



Journal

September 2008



STARCROSS COMMUNITY

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To answer the requests for more communication from Starcross, without increasing expense, we will experiment with this e-JOURNAL to be sent (hopefully!) in between the quarterly newsletter, SHARINGS, mailed to all on our mailing list.

We are between two delightful events.

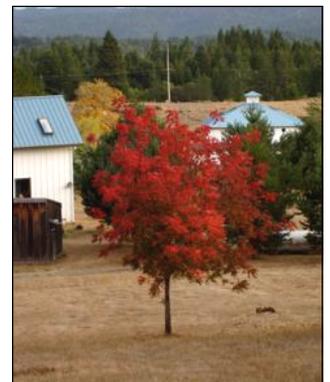


BAREFOOT MUSICIANS. August ended with graduate string players from New England Conservatory, Juilliard, and San Francisco Conservatory gathering to enrich the land, and its inhabitants, with chamber music. This is a rural area and some of our neighbors who love music, rarely hear it live. One expressed it as an uniquely intimate experience "...with barefoot musicians playing this beautiful music with our hills in the background!" They came once to the chapel to play during vespers – it was a profound spiritual experience. Also, this meant we could have some contact with David, who had been hopping around the world with his violin all summer. He and the cellist Bonnie Hampton, of Juilliard (in the picture), were musical directors of the event.

AUTUMN GATHERING. In a few days (Sept 13-14) we will have the second quarterly gathering of Friends here to work together (planting lavender is the main job), hearing "State of Starcross" reports, spending time in the chapel and around the table together, singing Shaker songs, exploring ways of bringing our dreams together, preparing for the next gathering at Olive Harvest (November 22-23). There is space, so contact Sister Marti if you want more information sm@starcross.org.

WAKING UP WORRIED? But, in between those lovely events we hear from many of you about this being a time of uncertainty and anxiety in your home. Something politicians call "The Misery Index" (money scarce, prices rising) is climbing. We feel that also and it is only right. One of the worst parts of times like these is the feeling that we are each on our own. We have to find ways of being in solidarity.

As the recession dawned, we were not affected much but as the hardships grew we were suddenly hit hard. Prices shot up and contributions dropped dramatically. Plans for a greener Starcross had to be scrapped. This included solar heat, and a hybrid car.



So, like you, the old car has to do and we are piling up wood for the winter. We have no big debts and none of us gets salaries. So, we are a lot better off than friends who suddenly had to cancel a daughter entering college, saw “For Sale” signs on their front yard, canceled needed medical procedures, and you know other sad stories.



SELF-SUPPORT. For ourselves, we are hoping the sale of the Christmas wreaths will bring relief. Folks are backing away from luxury items and our wreaths bring premium quality for a moderate cost. After a lot of work we have managed to keep the price the same as last year. But the shipping cost may rise. We have no control over UPS or the Post Office. By the way if you were planning on Olive Oil as gifts it might be wise to order now. www.starcross.org/pdfs/orderform-olive_oil.pdf. The supply was limited and it is going down fast. This year's harvest will be much larger. It is pressed in November but will not be ready to sell until spring. (That's Sister Julie in the field).

THE AIDS LEGACY. We share the hopeful stories, like the happy faces from our Uganda program in the last SHARINGS. Here at home, we adopted Holly at birth when she tested HIV Positive. When tests improved, she was Negative. “That is when the real story begins!” says a father in our extended family of adoptive parents of children impacted by the AIDS pandemic. He is right. Unique hurdles, medical and social, confront the child and her family. “She is a great kid, but give up the hope of her getting to college” an expert told us early on. As I write Holly, now 18, is starting her first day at Johnson and Wales University in Denver on scholarship as a culinary arts major. It has been hard. She studied four extra hours a night for years as her classmates relaxed. She cried. So did we. And, she faced being labeled as either stupid or lazy. But in addition to the challenges Holly had, she also had grit. She has a long way to go in life but she is on her way. And I am one proud father.

AIDS also casts a dark shadow, and we have been gently chided for not reporting that side. I want to but often I can't because I have been asked not to. Issues are too painful to people I love. These stories unfold here as well as in other families close to us. Somehow mental and physical things went wrong years ago. An adolescent time-bomb explodes. There is violence. Life is disrupted. Hours and days are spent on finding long-range solutions which go down the drain on a teen-age moment of defiance. People are in fear of their safety. And, there are drugs. You find yourself involved with “the system” handling things like a bill from a seemingly asleep-at-the switch bureaucrat sent to the victim of a crime to pay the lawyer's bill for defending the one who victimized her! After all she was somehow responsible for it. Right? Those are bills that will never be paid if I have any say. Did all this Hell start in a toxic environment of no pre-natal care? - I am one who thinks so. Was it made worse as our social and medical support systems eroded? - I'm not sure but it worries me.

Someday these stories will be told and the courage and dedication of parents I greatly admire will be better known. As most of you have experienced, in parenting it is often the slow little steps that define a person's greatness.

GROWING UP AND GROWING OLD. Last Saturday I was wondering about a theme for our Sunday Service and meditation. I was feeling my years and David and Holly (with Sister Marti in the picture) were off to commitments in school and otherwise. Julie suggested “Growing Up and Growing Old” -- I wasn't sure what to do with that. I got up in the night and opened the door. A sweet gentle breeze was cooling the land. I thought of those biblical references to God being found not in storms and earthquakes but in the gentle breeze. For the young that breeze is a



compass leading us on to a path of love and compassion. No matter how our beliefs might change that compass is constant. For the old (that's me, almost 78) that breeze is a comforter calling us to simply stay close. I left the chapel with a strong sense of being united with everyone and everything around me.

The times may be challenging but let us do what we can to help each other understand we are not on our own.

Your brother,

Toby

From Sister Marti: If you would like to make a contribution on-line click here, and thank you.
<https://secure.pon.net/referral/area/donate.htm>

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