
Dialogue

Volume 4 Issue 4 *Strength for the church's journey into wholeness in Christ* October 2002

The subject: *Poetry*

Poetry is being rescued, these days, from the back rooms of campus libraries and dark alleys of downtown by a robust crop of writers and lyricists. You may meet some you appreciate in this issue of the *Dialogue*.

There has been so much talk of poetry among us (especially in Center City) that we thought we would risk asking people to offer some of their work for publication. We deeply appreciate those who have been vulnerable enough to share the intimacy that poetry seems to demand. We asked each author to share a line about their motivation to help us understand. Thanks for that, too.

We long for poetic intimacy with one another and with God. No doubt that is why the Bible is full of poetry. The Psalms, which are often the best-loved part of the Bible, are poems and song lyrics that lead us closer to God. The Song of Songs is an amazing, erotic love poem. Often Paul can't resist quoting a poem or song when he is trying to get a point across. So let's begin with him.

*If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels,
but have not love,
I am only a resounding gong or a
clanging cymbal.*

*If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all
mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith
that can move mountains,
but have not love,
I am nothing.*

*If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender
my body to the flames,
but have not love,
I gain nothing.*

This quarterly is part of our ongoing dialogue of love. We use as many ways as we can to come together and keep together on this long, dangerous and joyful journey we share in Christ.

Ed. — Rod White

Too numb Too hungry Psalm 90

With one word we complain and with one word we express our most human longing, yet we've grown numb. With one thought we turn around to look back at our past, our communal experience, that thin shadow that has kept with us ever since. Jesus, you have been with us for all times, as our shadow protecting our backs, in unexplainable, unappreciable forms and figures, most often as our mothers, *God bless their hearts*.



Yet with one word, we pass the opportunity to celebrate someone's existence and revel in the public gift of their beauty. I memorize statistics on urban failure and corporate bloodshed from the back of my smart classroom, professors in front mocking the God that's giving me the peace not to return ignorance with more ignorance.

God, my friends ask me how they're supposed to teach their fourth graders morality and virtue when they can't even decide what's right for themselves. Show us how to build this divine center, yes, *establish the work of our hands*

When the Shadow God comes with

his one word, his miraculous act, bringing forth love from the most destitute of earthly saints and sometimes even us Christians, we might say the word and believe... go, and walk on water.

Whether we know it or not, we are building some kind of kingdom out there, taking in some kind of truth, paying homage to some kind of God. Even when I think I'm following the blueprint, my bricks usually go in the wrong spot, but I'm still trying my best anyway because I know at least there is a blueprint — grand, expansive truth beyond me.

*Establish the work of our hands,
yes establish the work of our
hands.*

God, you build into my life and I keep trying to board up the most immediate vacant rooms through my encapsulation stabilization policy like they're doing on Norris Street.

Heal the scar tissue of my foundation -- that I might understand this sacred wound, a worthy gift. Establish the cornerstone. I feel the rocky ground I come from gives me a disadvantage...like I'm starting a new round of Solitaire already in the hole...so *what's next?* is my prayer.

Give us an abundance as large as the debt we've brought to you. I make your burden heavier every day, *so make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us, for as many years as we've seen trouble* and had not believed in your church. Yes, *establish the work of our hands*, in one word, today, this

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

day, in one encounter. (Look who's demanding from the giver of good gifts?)

Right now, the pendulum of transformation is off to the races, and sometimes we'll get it, and other times, we'll not, and others times I just won't care, and still other times we'll give it out so much that we'll never need it again.

I see a line as long as the sky, where families and children and blurry faces are coming out of Egypt and the ghettos and abusive relationships with purple eyes and silent treatments from conservative fathers...all hoping with hope's extreme, standing on their tippy toes to reach that promised land. And all I can do is want to help, flash my good intention badge, and look up the most consoling verse my concordance has to muster. My God, MY GOD...from everlasting to this morning...hear us...bring us peace in this tension as we hold together dis-realities and paradoxes, not tug of war, because you're at both sides and it is finished. This life is yours. Amen. Take me I love you. I love you.

Ryan Bowers



this depicts relational/emotional circles i seemingly repeat. autumn was literal but figurative in the changing of seasons of the heart as well.

**a thin man and
a weight-gained divorcee
(a dichotomous story of me)**

i feel fall today.
folded between the season of our
'bright eyes'
-a latent discovery whom would sing
you of our perfect
sonnet. pardon all ears in my ever
shaking voice

Choice:
me vs Armani?

...and the winner will be?
commence the wrestle, or shall i
say
resume. (it's a foggy pennsylvania)

the tumble hurts more each time-
bruise on bruise, and i walk and
not choose.

flight is my plight
yet the horse has his boy
and 'caspien' is a financial promise
of
future deliverance. confusing
"getting used to" with
"liking" begets feelings of
forgotten feeling.

though, i feel fall today, per
retro verse, and trite recourse.
thinking i do
still thinking around you.

Joel Ealy



this is inspired by annie quick from stickman jones. she has this song comparing things like "the sunshine on your orange juice" as a way of jesus screaming at us that he loves us and we are beautiful. this short poem is my depressed response.

Annie says, 'I'm beautiful'

this morning, in my
rustled semi-awoke-ness
my orange juice was nowhere to
be found. (to my finding)
and this my ever saddening song

i run out the door as if to outrun an
ever thickening callous.

Joel Ealy



i was really struggling with what was truth- i think it's me coming to grips on my own how i believe that Christ is God incarnate-and that christianity is not some mere religion but it's the teaching's of Christ as is referred to as "bloody wisdom"-that is to defeat sa-

tan's facade of the truth we want to believe.

Sanitary \$ bill

The truth we all want is not what is
We challenge this world of individual
Holy-that of Christ
Could there be another, bloody wis-
dom?

Dare our almighty image be spotted?
Life's message, messy, stick stuff
Pumping our stainless lollipop
shaped hearts

But so handsome are we
And our sanitary, dollar-bill wisdom
Rationalize opposition to that which
has past lived

Those glowing eyes, seen the years
Soft hands, felt misplaced compan-
ions

Trembling lips, spoken foolishly
Floppy ears, heard whacked ideol-
ogy

As the spinning on axis
Continue
We too
Indifferent

Joe Getz

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, yet — but we reserve the right to do so.

[Lyrics] ...we as americans believe that we are the only human species that exist and have any significance-especially before God-sort of the whole "God bless america" bull we see everywhere.

of our own kind

it happened
all over all again
in the room where
they fill the news with print
of a story
to recognize our times
they are to glorify all innocent crimes
-remind me again-
of human kind

we'll miss you
as you leave
on our behalf
defend the income
of our God trusted land
of a story
told under sworn oath
to protect all that is our own
-remind us again-
of our own kind

Joe Getz



this poem came out of ruminations i was having on a silent retreat recently. i had come to the silence with quite a bit of pain, anxiety and confusion. as i began to let down, i started to experience an amazingly warm love from Jesus. i began to feel God loving me through my pain instead of judging me or begging me to change.

You Are the Strangest of All Lovers

You are the strangest of all lovers.
I need not wait to remember you
by the scent on my coat,
or recall the sound of your
laughter,
or feel your fingers entwined
in mine.
You move through me,
sensibly,
sensitively,

with mystery of past
preparing for the future.
But now
(yes now)
experiencing the present.

You are the strangest of all lovers.
You need not vow to stay,
for you can't leave me.
I can't leave you.
And when I try
you wait and wait ...
and stay and stay....
You stay.
Your strange love devours
my bile and through this
alchemic process,
makes it fluid syrup.
Sweet.
Like honey.

You are the strangest of all lovers.
You desire to give and that is your
pleasure;
I pleasure in your gifts and that's
how
I love you. (What strange love).
Your passion is overflowing
and your desire
for my desire
to be passionate
is overflowing
and you want me to want you,
but not only you,
for your strange love
desires that my love
become bigger
through you
to give to all those you love.
For you are not exclusively mine,
but you are exclusively mine.
(Are you not a strange lover?)

You are the strangest of all lovers.
Your love is dangerous.
It creates waves in me
and those around me
and it feels as if I'm drowning,
but this is a feeling I seek to en-
counter
again and again.
The outcome of pain
is luminous
and bright,
because you, strange lover,
encounter me there.

Your curious ways
allow me to take you
to the hot,
burning,
toxic place within me
that no other lover has gone (or
should go).

You are the strangest of all lovers.
You see my deception,
my inclination to leave
and you do not chastise me.
(How strange you are)
in that when I run-
you don't run after me-
you run with me.
You pursue me
and hold me gently
and become one with me
so I am not lonely
in my yearning to go.

And your strange love embraces
me-
reminds me in a fissure of time
that your strange love is for eternity.
For you are the strangest of all lov-
ers.

Angie Petersen



[Lyrics]....about me as an artist trying to understand my place in life-knowing that it is different from my role models- also it's the artist coming to grips that the realities of living and how making ends meet -also on another level it can be someone prone to a life-style that is dangerous.

like father

i do know what i don't want to be-
come
i don't know how to not make it hap-
pen to me

so surprised by the outcome
i knew it looked too easy
"nothing's for free" had no meaning
when the water was always running

have to make a living
as it impedes

(Continued on page 4)

how to live a meaning
and meet your needs

so deceiving

i do know what i don't want to be-
come

Joe Getz



*It's basically about jealousy and how it can
transform a frail, insecure person into a torrent
of anger and hate*

Tearing Wings from Angels

that which rises above will be thrown
down hard
the pile of mangled bodies and bro-
ken limbs
disfiguring beauty
a fairy shrieks
her wings ripped from her
once evoking enchantment
now resembling a damaged housefly
mutilated by wicked children
jealous of her flight

a bride's tears wash away her gor-
geous face
as her dress is fed to the flames
scorned by those enraged by her
happiness

the agony of the innocent
blood and ashes
left in the wake of tortured souls
turned ogre
worthless self-image feeds the in-
ferno of hatred
delicate fingers transformed into ra-
zor talons
fangs dripping with caustic envy
sobbing and laughter
the scales of misery
shifted by the devastation of the pure
but not disparately
rather the whole apparatus sinks fur-
ther downward

an ugly veneer seems more appeal-
ing
when contrasted with the surrounding

desolation
the desolation of a pretty face
clawed apart
but the beauty within has shriveled
to nothing
a dual metamorphosis
thus is the fury of inferiority

Jon Olshefski



basically it's about searching...

**3 paths to passive extinc-
tion**

dehydration
crawling in the desert wastes of life
searching for true knowledge
parched soul aching
all fluids purged along with the ex-
pulsion of prior notions
squinting through hallucinations
seeking truth, not for what it of-
fers,
but only for its reality
to search for reasonable explana-
tions
to pre-existing beliefs and hopes is
to drink from the flask of fools
taking comfort in lies
gulping salt water
only when there is a willingness to
accept truth no matter its proc-
lamation
regardless of its morbidity and de-
spondence
or absurdity of its beauty
can you ever hope to drain its foun-
tain of miracles
for only in truth is there hope
all else is meaningless deception
a sea of empty promises, a tanta-
lizing oasis
dry gasps echoing beneath my skin
my eyes water as i gag upon an-
other mouthful of sand

Jon Olshefski



*i wrote it thinking about the difference be-
tween appearance and perception, endless
commodification, and the ways that we (mis)
communicate.*

“to my little pokerface:

when it comes to phones, i'm all
eyes.

yesterday i saw a photo of you
with your hands curved into glass.

doesn't that chill you?

but it's okay: i'm high on american
flag,
and i own an asteroid. certified.

you should see the picture.
oh, can't talk now:
my information superhighway is run-
ning down my leg.

with love from

the official state kiss”

Sharon Nowak



This is my poem for community.

Keep

keep
keep
this on your wheel and heart
we are the call of the silent scream
cracked flat with pleading tones
layered with starvation and bitter
winds
we are the arms of an answer
laid out in wood
we are the crawl of a past too
known to hasten
the stream too furious to bide
the notes too shrill to resolve
we are the answer seekers
locating only
simply the frenzied
surrender of motion

this is the air I breathe
this is the life I drink

quiet

we are merely
we are the morning
we are now.

Brooke Sexton

[Lyrics]...from the collection on the CD titled "Forest Glen" with Rachel Toliver's collaboration.... A time of thinking how relationships with God and others work out in the grand scheme of things.

Up in Found

Where I'm going I cannot take you
where I'm going I cannot take my-
self
and still we resurrect these ladders
only to climb only to find

That nothing's better than falling
from this place
and finding flying on the wings of
grace
the down that takes me up and all
around
the lost that tangles ties me up in
found
and we will walk together
hand in hand in some spirit vibe
with no more rings to cover
no more things to hide no worries
that tide

That nothing's better than falling
from this place
and finding flying on the wings of
grace
the down that takes me up and all
around
the lost that tangles ties me up in
found
Some how some where these
hands liken to quest
when the meaning is in the beating
of the rhythm of flesh
but this now and forever placed in
our hearts
is the answer to the question that
stops to start

cause There's nothing better than
falling from this place
and finding flying on the wings of
grace
the down that takes me up and all

around
the lost that tangles ties me up in
found.

Forest Heinzenknecht



Some people in my past, teachers in particular, have tried to feed on my thoughts, and drink, uninvited, at the river of my consciousness.

who would have thought they
would be with me now?
like termites or parasites
they removed me
piece by piece
until
with their tiny mouths
they had made
tiny holes
crawled inside,
curled their tales
the deeper they crawled
the more they became me
filling their bellies with
my laughter,
my outrage,
my astonishment,
embarrassment,
until they had ventured
right
to the middle
there they wait, unable to proceed
they are able to eat things from it
but they cannot enter
the river
my thoughts keep them alive
peace will be
to starve them all to death
and make room for the
breath
of God

Devin Greenwood

I have always been in love with thunderstorms i think particularly because my mom had this obsessive fear of them and would send us all to the basement with flashlights and candles whenever one approached

Oh Sunderer of darkness

i see Your reverent shadows of gray
come near
serenity graces Your every essence
the engulfing power gently brushes
my fear
then allows it past my enchanted
presence
as most normally do i commonly flee
seeking shelter in my artificial home
then i watch You from glass windows
distantly
yet tonight i rest out here with You
alone
the gentle touches of Your glistening
rain
the thoughtful caresses of Your loving
wind
wash away memories of yesterday's
pain
and whisk away doubts burning deep
within
Your radiant flames rush upon these
bound lands
the pounding waves of sound roll in
from above
oh sunderer of darkness to unchain
hands
filling caves of my soul with immortal
Love.

Scott Krueger, July 93

My Sunday afternoon sad feeling ended up on paper.

evensong

the faucet cries
as I rinse the soap
from saturday's dishes,

and the hand towel
hangs forlorn

(kyrie eleison)

in sunday's last
hourglass
grains

rain slides down
the window
slightly cracked
open

this spectral air
steals into the room
gathering grey
around me
singing

(christe eleison)

... do I listen to
sunday's heart break
or is it my own that
I rehearse on this piano?
I can no longer distinguish
whose tears wash
my cheeks, my hands...

(kyrie eleison)

Jessica Lindsay



Let's end with more poetry from the Bible. First from Job 28:12-28

But where can wisdom be found?
Where does understanding dwell?

Man does not comprehend its
worth;
it cannot be found in the land of
the living.
The deep says, `It is not in me';
the sea says, `It is not with me.'
It cannot be bought with the finest
gold,
nor can its price be weighed in sil-
ver.
It cannot be bought with the gold
of Ophir,
with precious onyx or sapphires.
Neither gold nor crystal can com-
pare with it,
nor can it be had for jewels of
gold.
Coral and jasper are not worthy of
mention;
the price of wisdom is beyond ru-
bies.
The topaz of Cush cannot com-
pare with it;
it cannot be bought with pure gold.
"Where then does wisdom come
from?
Where does understanding dwell?
It is hidden from the eyes of every
living thing,
concealed even from the birds of
the air.
Destruction and Death say,
`Only a rumor of it has reached
our ears.'
God understands the way to it
and he alone knows where it
dwells,
for he views the ends of the earth
and sees everything under the
heavens.
When he established the force of
the wind
and measured out the waters,
when he made a decree for the
rain
and a path for the thunderstorm,
then he looked at wisdom and ap-
praised it;
he confirmed it and tested it.
And he said to man,
`The fear of the Lord--that is wis-
dom,
and to shun evil is understand-
ing.'"

...And finally from Philippians 2:1-12. Paul supplies the motivation for the poem he quotes: "If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God
something to be grasped,
but made himself nothing,
taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.

And being found in appearance as a
man,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to death--
even death on a cross!

Therefore God exalted him to the
highest place
and gave him the name that is above
every name,
that at the name of Jesus every knee
should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the
earth,
and every tongue confess that Jesus
Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed--not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence--continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose."

Readers Respond

Sometimes people offer their thoughts on what has been written. Most of the time we print what they offer...

Ancestor Worship in the Philippines

Below is a letter from the friend to whom I referred in the article on the occult--the one who lived in the Philippines.

Here is the reference from the article — ed. Perhaps the most sublime case of systemic oppression was told to me by a friend who grew up in the Philippines. Her father spent close to two decades there translating the New Testament into a local tribal dialect. Ancestor worship was the cultural tradition. To my friend's mind, a pattern emerged. In times of crisis, a family would call a local shaman to divine the cause. The shaman would seek out the spirits of the deceased and typically discover one who required the sacrifice of a valued animal in his or her honor. The resulting sacrifice and feast would represent a substantial economic hardship. Unfortunately, the pattern would be reinforced by the apparently coincidental end of the crises. After one incident, my friend's family put a young girl through high school after her family sacrificed the livestock set aside to pay for it at the command of a deceased ancestor.

She clarifies what was going on with the ancestor worship, and I think it is very interesting. I thought you might want to publish it in the Dialogue. She gave her permission to do so.

Clinton Ohlers

I double-checked with my mom on the spirit worship and sacrifices, and basically what you have said is correct. I have a few clarifications though. My parents have actually been there for 29 years this year. They started in that language group 28 years ago.

I would offer that their religion is more a mix of Catholicism and animism, rather than direct ancestor worship. They seek out the "spirits" (anito) who often, but not always, manifest in form of ancestors. They don't seek the spe-

cific ancestors. Also, in terms of offering sacrifices or worship - although there have been instances of proactive worship of spirits at joyful occasions, this is mostly limited to people who feel they have extra to sacrifice. Most people are subsistence farmers, so that leaves most of the population in a reactive fearful sort of worship where they offer sacrifices demanded by spirits who often manifest as ancestors.

The worst sort of sacrifice that a spirit could demand is the caribao (water buffalo - not caribou) which is used to plow the rice fields. Most families only have one, so such a sacrifice means the family plows the fields by hand.

The story about the girl whose school money was sacrificed is true. She knew which pig was her "trust fund" and cried bitterly when the demon disguised as a dead grandparent demanded more and more sacrifices, including her pig. That family was actually pretty well off comparatively, but in that instance the amount of sacrifices was so great that even they suffered economically as a result. The girl was a cousin in that family, so her status was already kind of low. The sick one was a young daughter, who did get better.

When the sacrifices take place, the whole village and even surrounding villages are called by gongs and a huge party takes place. They feed all who come from the sacrifices. There is dancing in traditional dress to gongs. The actually blessing or offering of the inner parts by the elders is kind of a private thing that is not the focus of the feast or witnessed by many people. Our family used to go to the feasts, and my dad was always given a place of respect and honor. We kids got to eat the rice from the bottom of the rice wine jars, which was always a big thrill. We had meat and rice. My parents stopped going to the feasts when the New Tribes missionaries came to town because they did not believe it was ok to eat meat sacrificed to spirits. Wanted to have a spirit of unity and not cause them to stumble. We kids were still allowed to go, but I don't remember going but once without my parents.

I know this is probably too much information, but maybe it will give you more big picture clarity for your summary!

Christie Carlsson

Goal Check *July-September 2002*

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 October of 2001 and January of 2002. Every quarter we evaluate our progress toward meeting them.

Network Goals

- **Deepen our skills for growing our cell network and encouraging the process of coming to faith in Jesus Christ.**

We have had significant Cell Leader Training Times and also trained Prospective Cell Leaders.

- **Assign Circle Venture to help us share our resources.**

The CV Board has considered a plan for defining and distributing our Compassion Fund.

- **Create more mission teams to lead us in particular aspects of ministry.**

The Shalom House Team took significant steps in organizing. A new team to create a Mega Thrift Store with MCC formed.

- **Develop our capabilities for helping new and old believers to mature in Christ.**

Our class on Art in the New Jeruz was helpful.

- **Perfect the means we use to grow love and connect our mission as a network of cells and congregations.**

The two congregations have grown in different directions over the summer which will require significant dialogue if connection is to be maintained.

- **Increase the activity of our Damascus Road Team in overseeing our structures and training further people.**

Art Bucher took over the leadership of the team.

- **Better organize our people to extend the kingdom by reimagining the com-**

munication of our vision for a network of cells and congregations lead by a team of Cell Leader Coordinators and Pastors.

A 2003 version of the Cell Multiplication Plan was used in recent training.

- **Hold quarterly training times based on an updated version of our "Public Meeting Plan."**

We have made significant progress towards having these times regularly.

Congregational Goals

Center City

- **Organize a series of events that get us out of our "box."**

We experimented with Week 3, a Saturday PM.

- **See a visible increase in our diversity through the work of our Damascus Road Team and our united attempts to help everyone bridge barriers.**

In regard to people of color, they continue to be represented at about 15-20% at our public meetings.

- **Be ready to move or expand our location by February, when our present lease ends.**

The Next Building Team has had significant discussions and done more research. They are forming a plan for completing our response to our space needs.

- **Initiate experiments in corporate prayer, and experience the work of gifted intercessors organized for regular prayer.**

No significant action.

- **Raise \$120,000 for our Common Fund from October 2001 to September 2002.**

From January-September we received \$74,886. That's \$15,000 less than our budgeted goal.

- **Show compassion in Center City in new, practical ways under the leadership of Circle Venture and Circle Counseling.**

The Shalom House team, the Frederick Douglas Support team's new project, Orkney House work, people lead-

ing against the war with Iraq and the Mega Thrift Store team helped us accomplish this. well

- **Improve the tools we use to work together and improve the means we use to tell people about how they can share their time, money and gifts.**

Our treasury reporting was greatly improved by Missy Stoner

Northwest

- **Cultivate relationships with the surrounding community – including the people, schools, businesses, churches and community organizations.**

Brotherly Love Urban Youth Services helps us do this. The CCDA Youth Conference was a great success.

- **Continue to build a sense of community among the current membership.**

Ongoing, incremental progress.

- **Expand the number of covenant members.**

No action.

- **Continue to improve the quality of the building. This would include having at least one kitchen operational.**

More improvement has been made.

- **Build an effective ministry to youth and young adult.**

Continuing development. Youth workers connected to BLURB Youth Services are contributing. Hope Café continues to expand.

- **Increase the level of security during the public meeting.**

No significant action.

- **Continue to develop an effective worship time that is rich and dynamic and that allows us to experience God in a deep and meaningful manner.**

Consistent improvement.