateful. ~Charlotte Campbell*

(Continued on next page)

Word from the Common Life Groups

Midway in the study we were challenged to write our own "Creed for an Evolutionary God." Here are some statements important for Cathy...

*The fullness of being human is unity with the process of G*d.
The path of evolution is always from stability, through chaos,
to increased complexity.
Christ is most radically present to us when we are present to
and with the suffering of others – the inevitable journey from
stability through chaos.*

~Cathy Holtmann

And an Evolutionary Covenant ...

Call me what you will

— God, Spirit, desire, presence, or any of a host of other names —

*I am the desire of the Universe
to move forward, to grow, to evolve, to change.*

*When you revel and rejoice
in the abundance of life around you,
I am in your joy.*

*When you pause in your journey
to be overwhelmed by the glorious diversity of life around
you,
I am at the heart of that moment.*

*When you ache
to see the destruction of the world
— by pollution, by carelessness, by greed, by ignorance —
I am the ache that you feel.*

*I am, always have been, and always will be present
in the heart of the Universe,
in every living thing,
even those things in which you perceive no life at all.*

*I do not change,
though I invite all of the Universe into on-going and never-
ending change.*

*I invite you, as part of the Universe,
to be a part and an agent of that change.*

*Celebrate growth, welcome change,
know that only from death comes life in all its forms.*

*I am.
I am the one who will be there.
I am the one who will be there as I choose to be there.*
~Mac Campbell

In response to considering the wisdom of Jesus through an ecological lens, we were invited to write our own Prayer of Change...

*Holy spirit let me know
How I connect to all this abundant universe and
How to live among its hum,
with loving care and deepest joy. ~Gail Wylie*



Central New Brunswick Group (clockwise left to right): Norm Whitney, Mac Campbell, Gail Wylie, Charlotte Campbell, Heather Donnelly. Absent: Cathy Holtmann.

Tatamagouche / North Shore Nova Scotia

Group members: Kathryn Anderson, Wilf Bean, Herma Binnema, Debbie Cameron, Mike Cameron, Jan Haynes, Charlie Kennedy, Paige Kennedy, Margot Roach

The Tatamagouche group generally meets in members' homes every 3rd Sunday from 3 to 7 pm. We begin with an opening prayer or reading, followed by an individual check-in, followed by our chosen topic or theme. In 2008-09 our focus was John Ralston Saul's book, *A Fair Country*. Our monthly meetings end with a small meal of soup and bread and further discussion.

In November, we enjoyed an overnight retreat to the Four-Seasons Cottages in Economy, Nova Scotia. Leaving Tatamagouche early November 2, stopping for a break at "That Dutchman's Cheese Farm," we arrived at the cottages on the Bay of Fundy in time for lunch. Each couple or individual was responsible for bringing and preparing a meal. We shared from, *A Grateful Heart* (ed. by M.J.Ryan) and readings from *Darwin, Divinity and the Dance of the Cosmos* by Bruce Sanguin. Our time flowed with the movement of the tides, silent retreat indoors and out, and group reflections. After lunch on November 3rd, we all hopped into the van and

Word from the Common Life Groups

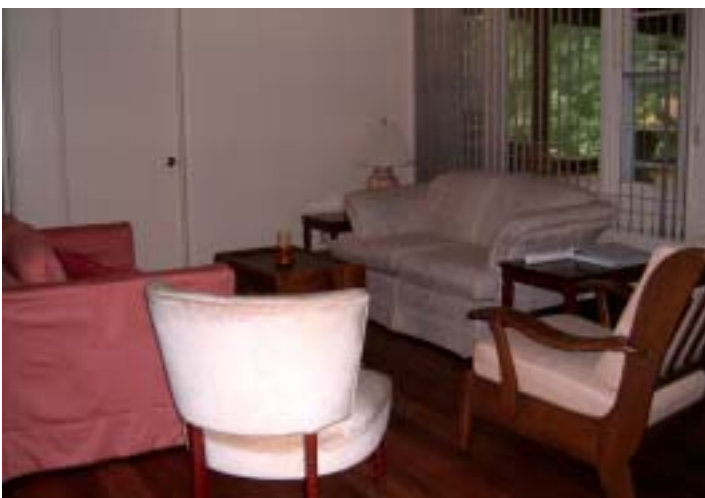


Tatamagouche / North Shore Nova Scotia Group on retreat on the Bay of Fundy (left to right around the circle): Wilf Bean, Herma Binnema, Charlie Kennedy, Debbie Cameron, Kathryn Anderson, Paige Kennedy. Missing from the photo: Mike Cameron, Margot Roach and Jan Haynes (photographer).

wandered home by way of Joy Laking's art gallery. It was an inspirational and renewing two days.

Our ongoing focus for 2010-11 is for group members to share their spiritual practice. Margot Roach's offering is the Examen. In this practice, we are twice-daily naming what we as individuals are grateful for – and less grateful for. Our resource book for this is *Sleeping with Bread* by Dennis Linn, Sheila Fabricant Linn, and Mathew Linn. We have also woven chapters of Ched Myers new DVD *Mammon to Manna* into our gatherings and continue to be challenged by his ministry.

We look forward to our annual gathering with all Common Life groups in the Maritimes on May 7, 8 at Tatamagouche Centre. *Jan Haynes*



The cosy livingroom of **Friendship House at Five Oaks** where **Free Spirits** gather on a regular basis.



Friendship House at Five Oaks where the **Free Spirits** meet.

Free Spirits

Group members: Mary Joan Bradley, Michele Braniff, Lilojean Frid, Nancy Hardy, Marion Kirkwood, BJ Klassen, John Klassen, Des McCalmont, Joan McCalmont, Yvonne Stewart

Restorative Justice: At our March meeting, BJ demonstrated her commitment to the CLC practice of engagement for justice as she led us in a discussion of restorative justice in which she has been involved for many years. This is clearly a counter-cultural approach to justice in these times when we have a punitive, tough on crime government.

Here are the interconnected basics of restorative justice.

The interconnected basics of restorative justice are like the petals of a flower.

Focuses on the harms done & the consequent needs of the victims, the community, the offenders.

Addresses the obligations that result from the harms for the offenders, community members, society

Uses a collaborative, inclusive process

Involves: stakeholders, victims, offenders, community

(Continued on next page)

Word from the Common Life Groups

We discussed the following questions in light of the above.

What is restorative justice? - making amends to victims, ensuring that life situations are changed so that such criminal behaviour is not encouraged in future eg. better support for the learning disabled, preventative work in/with First Nations communities

What are restorative actions? Creating supportive community for victims, for offenders

What are restorative principles? Righting wrongs, clear communication and guidelines for behaviour, identifying potential for personal growth and contribution to the community

We noted the differences between retributive and restorative justice. Here are just a few;

Retributive Justice

Blaming is central
Focuses on the past
Adversarial approach
Emphasizes differences
Imposition of pain considered normative
State & offender are key elements
Offender has no responsibility for resolution
Victim's suffering is ignored
Assumes win-lose outcomes

Restorative Justice

Problem-solving is central
Focuses on the future
Dialogue is the norm
Searches for commonalities
Restoration & reparation considered normative
Victim & offender key elements
Offender has responsibility in resolution
Victim's suffering is lamented & acknowledged
Makes possible win-win outcomes



Shekhinah Seekers

Group members: Barbara Bitzer, Pam Byers, Jane Entiknap, Jocelain Hitchcox, Lloyd Smith

I asked the Shekhinah Seekers if they thought we were being counter-cultural at all and told them that you were looking for submissions for the newsletter on that topic. I got this response from Lloyd Smith.

"As part of my daily walking routine in the winter, I have set out to do my small bit to enhance the community of those of us who walk in the neighbourhood mall. So, I go the opposite way around the mall from the crowd in order to see each person face-to-face. And I smile at each person and say, "Good morning!" as I meet them for the first time each day. Our culture encourages individualism and self-reliance and I am trying, in my small way, to emphasize our community-needing natures."

BJ and John participate an ecumenical Dismas program for ex-offenders, church and community members which involves a weekly meal, meditation, worship, discussion of a question related to their lives. (*Dismas* is the purported name of the thief who appealed to Jesus from his cross at Golgotha.) BJ talked about her involvement in a circle of protection surrounding a released pedophile. She also described the annual ecumenical conference on restorative justice (for which she is a planner) held every year in her congregation. We discussed the programs/retreats held at Five Oaks for staff and volunteers who work with ex-prisoners and for male and female ex-prisoners themselves. John told the story of the response of a male ex-prisoner (whom he accompanies) when his birthday was acknowledged for the first time in his life.



Tim Scorer, Common Life Facilitator, writes:

It's been a crazy few weeks and I just haven't had the time to give a CLC article the kind of focused thought needed. However, I'm doing two things that will fuel future thought and writing: beginning a new two-year group in Naramata in October; and adapting in September the principles and purposes of Common Life to 'Salt and Light' – a one-year congregational program at St. Andrew's-Wesley, Vancouver.

The capacity to secure our existence has not been turned over to us. The Lord has retained that. That, of course is what we do not like...What has apparently been turned over to us is the capacity to destroy ourselves. But the Lord has not placed in our hands the comparable power to make our lives safe, whole, free. This is kept by God, who gives it in strange times and places.

Walter Brueggemann, *Living Toward a Vision*

Article

Since the Rule of Benedict was practiced on the island of Iona in the middle ages and since the Iona Community similarly calls their discipline, *The Rule*, it is informative to read about the original Rule from the perspective of Joan Chittister, a Benedictine sister who has followed it for over forty years.

Wisdom Distilled from the Daily

By Joan Chittister



The Rule of Benedict has been a guide to the spiritual life for common people since the sixth century. Anything that has lasted that long and had that kind of impact in a throwaway society is certainly worthy of consideration...

Benedictine spirituality offers exactly what our times are lacking. Benedictine spirituality seeks to fill up the emptiness and heal the brokenness in which most of us live in ways that are sensible, humane, whole, and accessible to an overworked, overstimulated, overscheduled human race.

The Rule of Benedict called the class-centred Roman world to community and calls us to the same on a globe that is fragmented. The Rule called for hospitality in times of barbarian invasions and calls us to care in a world of neighbourhood strangers. It called for equality in a society full of classes and castes and calls us to equality in a world that proclaims everyone equal but judges everyone differently. Benedict, who challenged the patriarchal society of Rome to humility, challenges our own world, too, whose heroes are Rambo and James Bond, military powers and sports stars, the macho and the violent.

Benedictine spirituality calls for depth in a world given over almost entirely to the superficial and the tinny. It offers a set of attitudes to a world that has been seduced by gimmicks and quick fixes. Benedictine spirituality offers insight and wisdom where pieties have lost meaning and asceticisms have lost favour.

Most of all, Benedictine spirituality is good news for hard times. It teaches people to see the world as good, their needs as legitimate, and human support as necessary. Benedictine spirituality doesn't call for either great works or great denial. It simply calls for connectedness. It shows us how to connect with God, with others, and with our inmost selves.

All in all, the Rule of Benedict is designed for ordinary people who live ordinary lives. It was not written for priests or mystics or ascetics; it was written by a layman for lay [people]. It was written to provide a model of spiritual development for the average person who intends to live life beyond the superficial or the uncaring. It is written for people with deep spiritual sensibilities and deeply serious concerns who have no intention of setting out to escape their worlds but only to infuse their moral lights with the vision of the Divine.

The Rule of Benedict is wisdom distilled from the daily.

From:
Wisdom Distilled from the Daily:
Living the Rule of St. Benedict Today,
by Joan Chittister, O.S.B.,
Harper San Francisco, 1990



Joan Chittister

Common Life as Counter-Culture?

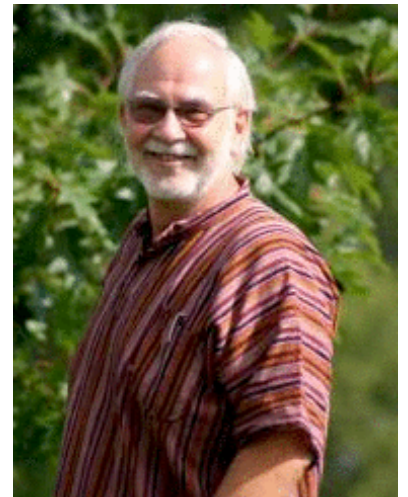
By Wilf Bean, Tatamagouche Group

I recall Ursula Franklin, the Quaker physicist and peacemaker, talking of living in an occupied country. She was remembering her experience in Germany during the Second World War, but she went on to reflect on how, for her, there were parallels within present-day Canada. It is as if our country is being increasingly occupied by alien interests who put profit above all human or earth values, she said. That perspective has “colonized” us and now frames the highest levels of our state and we are forced to live under that regime. I have thought of her words many times since. My own feeling is increasingly that the dominant culture, entrenched in state power, does not represent me – in terms of my concern about the environment, about global warming, my concern about peace-making instead of military build-up, about building a caring, sharing society which cares for our fellow human beings, both at home and overseas, about paying fair taxes so our government will pursue greater equity and protect our “commons.” Somehow I feel I am increasingly living in a dominant and dominating culture where short-term financial return is the only measure of value, and more and more dimensions of society – from advertising to sports to education – serve that end. It sometimes feels as if my country is indeed occupied by a foreign power!

So for me, Common Life is an opportunity to vision and support each other in trying to live out a contemplative and engaged alternative. Just as Jesus gathered a small group of disciples to share a common life and live the reality of a “counter-culture” within the Roman Empire, Common Life for me is an opportunity for our small group to begin to live out an alternative to our dominant culture – an alternative based on love, caring, sharing and an economy of abundance. In

our Common Life group, I am supported in trying to cut back on my consumerism and my material possessions. I am supported when I volunteer time to support the sustainability of our local community. I’m supported when I say I want to take more time just to walk the beach or make music or read a book “for no reason at all.” And I’m supported when I speak out on public issues – whether in terms of opposing the Federal Government’s proposed “free trade” agreement with a Colombian government that refuses to respect human rights, or in opposing the United Church Pension Plan’s refusal to divest itself of Goldcorp shares – the same Canadian gold mining company that refuses to respect the rights of indigenous people in Guatemala and elsewhere. In our group, I am supported by the similar actions and values of other members – by our “common life” of living out values counter to the dominant society.

So is Common Life counter-cultural? For me, in this dominant culture of individualism and competition, the practice of caring for each other, consuming less, living more contemplatively and sharing our lives more deeply is indeed counter-cultural. And it is through the support of this counter-cultural Common Life community that I find the courage and support to live out the values in which I believe.



Wilf Bean



Christian Faith and Climate Change

By Allan Baker, The New Group



John Bell at Five Oaks in March 2010

Earth was singing a love song to God long before humanity appeared, according to John Bell of the Iona Community. Dressed in his red shoes, blue jeans, yellow shirt and red tie, Bell shared his wisdom at Five Oaks in March, 2010. *Keeping the Faith in a Culture of Consumerism* was the title of the three day event.

Bell, in his own mystical way, says that it is our role in life as responsible and thinking tenants of God's vineyard not to interfere with nature's ability to offer music to the Creator.

In his engaging leadership of a series of lectures, singing and small group discussions, John Bell contrasted our (mainly western) anthropocentric approach to life with examples of an awareness of the harmony of God and creation. Some of his selections from the Hebrew scriptures were:

- "Let the rivers clap their hands, Let the mountains sing together for joy"; Psalm 98:8;
- the prophets, "hear God's case, O mountains"; Micah 6:1,2
- and even the book of Job, "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?" Job 38:4

One of the questions for all of us concerns how we join in the universal harmony that was in the consciousness of our forbearers in the faith?

Our Song of Faith also may assist us in singing a response to that question:

In love
the one eternal God seeks relationship.
So God creates the universe
and with it the possibility of being and relating.
God tends the universe,
mending the broken and reconciling the estranged.
God enlivens the universe,
guiding all things toward harmony with the Source.
Grateful for God's loving action,
we cannot keep from singing.

What type of song are our lives to be in a crisis of climate change? Bell advocates that we offer an alternative vision to the consumer culture. Christians can live as invitational examples. Through living our faith, a faith that lives with respect in creation, we can offer a meaning-full

(Continued on next page)

Article



Left to Right: **Lilojean Frid, Allan Baker, John Bell & Yvonne Stewart**

journey for others to join. An attitude of gratitude, and of humility, is more harmonious than a mind-set in which we are directing others to the correct destination.

Humour is one of John Bell's traits and he used it in an illustration of how we have misinterpreted the words of Genesis 1: 28; "*Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.*" According to Bell, "Dominion is not domination – you may understand this in the Dominion of Canada."

The promotion piece for the event also said that: "John manages to survive without the benefit of a wife, car, cell phone, camera, or ipod."

Yes, during our time together there was plenty of discussion of climate change, consumerism, climate justice and social justice. Our souls were also nurtured in an evening of singing. Red shoes and all, Bell's colours shine most brightly through his music:

*Praise God for this holy ground,
Place and people, sight and sound.
Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
God's goodness is eternal. (More Voices, # 42)*



Quotes to Ponder



The first disciples were invited by Jesus to a new location and a new vocation. They were called to join him "on the road" in a struggle to overturn the existing order of inequality. Across the intervening centuries, this invitation has been reiterated time and again. The discipleship adventure beckons. Yet its context is the stuff of everyday life and work – ennobled by a commitment to the community and to the sovereignty of God.

Ched Myers, "Say to This Mountain"

Never let success hide its emptiness from you,
achievement its nothingness, toil its desolation.
And so keep alive the incentive to push further,
that pain in the soul which drives us beyond ourselves.
Whither? That I don't know. That I don't ask to know.

Dag Hammarskjöld, Markings

Something on the Slant

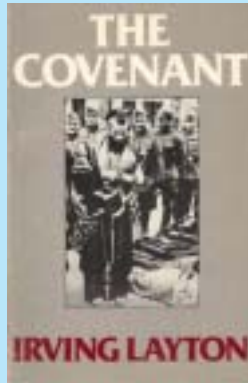
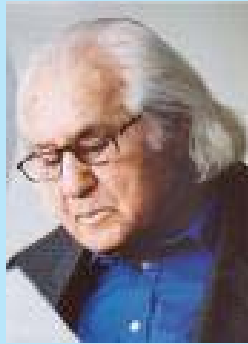
XIANITY

Irving Layton

Brother and fellow-poet,
is this what you wanted?

The mutterings of bead-counting hysterics?
The snufflings of joyless misfits and cripples
fearful of death, more fearful of life?
The *misereres* of the doomed dregs
in every large metropolis of the world?
The hosannahs of the conformist hordes
stinking of money and respectability?

Is this what you wanted:
The grey suburban church and the greyer people
shambling into it each Sunday
you who openly consorted with whores and
drunkards
and so loved laughter and joy
that you were willing to be crucified for them?



MAGDALENA

Irving Layton

Not you brother; a crackbrained whore
from whom seven devils rushed out
founded the Christian religion:
though stone dead you appeared to her
and she cried out, "He has risen!"

Our famed ancestor, Joshua,
with a clarion blare of trumpets
put sinful Jericho to rout:
she swept the Eagles from the sky
with one hysterical shout.

From:
The Covenant, Irving Layton,
McClelland and Stewart, 1977

KAIROS

The United Church is still encouraging appeals to the federal government to restore to KAIROS, our ecumenical justice partner, the funding that was withdrawn in November 2009. If you haven't already taken action, go to www.united-church.ca, type KAIROS in the Search box in the upper right hand corner and all the background information and steps for action will be there.



This newsletter has been formatted by Debra Brown, Communications Coordinator at Calling Lakes Centre.

This will be the last newsletter I format for the Common Life Community since I will be soon embarking on my own "counter-cultural" journey of taking a "Sabbath year".

As I prepare to move to the family farm in the Qu'Appelle Valley in June, I am aware of currents of grief and anticipation and the need to maintain community. For this reason, I have asked a close circle of friends to companion my journey and bear witness to my regular email ruminations. Many will also visit me at the farm. Spiritual practices of grounding in the present and attending to the land shall establish the container of my time. I look forward to tending my "soul seed" and having more time for creative expression.

I have appreciated being part of the Common Life journey in this way. Blessings to each of you.

A thousand thank you's Debra! You have done beautiful, creative, thoughtful and skillful work on our newsletter. You have made it a joy to look at as well as to read. We will miss you greatly. Yet we wish you every blessing as you take sabbath time and move in new directions in your life journey. Thank you for your great contribution to our Common Life Community!

Shalom, Yvonne



**Annual
Common Life
Community Retreat**

with **Ched Myers**
May 9 & 10, 2010
Five Oaks

**Folks from ALL Common Life Groups
across the country are welcome to attend.**