



STARCROSS
community

34500 Annapolis Road
Annapolis, California 95412
(707) 886-1919 • Fax (707) 886-1920
email: community@starcross.org
Website: www.starcross.org

Sharings

Summer 2004

A CHALLENGING AUGUST!

Dear Friends,

Our vision of summer is as a mellow time of renewal. But this year we have been hit by unexpected sickness and injury. Also, international situations, especially the war in Iraq, have put a severe drain on our financial resources for supporting AIDS orphans in Africa. In South Africa we started with the dollar buying 10 Rand and now it is only about half that. As a result our expenses have increased about 80% and our banker friends say the situation is not going to improve soon. Some of the children we support in Africa are very confused and conflicted by what they see as America's attitude toward the rest of the world. Brother Toby shares some of those hard questions in his reflections on page 3.



Sister Marti

Other questions come to us from a surprising number of you who find yourselves in a ratcheting-up Aculture war between extreme religious fundamentalism and seemingly unrestrained secular self-centeredness. Spiritually, what do those of us do who are uncomfortable with either of these extremes? This is a question we will be addressing, with your help, in the months to come. As someone said in a telephone conversation today, this may be the time for every family to take more responsibility for finding the intersections between our personal histories and our global spiritual heritages.

Here at home all of our children are facing major changes in their schooling. Andrew begins junior high, Holly begins high school, and David begins music conservatory. As parents we must also



provide support in the educational and emotional stresses our children encounter. For some children today, school can be very difficult.

Despite all these tensions, August at Starcross is harvest-time, a time of feeling the partnership between the ongoing divine act of creation and our unfolding lives. Sick or not we do cider the apples! And, the blackberries do make their way into jam and syrup, and tomatoes into juice and pasta sauce. We laugh at the antics of animals celebrating each new day. We watch the birds born here this summer prepare for their long flight south. We walk together under the giant Lammas moon.

We hope that something of all these things comes through in this issue of *SHARINGS*.

May God's peace be with you all,

sister Marti

A Reflection by brother Toby

WHEN CHILDREN FEEL FREE TO SHARE THEIR QUESTIONS

This summer I became disabled in a foreign city with no cars and a million tourists. A boat was not properly tied-up and I took a bad fall. For a while both ankles were twisted. Infection had set into my left leg which was cut, very swollen and bruised.

It was instructive being a very vulnerable American at this point in history. It seemed to me that before my accident I was, this year, too often seen in foreign places as a predator. Respected but for the wrong reasons. After my accident I was seen as a human being again. I needed help and encountered no one who was not gracious in their response. I wondered if there was not something here for us to learn as a nation.

Starcross and our friends are providing homes for 141 AIDS orphans in Africa. They are growing up to be informed citizens of the world. They read, or watch, the news. In late spring we began to hear that they were increasingly troubled by our country's actions in the developing world. We were the only Americans they knew and they were confused. Did we agree with what was happening? How could people who saved them from a homeless and hopeless life also be bombing children in Baghdad? Yet, we were told, they were reticent to ask these questions. Sister Julie encouraged them to send their concerns.

There were many hard questions as you can imagine; Why does the fighting continue?, Why don't the soldiers go home before more people die for no reason?, Can't they refuse to kill?, Is this really about oil?, How could people be so mistreated in the prisons and by the soldiers?

It was more than any of us could answer. We got the help of those people who work with us on the international projects. There were many different points of view. We sent all the responses over. After about a week 13 of our kids in Kampala wrote again. Their average age is 12. They expressed relief that we had this exchange and they were quite free in expressing their love for the Americans who were helping them. And, they had some more questions. Here are a few:

Nanyondo Alice: What are you going to do in order to clear away the hatred and enmity toward you from the people of Iraq? Namusisi Jane: Doesn't the money wasted in war hurt you? Ssenyondo Esau: What sparked off the other war of Vietnam?

Nazziwa Harriet: Do all Americans understand clearly what is happening in Iraq? Nabatanzi Mary: Why do Americans use guns as the solution of every problem? Can't peaceful means be applied?

We realized we were in a unique situation as the children shared what was truly in their hearts and probably in the hearts of many children in the third world. So the dialogue continues. And this too is part of preparing these children for adult life. It is also a very important part of my own discovery of how to live in this uncertain world; which we all must learn to share.



STARCROSS

STARCROSS MONASTIC COMMUNITY
34500 Annapolis Road

U.S. Postage
PAID
Non-profit Org.
Permit #20
Santa Rosa, CA



SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2004

ONE OF THOSE TIMES WHEN I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO

Another summer project almost complete. Only one small deck more to be watersealed. I told 12-year-old Andrew to hurry up with the sweeping. I was coming along behind with the sprayer.

But Andrew wasn't moving. He was crouched motionless peering at a balled-up sandwich baggie in the corner of the deck. I came closer to have a look. It was not a plastic bag. The thing moved ever so slightly. It was almost transparent. A pale color between pink and yellow. There were a couple scraggly down feathers around the middle. Purple splotches for closed eyelids. The movement came every few seconds. A deep yellow triangular beak would open up and a thin yellow tongue poked out. It could have been gasping for breath or trying to scream, but it made no sound. A creature so unformed and helpless could not survive alone. It must have fallen from the swallows' nest just above the porch. It did not seem ready to be hatched from it's egg.

Part of me wanted to sweep it aside and get on with my work. No way could it live. Putting it in a box would solve nothing and probably just prolong it's agony. The mother might reject it if we touched it. And certainly the bird rescue folks wouldn't drive way out here to deal with a premature sparrow.

But my child could not walk away. And half of me was right there with him. We are not bird experts. We are not naturalists. We knew it was a long shot but here was this little fellow on our doorstep and we had to try to help. We hadn't asked for this, but then again, neither had the baby bird. An accident made our paths intersect. Since we were the ones with all the power and resources in the relationship, it became our duty to offer it what comfort we could.

We brought a stepladder and some gloves. Ever so gently, Andrew scooped the tiny creature up and lifted it back into the nest. It was all we could think of to do. Without some intervention it would die very quickly. Did it survive? We don't know.

Almost every day I find myself thinking about the baby bird. All that I accomplished from my to-do list that day has vanished from my awareness. When I look back on this summer, the strongest image that emerges is of a small translucent being, wanting only to become a sparrow.

sister Julie



WREATH SEASON

For us, summer is the beginning of preparations for our sale of Christmas Wreaths and Dried Fruit. We are making bows, writing flyers, preparing computer programs and otherwise reminding ourselves that the time for our most important support project is coming sooner than we think.

We hope you will plan to buy wreaths and/or dried fruit for yourselves and your friends. The quality is really fine, and people love receiving them because in addition to enjoying the wreath or fruit they feel the gift has helped to build a better world.

Any extra help would be appreciated, as we find ourselves under more financial stress than usual due to the international situation. But we are one people on this planet and must expect that what happens on the other side of the globe will, in time, impact all our lives.

Yes, the ongoing argument about bows continues around here. "Too dark!", "Too bright!", etc. But we think we have now transcended the dispute with something you will really like!

Sister Julie, our farm manager, trims up one of the olive trees, which will bear a light crop this year. There will not be enough oil to sell, but it will be exciting to taste the fruit of these wonderful trees!

YOU'RE INVITED TO A PARTY!

On January 4, 2005 brother Toby will be 74. Years ago he mentioned that he'd never had a birthday party as a child and the kids wanted to make up for that. This will be his 14th birthday bash. All are welcome to attend the celebration which will be held in Santa Rosa. Festivities will include Dad's Annual Birthday Concert featuring David and Holly and some well-known musical friends as well as the presentation of the ABT Humanitarian Award. This award was established last year to give needed encouragement to people giving service to the world who have not been recognized before. Our friend Gaye LeBaron has called for the party to also become a proper 12th Night celebration for the end of the Christmas season, so that's in there too! A wonderful evening with good friends and good food. If you are interested, let us know, community@starcross.org / 707-886-1919.



SOUTH AFRICAN FAMILY *Our newest sponsored family in KwaZulu Natal. The kids range in age from 17 years to 13 months. They have all bonded as a family and are very grateful to their sponsors. It is hard to turn away other desperate children who have no one to take care of them. The program is solidly established. We are ready*