
Dialogue

Volume 9 Issue 1

Strength for the church's journey into wholeness in Christ

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The subject: *Dealing with Power*

How Christians are to deal with power is complicated. This issue of the Dialogue deals with the power that exists in worldly structures. The question at hand is truly, "What should Christians do with power?"

The world's view of power. The world, at large, sees power as something finite. It is something that gets its *value* through its scarcity. To the world, power is something that is to be *protected*. Brian Baughan and Shalom House speak of this later in this issue. Additionally, it is something that we want to *accumulate*. Within a marriage, as Shelley points in her article, accumulation of power is a constant struggle. It is only healed, however, when power begets power. And finally, those of us that do not have power, simply want to *acquire* some of it. How do we do that? That's a question that Joel McIntosh seeks to answer in his article.

What to do with worldly power. This question is complicated because most of us who are in the privileged sector simply want to ignore the power that the world assigns us. But this is impossible. Annie Kopena writes about her conversations with two White, males: Adam Heinze and Ben White. Both Adam and Ben offer interesting answers to this difficult question.

Power from God. This kind of power needs no protection, it is abundantly available (but ultimately priceless), and one that is available to all: the grace of Jesus. It allows us to forgive, to build bridges, and to listen. It allows us to distribute our power (because we are not afraid of losing it), and to make partnerships. It allows us to do things in a totally counter-cultural fashion. For Circle of Hope, with a new year ahead of us, we are trying to look for new and creative ways to distribute power and to take advantage of the grace of Jesus in doing so. — **ED.**

Should I vote to empower someone who isn't Jesus?

I've always been pretty proud of the fact that I vote. The media and my peers back in school convinced me that voting is an important responsibility for a citizen. From childhood, despite an upbringing in an uninformed, non-voting household, I knew I wanted to grow up conscientious and informed about our world.

After Election Day last November,



though, my friend Jonny Rashid surprised me by questioning the value of voting. And I surprised myself by thinking he had a good point. Next thing you know, he expects me to write about voting!

In taking the time to question the integrity and validity of voting, much of my underlying cynicism has bubbled up to the surface. It's always there; I'm constantly aware of the wretched state of our world, and my longing for Jesus to return, bringing healing and justice.

Do we want to empower the candidates we have to choose from? Their integrity is questionable. Daniel Schorr, the deep-voiced political commentator on NPR, observed recently that "truth is overwhelmed by celebrity worship" in contemporary politics. He cited examples in which Giuliani, Romney, Obama,

Huckabee, and Clinton, among others, have all stated as "fact" things that are not true. This ranges from "rapid fire statistics" in speeches, to events in an "autobiography" that never happened. The Annenberg School has set up a full-time political fact check (factcheck.org) for just such incidents, but how many voters are questioning the validity of their favored candidates' claims? It seems that one only questions the candidate whose image one already dislikes. Schorr contends that we vote based upon instinct and perceived character, and that we have all accepted the practice of taking liberties with the "literal truth."

Did you listen to any of the presidential debates this fall? They were tiring! After a few minutes, most of the candidates started to sound the same. And what do campaign promises really mean anyway?

I don't know about you, but I'd prefer to see the *billions* of dollars used to get candidates into office used for something that benefits citizens (better health care or urban schools, for example). I'd like to see elected officials spend less time and money trying to get into office and spend more improving their jurisdictions.

Back when Trevor (my husband) was in graduate school, he had a professor who asserted that no one can enter politics and remain uncorrupted. Regardless of the financing, the I'll-vote-your-way-if-you-vote-mine-nature of decision-making taints everyone involved. This seemingly makes it impossible to have full integrity in bringing about the improvements you entered the political sphere to make.

I don't have the space here to even scratch the surface of the horrible injustices I see in our city, state, and country. I am pretty convinced that Jesus would like our leaders (and us) to do a better job of stewardship, in virtually every arena. Clearly, empowering leaders (who are not Jesus) has led to some pretty atrocious consequences.

"And the government shall be upon His shoulders." Did you hear this

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quote from Isaiah during Advent? (When I hear or read that line, a choir in my head starts singing the song from Handel's *Messiah*.) I believe the Messiah was born 2,000 years ago, but I'm still waiting for the government that sits upon his shoulders.

So, should we vote?

When the alternative to voting is staying home and letting all the boneheads decide everything, we should probably get out there and take advantage of whatever small voice we do have.

O.K., but the question was actually, "Should I vote to *empower someone who isn't Jesus*?" I would argue that my vote is not so much *bestowing* power as helping to choose *on whom* to bestow it. The power inherent in political offices has already been bestowed, and, yes, we have granted it to *people*, not Jesus. Whether I vote or not, a bunch of people have power within a corrupt system until Jesus' return,

I want people to have the freedom to choose Jesus, not get forced into "following" when they haven't chosen to.

when the government shall be upon His shoulders.

In the current climate, is it not impossible to "empower Jesus" as much as we might like to? The world is in so much disarray, and even His followers can't agree about the issues. I admit that my faith is at the core of my decisions, and therefore a huge factor in my political leanings. But all of us have disagreed strongly with someone who also claimed to be a Christian, like we are. For example, does God call us to value more the human life on the battlefield or in the womb? I find that many Christians get more worked up about killing one and not the other, but I'm pretty sure that Jesus loves both.

I actually get a little wary of certain types of overlap within politics and religion. Don't we have separation of church and state? I want people to have the freedom to choose Jesus, not get forced into "following" when they haven't chosen to.

Life is messy. Choosing to vote means participating in a severely broken system. I am completely in favor in reforming our political processes. Until then, I may as well vote, as best I can, with what we have for now.

If voting is ineffective, what can we do? Much power is in the hands of the few, and I keep hearing more and more about how deceived we've been, how corporations have politicians in their pockets, how power is abused. It's important to resist complacency, to keep listening, and to advocate for our values—beyond voting. The news outlets aren't telling us the whole story. It takes tremendous effort to stay aware, and sometimes even the knowledge feels tedious. And then there's the endless arguing—how I hate to argue, especially with my brothers and sisters! Though I hope for reform and look for ways to support it, I hope most for the day of Christ's return.

— KATE GRANT-DAY



How do we bring about the revolution without using guns?

"WELL, you know, we all want to change the world," goes the Beatles song. The thrust of "Revolution" (released in 1968 in promotion of *The White Album*) was as direct as Lennon/McCartney ever got: sure, the system's broken and we need to replace it, but let's go about it the right way. No hate, no destruction. After all, what good is violence or the use of force if it corrupts the vision and the soul of those waging it?

We at Shalom House, a newly formed Circle of Hope mission team, were asked to answer the question at hand (listed above). The question is conveniently phrased because, frankly, it looks beyond the typical debate over nonviolence, assuming that the revolution should be waged without guns. We are saved the burden of an elaborate argument here, because pacifism—while it is the only ism I'm comfortable with—is not an easy ideological stance to argue.

Nonetheless, the question before us is still challenging because it anticipates a total plan of a complete revolution. The word itself conjures up our conceptions of what are arguably the most profound global transformations in modern history: the American and the Socialist Revolutions. These revolutions were fundamental, of course, and yet at the same time they were incomplete in the sense that God's kingdom was not realized. Power still ended up concentrated

among a small elite, resources were not totally distributed, and the needs of the "least of these" were not completely met.

The revolution that we are talking about—the one that the Prophets foresaw, and founded on the principles of Jesus' Sermon in the Mount and in his other teachings—is the realization of the kingdom on earth. This point is necessary to make because the totality of "the revolution" transcends our notions of any social movement we would try to plan or wrap our heads around. It would not be a political project with a beginning and an end. Acknowledging our human limitations, let's help realize the kingdom without hang-ups on pragmatic results; let's favor the building of local communities over the construction of political campaigns; let's be revolutionary, knowing that since we see through a glass darkly, the revolution is not ours to take credit for, nor is it one in which we grasp all the details.

Now, to the task at hand. We can be revolutionary without using guns by using people power as the most effective counterforce to the powers that be. The powers that be, I would argue, are the military industrial complex and its supporting structures. And what a magnificent force this opposition is. The current United States annual defense budget is

Dialogue

WHY? *This quarterly journal is a gift to everyone who wishes to be a part of the ongoing dialogue we share in Christ that forms us and deepens us as a real church. Whether you just arrived or have been with us from the beginning, we want you to be part of the conversation and an informed member of the team. We hope you will work with us to build a safe place to experience and share the love of Jesus Christ. Dialogue is a crucial part of that.*

If you would like to respond to any of the articles printed, that would be great. We have never turned a response away — but we reserve the right to do so.

\$471.2 billion. These funds keep the U.S. fighting wars that a well-informed populace would never support, and they divert much-needed support from human services like education, housing, and health care.

People power, the worst nightmare of the powers that be, is founded on nonviolent direct action and noncooperation with unjust laws and policies of state. A tradition of resistance has come up with best practices in this field. One expert on nonviolent action, Gene Sharp, has come up with 198 Methods of Nonviolent Protest and Persuasion (see www.peacemagazine.org/198.htm). As entrenched as the military system is, a multi-pronged nonviolent attack—marches, public statements, strikes, boycotts and other withdrawals of support, etc.—could dismantle it eventually. To paraphrase Gandhi, power does not belong to the people because they do not protect it, or fight hard enough for it after it is lost.

The essential ingredient to this kind of nonviolent direct action is numbers. Right now, they are surely missing in a society crippled by apathy, rabid consumerism, and a host of other problems. The only way to overcome these obstacles, again, is to live out the Gospel faithfully in a way that furthers the kingdom. Consequently, in

building communities of faith, stone by stone, the idea of taking what once seemed radical steps becomes more feasible as this Other Way becomes more integrated with everyday reality. The possibilities also expand thanks to the Gospel's inclusive nature. If all are heirs to God's promise, to paraphrase Paul, then none are excluded from God's work. This logic flies in the face of other revolutionary movements in history that have consciously or unconsciously restricted membership on the basis of race, class, religion, or former political allegiances. There is no need to "target" a specific segment of the population when all are welcome, even enemies.

But what about the need to protect the innocent from harm, to maintain harmony? If this revolutionary, kingdom-building movement does in fact change the world without guns, will we not need guns eventually to keep the new order? That will surely be the case if we fail to

build a system that address the right approaches to handling conflict. If our legal system is like the U.S.' current one, which fails to rehabilitate offenders or address victims' needs, we will need guns to keep people accountable to the law. If our economic system remains one in which the enfranchised decline to share with the disenfranchised, then we will need guns to preserve equality. And if our international security system fails to reconcile the conflicts between nations through mediation, diplomacy, and peacebuilding, then we will continue to need peacekeepers with guns (and even nuclear arms).

One solution to this fundamental need for security that has been tried in history (though without sustained logistical support) is the formation of an unarmed interpositionary peace force. Such a contingent would act as a buffer force between two (or more) combatant parties to prevent the outbreak of fighting. (Interestingly enough, Gandhi had been organizing such a

force, called the Shanti Sena, just days before his assassination). Christian Peacemaker Teams, whose slogan is "Getting in the way," train their Corps members with a similar interpositionary strategy. They go to places around the world that violence and injustice mar, and, in coordination with local partners, they work through conflicts in a constructive manner. This approach to conflict could be replicated on a much larger scale, and would obviate the need for guns.

We can also avoid going back to our old ways of violence and war-making through a proper approach to education. If we were to institute peace education in schools, we would get the desired results. If we included conflict resolution and history courses that assign equal import to nonviolent movements as they do to wars, we would be sowing seeds for a new generation of leaders who would have a much better idea about how we are supposed to live together than we do now.

In short, if we really desire an end to violence, we have to study war no

more, and if we really want peace, we have to start learning it.

— BRIAN BAUGHAN AND SHALOM HOUSE



Distribution of power in the CoHO structure

EVEN though the Mummies were tempting, Ed & I instead watched "Kingdom of Heaven" on New Year's Day. It's an epic film, and near the end, a definitive battle looms. The hero is obviously backed into a corner, completely outnumbered. One of his critics says, "My Lord, how are we to defend the city with no knights? We have no knights!" Yes... good question. With no one empowered, the villagers will soon be in big trouble, with the catapults, enemy hordes, burning oil and more just outside the city walls.

But our hero, a man of courage and wisdom, makes a bold decision. Eyes blazing and voice determined, he asks all men who are able to bear arms, including servants, to kneel, and he knights them all on the spot. He makes common men knights! His critic sneers, "Does making a man a knight make him a better fighter?" He thinks not, but we know in our hearts and by the determined looks on the faces of the newly empowered knights that the answer is "yes". They are no longer waiting for someone else to do the work at hand—they have become activated in service of their own future and that of those around them.

If you've been following the slow and winding path to the commissioning of the Circle of Hope Operations Team (the "CoHO"), which happened at this year's Council Meeting in January, you may have noticed that, in a slightly less Hollywood sort of way, this process is calling out our people with administrative gifts to be empowered. A group of us started out last year at about this time to try to "do something" to help ease the administrative burden on our pastors, but not yet having a system to plug in to, a lot of us felt pretty frustrated. In retrospect, this past year was

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not so much about “doing,” but more about listening and imagining together. As we are all pretty much aware by now, Circle needs more Knights of the Zoning Process and Financial Software if we want to keep following our vision for where God’s leading us.

To me, the CoHOOp seems like a natural outgrowth of the cell model we have already nurtured at Circle. That is, when we, as a community, listen for God’s voice, we will usually discern it in dialogue together, face-to-face. And that power is best held lightly, among many. That’s why the structure of the CoHOOp, though new, feels so familiar, with leaders & apprentices, and a built-in multiplicity of additional voices, as well. Sharing power, information and vision, we are accountable to one another through transparency and open communication. All of these things are intentional strategies to minimize the accumulation of power in individuals, and maximize the empowerment of many to realize our vision of being the church for the next generation.

I think there’s a general understanding that we will know the CoHOOp is effective in claiming its power because the pastors will be “freed up” for their primary call to lead, disciple, and teach. I think this is true, but I also believe there’s even more. I think we’ll also know it because, through the mechanism of the CoHOOp, gifted administrative servants will be honored as valuable leaders, and they too will be “freed up” by this recognition to unleash the full power of their special gifts for the good of the whole body. This, I believe, is surely a manifestation of what it means to be the “body of Christ”—entrusting the power over different realms of responsibility with those who have the passion, skills and gifts to make it excellent, with love.

— LIZ EINSIG WISE



Should we put ourselves in positions that may require us to us deadly force?

WE’VE probably at some point allowed our imagination to carry us to a scenario where deadly force against another human is our only viable option for survival. In the middle of the night, a stranger breaks into your house. Maybe the stranger is after your money or been following you. You have one chance to defend yourself before the person will undoubtedly take your life. Can you be prepared to confront such a situation?

Maybe you’ve wondered what could possibly push you to using deadly force to defend your family, community, or country. Given the opportunity, would you choose to take someone else’s life if it meant protecting your own life or that of a loved one? Though possibly a sparse reality (and certainly not worth dwelling on), it is within the realm of possibility of this world to have to answer this question with our actions. Our history textbooks, popular media, and our own neighborhoods glorify the honor and valor associated with fighting in defense of your life or that of your loved ones. And why wouldn’t it be? There are certainly instances where justification for this kind of action is logical. Still, I feel these considerations beg this question: *What validates the use of violence in the first place?*

I sometimes forget that I grew up during a period of time in a country where two groups of radical militants felt themselves required to use deadly force to order to bring their vision of justice to their communities. Both the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) and the Shinning Path, both Marxist guerilla organizations, sought to bring about a communist state in Peru through radical use of violent and deadly force against anything that was seen to them as symbols of imperialism and inequality. Evening news

brought images of car-bombs detonating in around the country on evenings when we were kept indoors by the 10 p.m. curfew. The Shinning Path, was the notable perpetrator of the violence and assassinations that occurred between the years of 1980 and 2000. Over 69,000 humans were killed between these armed fighting between the armed government and guerilla groups. Many citizens found themselves ensnared in a position of mixed sympathies. Perhaps they too felt the saturation of injustice in the country, but were not willing to take up arms against fellow humans. Speaking out against the violence, or straddling the ideological fence, could certainly mean death or persecution. The prevailing sense of fear and uncertainty was a brutal weight on the heart and life

“What else could we do? They were attacking our families, kidnapping our friends, stealing our freedom.”

of Peru. Defense or retaliation against these groups perpetrating violence seemed justified, but organized government efforts against them caused an almost equal amount of deaths. Heart wrenching struggles arise for someone seeking to follow Jesus in the depths of such a valley of the shadow of death.

I am also reminded of the Sandinistas of Nicaragua, another group who saw violence and deadly force as a means of liberation. Three years ago I became close friends with a man united to the Sandinista revolution of the 80’s at the age of nineteen. He told me stories of the brutal Somoza-family-run dictatorship that held power in the country since the early 1900s, of the people that had disappeared for questioning the power of the family, and of attempted but failed non-violent uprisings against oppressive governmental systems. He told me stories of former compatriots using violence against each other in civil war. I was also told about of the euphoria that firing a gun brought in a battlefield. He showed me the scars from bullet wounds in his side and arm. The spark of youthful idealism for a country taken for freedom and equality could still be clearly sensed in his voice. It is true as well, that the Sandinistas were catalysts for significant progress in the country, for example in the fields of literacy and health. Inclusively commendable was the establishment of a democratic election once they overthrew the Somoza dictatorship. Many would argue justification for the actions of the

Sandinistas and feel the justification for actions taken. I asked him once whether or not he believed, "that this was the way of Jesus to bring about equality and eliminate injustice?". "Maybe not", he answered, "but what else could we do? They were attacking our families, kidnapping our friends, stealing our freedom". I felt a certain amount of foolishness upon his reply. It was hard for me to be critical of the use of deadly force as a means of liberation when I had not been there to feel the violence of the oppression that awoke the Sandinista movement in the first place.

We know a fair number of situations around our globe which would seem to bring justification of such force in a similar way. The organized evil of human trafficking, the brutality of ethnic cleansing, the expropriation of lands from indigenous peoples for exploitation of natural resources, are some clear examples. Even more subtle violence as corporate corruption, systemic racism or the deliberate pollution of the earth might be enough to make one feel this urgency. I feel the heaviness of a world gone wrong and am grieved by complacency towards this evil. There are groups, be it Marxist guerrillas or government-sponsored armies, who have been willing to take up arms upon feeling this urgency. My hope is that Christians who seek to follow in Jesus' footsteps will be serious about being presence and life in the disarray where deadly force seems to be the only avenue for constructing a different reality. I want to see how the light shines brighter in the darkness where the attacker could break in the middle of the night, where authorities threaten human rights, where desperation makes one believe that violence is the only means of transformation. The words of Martin Luther King Jr. ring true to me: "the means which we use to obtain our goal must be as pure as the means we chose to accomplish." I believe Jesus, specifically in the Sermon on the Mount, suggests more creative approaches to conflict than deadly force. I imagine that such redemptive courage comes solely from the Spirit. But before we become too quick to criticize deadly force, let us allow ourselves to feel the necessity of existing and being active in the chaos where it is born.

— JOEL MCINTOSH



'Wearing Pants': Empowerment and Distribution in Marriage

ONE idea for the title of this article was. "Who wears the pants in your family?" which may give you an idea of where this is headed. I love this question, because it so aptly demonstrates the inherent sexism in our language and culture. Assuming that the phrase originated during a time when pants were primarily menswear, it could be rephrased as, who is the man in your relationship? Who has the typically male power? Who is in charge?

Professor and author Diana Butler Bass recently touched on this topic on her blog for Sojourner's magazine's website (blog.beliefnet.com/godspolitics). She describes a recent presidential debate where Republican candidate Mike Huckabee got a rousing round of applause when he affirmed his views of wifely submission as part of his evangelical faith. According to Butler Bass, Huckabee responded by saying "I am not the least bit ashamed of my faith." He then joked that his own wife was not submissive and appeared to temper his original statement by affirming the idea of mutual submission in marriage.

Bass goes on to say, "some evangelicals might find this acceptable, but many more do not—not to mention the American public as a whole." She cites a 10-year study by the Pew Research Center that has tracked a steady decrease of the impact of conservative religion on views of gender. In 1997, 28 percent of Americans strongly disagreed with the idea that women should return to "traditional roles." In 2007, 42 percent strongly disagreed with the same statement. I wonder, as Butler Bass does,

how many Protestant Christians are included in that 42 percent? And what of us at Circle of Hope?

How does this really work out in the day-to-day grind in the lives of young urban Christian families? After talking with four Circle of Hope covenant members about their experiences and thoughts on power in marriages, four ideas emerged.

Power isn't an easy subject.

Each person described a different level of openness about power in the relationship, but each person also admitted that the conversation about power is ongoing. Megan Scott, married to David for eight years, says that the issue of power "isn't scary or hard, but we have to be intentional about discussing it." Most often, "the power discussion" is raised in relation to a conflict, hurt, or decision to be made. Ryan Bowers, married to Rachel for four years, says, "It's easy till it's hard. Power doesn't come up as an abstract as opposed to feeling it when you run into it." Jeff Sensenig, married to a different Rachel for eight years, echoes that when he

says, "I think its always challenging, and although we discuss it regularly, the conversation still tend to be emotionally-charged." ***Power doesn't always play out the way we expect.***

Many of the interviewees started out their relationships with a dichotomy of more control or more equality. For some, these perspectives stem from what was modeled in our family of origin. Jeff reflects on this: "I was raised in a home by parents that

While not being consumed with proving equality, these four partnerships are struggling, striving, and working to be mutual, respectful, listening places where both partners are honored and respected.

preached that an authoritative model was the way to go. The man is the head of the house and the woman must submit to his leadership and guidance. The truth of the matter is that in practice my parents had a fairly egalitarian relationship. My mom held several positions of leadership in the workplace, worship place and at home." He goes on to say, "The thing that I find to be most unexpected is my own response to power. Do I want to lead my family? Sure. Am I capable? Absolutely. Am I comfortable wielding power and being seen as the only leader in a family unit? Definitely not. I married Rachel because I

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was looking for a partner, not a servant." Others have had a different kind of shift. Melissa Rivera, married to Julius for six years, explains it this way, "I thought it was suppose to be equal all the time, but that is really hard to do. And almost unnecessary at times." When asked what about power has been different than expected, Ryan states, "That it can never be exactly equal."

Empowerment begets empowerment.

It's by giving space, encouragement, energy, love, acceptance, and accountability to the other person that results in a feeling of empowerment. Melissa states that, "Julius empowers me by holding me accountable to my goals. He believes in my capability to accomplish them and I empower him by making a conscience effort to acknowledge his perspective." Megan describes this interplay as each one "being aware of giving each other the energy to live out their dreams. I feel empowered by accepting who David is and helping him go where

he wants to. He encourages me to stay focused on what my dreams are. He values my dreams." Jeff explains, "I think I feel most powerful when I am able to care for my spouse. There is power in knowing that I am not so fragile that I have to pour all of my energy into self-preservation." Ryan's experience shows again that it is not

about making everything even. He says, "Rachel empowers me by contributing more than her share and that inspires me to do the same. It feels good."

Trust, commitment and dialogue are essential to this kind of mutual empowerment.

It's not always easy. Ryan describes that when he and Rachel are making a decision together, "we sometimes have to be reminded that we trust each other. Too often, suspicion of motives is the first thing that pops up." Megan explains, "Accepting David for who he is comes out of my commitment to our relationship." Trust is central to empowerment for Jeff, too: "Rachel empowers me by communicating through her words and actions that she trusts me. I think we trust each other much more now than we did early on in our marriage. When we were operating out of a place of distrust it felt as if we

were constantly keeping score. For me it was about trying to take care of myself first. Early in our marriage I saw myself operating from a place of poverty. I tried to hoard as much time, energy, resources for myself as possible. I think now that we have a strong foundation of mutual love, respect, and especially trust I am able to operate out of a place of wealth. I am more apt to give freely of myself and to encourage Rachel to operate out of her strengths."

Everyone interviewed cited communication as one of the most important elements in avoiding a power struggle in their relationship: "Lots of talking." "Learning to listen." "Several conversations over time." "Clarifying, rehashing." Ryan describes the process of making decisions with Rachel: "When we first got married, decisions were either arbitrary or the strongest personality won out. Now we really hash it out and try to make decisions based on what makes

"A White Christian has the obligation to bridge barriers, include people in cell, and intentionally create a space where people of any color can be a part of."

-- Ben White

the most sense objectively for everyone involved, not just what we are feeling at the moment. Not all the time, but we try." Power struggles are taken to a new level when children are added to the mix, as another person whose feelings, needs, and rights have to be considered. Megan says, "One thing that has

been surprising is the unexpected power that children hold and that pulls on your marriage, on both of you." Ryan agrees, "Before kids, there was much less to negotiate."

I'm not sure how Circle of Hope would fare on the Pew Research Center's survey—but these stories show a depth and complexity too real and too rich to be detected in a percentage point. While not being consumed with proving equality, these four partnerships are struggling, striving, and working to be mutual, respectful, listening places where both partners are honored and respected.

Or, as Jeff Sensenig would say, "I wear the pants in our relationship, but my wife picks them out."

— SHELLEY CROGNALE

On the privileges of being White, and Male

FIGURES often crowd my mind, i.e. According to a recent report, *the State of Black Philadelphia*, in Philly only 14 percent of black high school students are proficient in reading, and only 10 percent in math. To be honest, lately these figures have tempted me to see the world as a large paper mâché landmass. In this horrible image the paper mâché consists of newspaper articles and demographic charts warring with sprinkles of hope and color; and hovering over the world are marionettes of maniacal geniuses, calculating how to preserve their dominance.

Scary, I know. I think this pessimism is dangerous and fairly prevalent, and there is the risk of being so jaded we don't even see people for people. In the U.S. this includes not seeing white males as actual humans, as people that are not systemically born into white privilege. However, this remembrance strikes me: there also exists living, breathing; sometimes joyous, smiling, laughing, and caring people and also, Jesus. God reveals this remembrance early on in Exodus, when despite the hardened heart of Pharaoh, God keeps the hearts of many Egyptians kind towards the Israelites. This kindheartedness manifested itself through simple gestures, and individual relationships. What does this mean for modern populations born into a high socio-economic status? For people born into power and privilege like white men? How are they supposed to react to this power?

Keeping in mind that there are actual people who are white men, not just numbers, I decided to speak to two of them: Ben White and Adam Heinze. The first question that comes up is what are the privileges and powers that white males inherit. Ben explained that the biggest advantages he sees in his life are cumulative through the generations. He benefits from his grandfather being able to "transcend the levels so easily" without roadblocks due to color or gender. This advancement helped educate his father, which helped him to be raised in an environment with deep cultural capital, tools we function in society with. For Ben, this cultural capital included an emphasis on formal education, a powerful tool of division and continued inherited inequality in America. Edu-

cation allows people born into privilege to continue to receive more education and wealth, as a result generations are bumped up the social ladder by the gains of the last. Meanwhile the state of those families and generations deprived of education deteriorates as the gap in competition continues to widen.

Considering the field started on the backs of slaves and sexism, the longevity of inherited inequality has been detrimental to the freedom America claims to strive for. Adam Heinze agreed with this conclusion, that education and economic standing were the biggest advantage he's received. Having raised foster children in local public schools, Adam is consistently distraught at the gaps in the quality of education. He's seen this stratification from the bottom up working at what is considered a liberal institution, Temple University. Recently in Temple's biology department, where Adam studies and works, he suggested that they should intentionally hire more females and people of color. Apparently his colleagues answered this suggestion with a look that informed him there was some thing growing or missing on his white male head. Despite their initial shock, they agreed to give preference to more diverse candidates. What really saddened him was that despite the agreement to change it did not come to fruition. Out of 400 race blind applications, all white applicants were chosen to be interviewed. To Adam's dismay the only diversity was one female. This result is understandably frustrating.

Changing the structure of any thing is a drastic step, and then for it to yield none of the desired results; it creates a gnawing question of what more can I do? What more can I give? Where do I find answers? One of the positive effects of these frustrations is the hope that longing and pain leads us back to Christ for direction, to the knowledge that the "I," is just asking for burn out and heart break. We cannot, will not, achieve a thing without God in our minds and actions.

One of the ways that Ben has decided to approach the issue is the same as the Egyptians, through relationships. Ben explained that he spent so much time thinking about race, talking about race, doing every thing he could think of about race,

that he ended up feeling paralyzed when all those things didn't work. He still supports drastic and systematic changes, but the low success rate can end up killing any forward motion. It has to be coupled with gradual change and with allowing mistakes or we will

burn out. He explained, "When we over-analyze it, nothing gets done. So now, I'm existing in the knowledge of [white privilege], but it's such an interwoven thing it's hard to confront it, it's part of the fabric you're working with." He's decided his course of action is to love and seek

relationships with all of God's people. In terms of race and sexism, the answer for Ben is to follow Jesus, and part of that is to love and care for the people he encounters.

Ben explained that in a non-Jesus world view, white men have no obligation to anyone but themselves. However, Ben boldly states "A White Christian has the obligation to bridge barriers, include people in cell, and intentionally create a space where people of any color can be a part of." Jesus teaches us how to love people, not just white people. To Ben, being obligated to reconcile all people is simple, "If you're really listening to Jesus, it's a no brainer." Ben emphasized that this doesn't mean the solution to social injustice is easy or simplistic. Even relationships are hard-work that takes patience, faith and Christ. There complexities are and privilege even in a solution. To Ben, deciding to make intentional relationships with other still reveals power structures. White people have a great deal of power to choose them, and it is a lot harder for people of color to one day choose to be friends with whites

Adam Heinze saw things differently in terms of what white male obligations are. To Adam, white males aren't specifically obligated to do anything. Everyone is called to love. He explained: "We're called to love. Not called to love black people, white people, girls, boys, we're called to love *all*. Maintaining power is not love." This means that we're called to love people indiscriminately before we know them and after,

or even if with never do meet them. Regardless of who they are Adam feels we're all responsible to be concerned about everyone's well being. According to Adam, being a white male allows access to loving differently, but the responsibility or desired outcome should be no different. Adam does agree that relationships have to be part of change. Relationships allow people to really know each other and not just blindly judge. To Adam, when people know each other it forces them to be kinder. They allow for growth and for people who have been stripped of adequate resources and voices to better represent themselves in the world. However, these are things we're all called to, not just white males.

Everyone has to work with God to keep their hearts soft and malleable, to have the courage to put ourselves in the world and risk actually connecting to others, to be disappointed or even changed for the better. We must do this despite ever looming pharaohs, naysayers, and brooding pessimism. Even if drastic proclamations and warnings to leaders fail, we must rely on relationships and the hope that God has given us of redemption in the form of His son. God has promised us freedom and justice, which keeps the sprinkles of color and hope in my paper mâché landmass winning in the battle for the Earth. I have hope in the people that make up statistics and demographics. After all God has said: "I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice." Ezekiel 34:16. The message is clear; we must take care of each other.

—ANNIE KOPENA



Readers, please respond!

Your responses may just be printed in the next Dialogue! We love hearing what you are thinking.

E-mail to iJonny@gmail.com

An oral history of the Circle of Hope in 2007 As collected from the Council, January 12, 2008.

- **Shalom House** opened with four people working for peace.
- Two male therapists began serving with **Circle Counseling** — one of color!
- We were greatly educated by our involvement with **community organizations, zoning and building permit processes**
- The **Kensington and Boston** space didn't work out, officially.
- The East congregation has grown a lot through **adversity**.
- The **East kids team** took some steps forward.
- We learned how to have **conflicts as a group** as a result of building difficulties. Similar challenges have killed other organizations.
- We learned about **having a conflict with a covenant member and friend**, having lots of dialogue as a group.
- We learned how to **love through hurt**; learning what grace looks like. 2007 a hallmark of tension and hope for us and how that is so formative for all of us. We need to acknowledge that process. As we get larger, we learn that it's O.K. to wrestle, and form together.
- We learned how to work with people who have **mental health issues**.
- Expanded and **organized better** at East with PM teams, etc.
- **PM Teams** met network wide.
- Writing **original songs!**
- BW added a worship team and instituted a **scramble**.
- **Creative uses of space** at East—it's hard when there's no room to walk around.
- **Circle Thrift** went above and beyond where we thought it could. We have a second store!
- 100s of people helped get **CT2** going.
- BW started a **children's cell** for the older kids—multiplied the existing cell. We at the strange difference between a program and a cell -- figuring it out and solving the problem together.
- **ESOL** team at East, got together with BW team for Christmas party.
- **Apprentice Pastor** team was established and is meeting.
- **Men's retreat** was great, nice to do as a network.
- Clearer understanding of the **Discernment Group** process. We've had over 100 people in this mapping process — a sure sign of life.
- Rod's **sabbatical grant**—applied and received!
- **AMPM** got more solid this year—as it grows the community is owning it.
- **New marriages and babies**.
- We listed all sorts of memorable **events and programs across the network**: Death row speaker, prayer with Shalom House, two 24-hour prayer times, eating contest, Circle Counseling seminar, Gulu Walk, retreats—Advent and St Francis Day, Christmas Caroling, concerts, movie nights, high school open mic night, poetry event, 50 kids got presents through Angel Tree, Undawater is selling water, CFLs are being handed out, 3rd Art Shop, Reconciliation Team created resource kits, BGX team has new leaders and held six BGXs, relief kits for school supplies, evensong, street sweeping, tree planting, water team funded the rain catchment, CJ's students have come to BW.
- We are writing, reading and reviewing a **book online**.
- We **reformed the website** and are making better use of the available technologies.
- Development of the **Operations teams**.
- We didn't get a **Pastor of Operations**, which caused us to change our whole track, get our act together, make a plan to move forward.
- More people **stepping into leadership** roles.
- Added a **third state** to the mix (Delaware!).
- People bought homes and moved into **neighborhoods near our sites**.
- We **shared (nearly) what we wanted to share** financially PLUS we raised \$40K for the East site.
- Structurally we are at the **edge of the 450 mark**—we are a new animal and we're facing up to it. We want the face to face congregations in a larger network so that we get the benefits of the small and the large. We are a new thing and we must work to do it.
- **Psalters** went on a tour that included parts of Europe, and Jay Beck led a West African drumming class right here in Philly.
- The **Reconciliation Team** diversified — they added members from East and they added members of color; they also developed toolkits for cells.
- Matt and Amanda interned on an organic farm and their experience has geared them up to make an **Urban Farm** in this city a reality.
- The Circle Venture Core Team held a **Circle Venture Festival** at BW and explored what is going on with its finances — it also decided to expand the team.
- **UndaWater** researched and developed a plan to bottle water and then they bottled water and they're selling it — they have marketing brochures and everything. And for every bottle that they sell — 25 cents goes to funding clean drinking water for a person without it. Every bottle sold brings one person clean water for one month.
- **BLUYS has bounced back from a robbery** and some personal losses in the Robinson family
- And we celebrated Circle of Peacemakers, Financial Stewardship Team, Books of Love, Awarehouse, and Cooking for Friends as their teams **died with dignity**.

2007 Goal Check

THIS is a regular feature of this publication. We want everyone to have some facts so we can have authentic dialogue! We adopted these goals in January of 2006. Every issue we ask our leaders to evaluate our progress toward meeting them.

Network

- **Find the next 200 -- Grow enough to justify preparation for another planting**

We did not find the next 200, more like the next 80. But that is a 19% growth in regular attenders at our PMs, which is one way we measure growth. It justifies preparation to plant. We wanted to multiply cells by 50%, it was 30%. We did some restructuring to prepare for future growth.

- **Share the spiritual wealth -- Encourage training and development**

Our training improved at all levels. We had a memorable men's retreat.

- **Operate out of our uniqueness -- Refine our sense of being one and many**

We got a much better handle on how our network operates and began explaining it well.

- **Make it easy to connect and contribute -- Propel the network's common purpose through better communication**

We overhauled the website and linked our congregations in all sorts of new ways. The Cell Leaders grew in their capability as advocates.

- **Take what God's built into the next level -- Provide for an administrative overhaul**

We did not hire the Pastor of Operations, but we did have a very fruitful time developing our administration. The CoHOp came into being, wrote the Operations Manual, formed several new teams, including a reformed Common Fund Team.

Circle Venture

- **Refresh Circle Venture as part of Circle of Hope's DNA**

The Core Team attempted a few one-shots and invented new ways to communicate.

- **Give people better tools to tell the Circle Venture story**

Some work was done on the website. There were seasons of emphasis about our Mission Teams in the PMs..

- **Include Circle Venture in the Administration plans of Circle of Hope**

The Core Team participated in the general rehab of our admin.

- **Aid in the expansion and connectedness of our agencies**

Circle Thrift funded part of the salaries for the next position.

- **Deepen the sources of support for our mission teams**

Even with missteps we raised almost the total we had set as a goal for fundraising from outside sources.

Broad and Washington

- **Find the next 100 -- Penetrate neighborhood tribes, oikoi and social systems.**

We found about the next 30, a 15% growth. Our cells grew by 20%, not 50%. The 12 for the next 100 made new friends.

- **Use our attractive front room well -- Hold fun, useful and helpful events in our space.**

The Events Team made a good impression and hosted over 3000 people in our events. Circle Thrift began making neighborhood acquaintances.

- **Welcome the whole kingdom of God -- continue to diversify**

ESOL classes reached out. We connected with our Indonesian friends down Broad St. People did a lot of deliberate boundary-crossing, personally..

- **Open a new front door -- Help Circle Thrift 2 to succeed**

An amazing success.

- **Reach out a loving hand -- Connect with the needs of the neighborhood.**

ESOL, Circle Thrift, Circle Counseling, Shalom House, our teachers, doctors and social workers and others all made a difference.

East

- **Step up to the challenge -- Move to the new home base**

Major turmoil ensued over being blocked from using Boston St. We regrouped and reorganized.

- **Spread the surface area -- Use our buildings well**

A little bit of blockage occurred. We adapted and found ways to open up a welcoming place. Circle Thrift made a lot of friends by using the building well.

- **Celebrate our diversity -- Continue to foster connections**

We had an ESOL conversation group and became more bilingual. We were very involved in neighborhood issues.

- **Get organized -- Refine our administration and communication**

We increased the Assistant hours, reformed the Children's Team, added new leaders and helpers in all sorts of areas.

- **Commission new workers -- Bless the partners who are will to serve**

Our cells (and leaders) increased by 35%. We commissioned new admin teams leaders in several areas.

2008 Goals

Goal: Build enough capacity to take the church to the next level.

1. Hire the Director of Operations by March 1.
2. Implement the structure outlined in the Operations Manual. Continue to refine the details in the Manual
3. Expand East's meeting space.
4. Increase our sharing in our Common Fund.

Goal: Take obvious steps to make ourselves known by our compassionate service.

1. Hire the Director of Circle Venture by April 1.
2. Create a way to administer the Compassion Fund well.
3. Train our mission teams to help people connect with Jesus and His church through their work.
4. Create more "good business" in Philadelphia through the founding of businesses or partnering with other startup enterprises

Goal: Plant our next congregation

1. Receive discernment from our Apprentice Pastor process by May.
2. Creatively use the time of Rod's sabbatical (May 15 to Sep 15) to advance Apprentice Training.
3. Deploy our next pastor by November 1

Goal: Support and train emerging leaders

1. Continue to refine the pastoral training of our Cell Leaders
2. Create a covenant for Coordinators and deepen their capabilities.
3. Support our Pastors and Directors as they become the Leadership Core Team.
4. Define and train the teams that function within the three areas of church planting, compassion and capacity.
5. Engage new leaders with a diversity of talents. Help people to connect to opportunities that are appropriate to their gifts.
6. Support Rod as he enjoys a sabbatical and transitions beyond church planter and founder.
7. Develop our mission to children and teens.

Goal: Develop our interconnections, both on the smallest and largest levels

1. Further develop our presence online by building on our website, online book, listserv, and social networking websites.
2. Link our network processes to create labor-saving systems.
3. Use sabbatical grant money to hold a weekend retreat for our discernment process in October.
4. Link our Events Teams.