



STARCROSS
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Sharings

Autumn 2011

THE THINNEST YELLOW LIGHT OF NOVEMBER IS MORE WARMING AND EXHILARATING THAN ANY WINE THEY TELL OF. Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862)

The world is rapidly changing around us. Our comfortableness with institutions, civil and religious, is fading. In personal and family life we are having to confront unexpected issues. At times like these we tend to reach for something that is unchanging — a renewed taste of the transcendent. And we find it – sometimes in a field at midday, around a table, or near a giant redwood at midnight.

Just before Thanksgiving we will be harvesting olives; an ancient practice requiring many hands. I remember a few years back looking down a row of trees and discovering a number of friends quietly working. Each of them had a story, as do we all. Nearest me was a well-known professional man suffering from an advanced brain tumor. Farther down the row was a young veteran just returned from a war he had come to question, his mind filled with images of death and destruction which overpowered him at times. Next I saw two people silently working side-by-side. One had spent his life trying to save the futures of a few of those caught up in the American penal system. Working on the same tree was a young teenager with serious social problems. They had never met before. Further still up the row was a woman who had spent her whole life trying to make the words of the gospel come alive in compassionate faith communities. It had recently been made clear to her by an uber-conservative church leader half-her-age that she was no longer welcome.

That day I saw our olive groves as healing fields. The ancestors of these trees had been performing this task for centuries. You may not have olive trees around you but there is something growing near everyone that helps us transcend our troubles.

We all welcome opportunities for authentic sacred circles. Thanksgiving is certainly one of those times. Living apart from those I love makes these hours a sacred time for me. I feel there is a facet of the divine in every person in the room. As the Quakers would put it, we “hold each other in the light.” I think it's important to see this day not just as party-time or a food bash but as a sacred gathering.

One final reflection. Like most seniors I wake at times during the night, especially when troubled. It's easy for me to step from my bedroom out into a little garden. That's what happened recently when it seemed as if the whole world was falling apart. There was a full moon and I was conscious of a circle of tall redwood and fir trees. They have been here since before I was born and will be here long after I am gone. Hearing a sound I looked up and saw a flock of geese crossing the moon. This would have been going on had I remained in my bed but I would never have known about it. My point? In addition to all the difficulties we may face as individuals and as a society there are other simple, beautiful, transcendent, moments which are also part of our existence.



Brother Toby



Milly, Kasule, Sister Julie and Alex of Tina Caring Association. These former AIDS orphans from our House of Hope work to prevent mother to baby transmission of HIV/AIDS.

OUR YOUTH ARE GIVING BACK!

When we met some destitute AIDS orphans in 1998, it seemed only natural to try to help them go to school and have a chance for a better life. Little did we know that in a few years they would be ready to use their talents in a big way to save lives and bring hope to other children. That is exactly what's happening right now.

Three young adults who were sponsored and educated by Starcross Kin Worldwide, have launched a new project to help meet the United Nations goal of eliminating mother to child transmission of HIV by 2015. Milly Nakazzi, a nurse-midwife, Alex Lwanyaaga, a social worker, and Kasule Kizito, a microfinance specialist have formed "Tina Caring Association" bringing PMTCT (Preventing Mother To Child Transmission) services to the poor in remote sections of Eastern Uganda. This initiative was organized by Brother Toby and Sister Julie. Their efforts

are being financed through the kind beneficence of friends of Starcross interested in effectively responding to the AIDS pandemic.

How does it work? All natural leaders, Milly, Alex and Kasule travel to villages by motorscooter organizing group meetings for HIV education. They provide testing and counseling. They facilitate groups and visit homes. Milly teaches HIV positive mothers about safe breastfeeding, weaning, infant nutrition and hygiene. Alex leads support groups for men. Kasule handles record keeping, finances and administration.

Tina Caring Association (TCA) is a new nonprofit organization operating in the sprawling Iganga District where one health center supposedly serves over 40,000 people, most of whom have no transportation. The population is mostly illiterate Muslim peasant farmers. Although Milly, Alex and Kasule are not Muslim themselves, they are highly respected in the community. Due to polygamy and lack of education, there is a high percentage of HIV/AIDS. Life expectancy is 46. Through community mobilization, education and PMTCT services, babies can be born free of HIV, even if the parents are infected.

The enthusiasm and energy of the youthful TCA members makes this project exciting to behold. We are proud and honored to have been a part of their story.

NOVEMBER LOCAL EVENTS

November 10th – THE WINDS OF AUTUMN: AN EVENING WITH BROTHER TOBY Thursday, 7-9 pm. in Santa Rosa. Our favorite monk will offer his unique insights, read from recent works, and engage in conversation with friends at the Steele Lane Community Center, 415 Steele Lane, Santa Rosa, CA. No charge. Tea/Coffee, Cookies. Call 707-886-1919 or email community@starcross.org for more information.

November 19th – OLIVE HARVEST AT STARCROSS, Saturday 9-5. Join us to pick the crop. A simple lunch is provided. Please call or email 707-886-1919 or sj@starcross.org if you can come.

November 26th – CHRISTMAS FAIRE at Starcross, Saturday 9-5. Wreaths, dried fruit, olive oil, lavender body oil and signed books. OLIO NUOVO, treasured by gourmets and chefs harvested just days old! Also our herbs and spices; homemade soaps and sachets; our apple butter and relishes. Unique gifts made with care and compassion. More info? Call 707-886-1919 or email holly@starcross.org.

RECENT DAILY LIFE @ STARCROSS

Late autumn came quite suddenly this year; one day we were giving thirsty plants extra water, and the next we were building fires.



The garden was delayed by the late spring rains, so **harvesting and preserving food** was also delayed, but we had lots of wonderful tomatoes and apples. Friends came and helped us with canning apple-sauce. Even into the cold and rainy weather we continued the tomato harvest. Our menu for

the next year will be very Italian! Preserving food really makes a difference in the grocery bills.

Times have been hard for some of our neighbors, so Brother Toby grew more pumpkins and we had a **“Free Pumpkin Day”** for kids. It was a lot of fun for them and for us, and the pumpkins disappeared in a hurry.

We have had a few **health issues** in recent weeks. Sister Julie contracted malaria in Africa during a trip in September to oversee our program there. Fortunately, she has completely recovered and it is not expected to recur. Sister Marti had a shoulder operation in October to repair a torn rotator cuff, so she has been limited in her movements, but that will be much corrected.

We are participating in a program where young people come and help with the farm work in exchange for our **teaching about sustainable farming** techniques. They are idealistic and dedicated workers, so it is a beneficial arrangement for all of us.

People often ask about our young violinist **David** and what he is doing now. His professional commitments are increasing, and he is also very connected here at Starcross as we continue to explore the part music plays in the unfolding of our story. In addition, in the last year he has performed in Israel, Italy, United Kingdom, France, Vermont, Oregon, California, and New York. At a festival in Moab, Utah he played Vaughan Williams’ “The Lark Ascending” in an outdoor grotto in the desert, where the audience had to come by boat on the Colorado river! He is finishing the last year of his studies for the prestig-

YOU ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE

In spite of personal hard times, people have responded generously to our **special appeal**. Thank you! Of course we are not recovered yet, but it sure has helped! If you are still meaning to send a contribution, thank you in advance. It is much needed and appreciated.

Our primary source of income is the sale of **premium and moderately priced wreaths and other holiday gifts**. We have enclosed a flyer in this newsletter. Please use it for your gift list, so that you and they will know that your gift is supporting others while giving them a gift of quality. Thank you for all the ways in which you support us.

Almost every major advance in our story has been possible because of **bequests** from far-sighted friends. Please consider putting us in your will. Starcross is a tax exempt 501 (c) (3) non-profit corporation. Our tax ID # is 94-1687876. Here is some sample language that might be helpful.

“I give, devise and bequeath to Starcross Monastic Community, a nonprofit corporation of the State of California, located at 34500 Annapolis Road, Annapolis, CA 95412, the sum of \$ _____ from (OR _____% of) my estate.”

One way of supporting us that has become very popular is the **olive tree memorial**. We dedicate a tree in our grove with a marker, either in memory or in honor of someone. We send a certificate to the donor and to the person being honored, telling what the tree is and where it is located. We ask a \$100 donation, but do not require any amount.

ious “Konzertexamen” in Berlin. The city has become an exciting international center for talented and idealistic young professional musicians. We are sometimes dizzy keeping up with him!

Thanksgiving is our primary feeling as we learn new lessons in focusing on what we have, rather than on what may be missing in our lives. There is much to be thankful for, including our friends who are walking with us through these remarkable times. We wish you every blessing this Thanksgiving and throughout the Season.

STARCROSS

STARCROSS MONASTIC COMMUNITY
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AUTUMN NEWSLETTER 2011

MY GREATEST TREASURE

“When my grandfather died in 1979, my entire inheritance from him was a well-used copy of NOTES FROM THE SONG OF LIFE. It’s my greatest treasure.”

We were frankly surprised by this and similar responses to the 35th Anniversary Edition, which has just been reprinted. NOTES FROM THE SONG OF LIFE is one of those rare books that seems to improve with age.

While we cannot *guarantee* that NOTES will change your life and bring you to a heightened state of awareness, we know that it has indeed had that effect on quite a few people over the years.

These 30 sharp essays, meant to be read one per morning, will give you much food for thought throughout the day.

To order go to: <http://www.starcross.org/books.htm> or call 707-886-1919.

INCREASED DEMAND FOR THE FRIDAY REFLECTIONS

There are now 5 yearly sets of Brother Toby’s emailed “Friday Reflections.” He originally planned only 2 but the positive response has persuaded him to do more.

Reactions are coming from all age groups. There is a special interest in Toby’s searching for the sacred in terms of a greater awareness of the cycle of the seasons.

For December there will be a slightly different format not just weekly, but shorter daily reflections. Friends are sending what he writes out through various social media outlets which gets them to all sorts of unforeseen places!

How to make sure you receive them? Simply get on our e-list. Just send an email to community@starcross.org.

