

Broken Bread

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Compassion, Peace and Justice are too important to be left to adults! Some people say that young people are the future of the church. That may be so, but the truth is that young people are the church now.

This issue of Broken Bread features stories of the young people in our midst- youth in our congregations and communities learning about social justice, engaging in acts of service and compassion.

There are also stories that shine a light on youth near and far facing hunger and poverty, injustice and peril- young people who envision a better world and turn that vision into reality.

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A MESSAGE FROM A YOUTH IN MISSION

by Kyle Nelson, from the 2008 Children's Mission Yearbook for Prayer and Study

Hey, my name is Kyle Nelson and last year something amazing happened to me. First let me tell you a little about myself: I'm seventeen, and I live in the great city of Gastonia, North Carolina. It's a small city but I think it's the greatest place to live. I am a member of Union Presbyterian Church, a small country church with the biggest heart. I attend school at Forestview High School where I am a junior.

Now back to that amazing thing that happened. It all started when I was trying to plan out what I wanted to do last summer. For some reason I felt the urge to do something for my church. I went to see Billy Wilson, a

notorious missionary from my church, to help me find a mission project. After my meeting with Billy, I learned that I had an opportunity to go to Malawi, Africa, with people from our presbytery to work around a children's hospital. God always has a way of getting to you, and I felt God tugging at my heart to go to Africa, so I listened and I chose to do the mission trip.

It is still hard to believe that I went to Africa. I experienced so many things and people that it's hard to keep all the memories straight. The trip opened my eyes. There were moments on the trip when I knew God just be working hard all over the world. I can't tell you the feeling you get when a young orphan hugs you or when one smiles so big because you just gave him a high five. It is weird to see so much joy and happiness in a place where the average American would only be

frowning if he or she lived in such poverty and hardship. Mission is not when people with money rush in and save the day; it's way more than that. Mission takes place when people reach out to others, make friendships with new people, and further their relationships with God.

I guess it's true what they say, you have to go, to know. Now I know how awesome mission can be for a young person like me. Young people have a great way of connecting, and it's important that we, the youth of our church, go out and do the work of the Lord. Maybe you won't leave the country or even your own state, but I'm sure there is the right mission for you even in your hometown.

WHAT ARE THE KIDS UP TO IN...

THE SOUTHWEST REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP
The youth of the Southwest Partnership have taken a mission trip together every year for the past 10 years including trips to Kansas City, Topeka, Kansas; Des Moines, and Cedar Rapids (with multiple trips to the last two places.) We will be helping Trinity United Methodist Church in Des Moines put on a health fair for the families whose children attend Moulton Elementary School on the north side.

It was also three youth from Southwest Iowa who made the recommendation that the Southwest Regional Partnership adopt Alejandria as our partner canton in El Salvador. We trust our youth as they

engage in lots of social ministries.+

Rev. Tim Maxa, pastor of United Presbyterian Church, Lenox, and Sharpsburg Presbyterian Church, Sharpsburg

TO DREAM

by Kathy Bassett, a member of Heartland Presbyterian Church, Clive. Kathy took part in Des Moines Presbytery's delegation to the Arizona-Mexico border with BorderLinks in September 2013.

Our children. We all have dreams for our children. We want them to be the best that they can be. We want them to obtain the highest education possible to be able to fulfill their future needs via gainful employment.

And we assume (for the most part) that this is possible. That isn't to say that it is always easy - but it is possible. For those of us with humble financial means, we have low interest loans, grants and scholarships available if we are willing to pursue them. A huge list of what is out there is a google click away. Fill out those applications and odds are you will get support.

Now consider putting yourself in someone else's shoes for a moment. Imagine this: many years ago, you came across the border. You lost your good engineering job due to the plant closing down. You do not have legal residency status. You came with dreams of opportunity. You came because you need to feed your family. You came with hopes that your children would have opportunity. In spite of your engineering degree, you have worked for 15 years at low paying jobs way below your capabilities. You've been

paying taxes and social security faithfully - knowing that you will never benefit from these services due to your lack of residency. Paying taxes and social security isn't a choice. The lack of legal documents is not a deterrent for obtaining work. You can easily get black market documents so your employer won't know you are not a documented resident. But that is another story.

Your child came across the border with you. He was 3 when you crossed. He has been attending elementary school, then junior high and now, thank God, he is in high school and graduating this year! Already your child has exceeded your hopes for a quality education! Your child is SMART! His English is perfect. He actually has no accent. He would love to be a doctor. He has the desire, the grades and the drive. And with all things being equal he could achieve that dream.

But obviously, things are not equal.

Little money has been set aside for a future education. With only low paying jobs available to people with black market papers, paying high rent, the high cost of food, gas and basic needs had left little to be saved.

So let's check what is available for our young, very bright, low economic status student. Oh. You are not a citizen? Stop here.

You are done. DONE.

Done.

No hope.

To apply to a university, or for financial aid, you need legal residency status. A Social Security number ÷ driver's license. If you question it ÷ or complain - you risk getting your family deported.

Now let me introduce you to a young man named Dario and to a program called Scholarships A-Z.
(www.scholarshipsaz.org)



We learned quite a bit from 19 year old Dario during our September 2013 BorderLinks delegation in Tuscan, Arizona. He said he didn't realize his family was undocumented till he was in junior high school. His older brother was a semester away from graduation and realized he could not continue his education when Prop 300 was passed in Arizona. Prop 300 provided that university students who are not U.S. citizens or permanent residents, or who do not have lawful immigration status, are not eligible for in-state tuition status or financial aid that is funded or subsidized by state monies. His older brother went back to Mexico. Dario didn't see him for over 5 years.

Dario shared his personal story. It is similar to the story above. He shared his family's struggle to make a decent life. His family crossed the border in 2003 when it was a little easier to do so - slipping through cracks when folks were not as discouraged to come across. All 5 members

of his family lived in a one room apartment. He went to school and graduated with a 4.0 grade point average and taking much tougher classes than were needed because he expected to go to college. When he tried to enroll in a university, he was met with all the roadblocks: %out of state+ status which at least doubles the cost of a higher education and no financial aid resources. He wanted to go back to Mexico. A friend dragged him to a Scholarships A-Z meeting. Here is where he realized he was not alone. And this was how he got involved.

Scholarships A-Z works in many areas: working with universities to change in-state status, providing parent workshops, GED assistance, training on how to search scholarships, leadership training, educator training, and they serve as a resource guide to get students on a path of education and citizenship. Some of the things accomplished in 2012/13: they won in-state fee status for DREAM students, 850 students received assistance, 2500+ students and educators attended workshops, A-Z students received over \$42,000 in scholarships and the organization made \$6,000 in scholarships available to all. They lobby and work at changing laws.

Dario said that only about 5% of undocumented students attend college due to the financial burden and documentation required. So what happens to the other 65,000 students?

Ponder this: Would you rather pay for undocumented

students behind bars or behind textbooks?

Scholarships A-Z is about networking, getting organized and community outreach. It began with only 5 students and educators. It is now a strong and viable resource to thousands of youth who identify themselves as %American+ ÷ for many young undocumented people, life in the States is the only life they have known.



Mission Statement:

To provide resources and scholarships to students, families and educators through online and community interactions, in order to make higher education accessible to all regardless of immigration status.

Vision Statement:

We believe everyone deserves the right to attain a higher education, regardless of his/her immigration status. We envision a society where students receive mentorship, educational, and financial resources needed to successfully pursue a degree that aligns with his/her abilities and career aspirations. We organize outreach activities and provide scholarships, resources, and advising that empowers community leaders and families to reform laws that block access to educational opportunities.

So there is some hope. But not without work and not without raising your voice in favor of educational opportunities for those who are caught in between the choices

their parents made and the realities of their current lives.

As good Presbyterians (Catholics, Methodists, or whatever you want to call yourself), we can most certainly pray for Dario and his family. But as he said: "Not just me - there are a million of me. Pray for all of us."

So do pray. Think about the opportunities your children have had within our educational system. Think about how you would feel if your child had no hope of an education beyond high school. Talk, call, email and write your legislators. Push for positive change. Think of the gifts and talents of our undocumented youth and what they could potentially provide to our future and the future of this country if given the opportunity.



WHAT ARE THE KIDS UP TO IN...

CLIVE

Heartland Presbyterian Church

On June, over 20 youth participated in a local mission experience, volunteering over 250 hours into the community. They landscaped, helped at the Central Iowa Shelter & Services homeless shelter, packed food and cleaned for Des Moines Area Religious Council, moved the Food pantry, organized backpack supplies for CROSS Ministries, planted hundreds of potatoes for the Faith and Grace

Garden at Covenant Presbyterian Church, and played games and went for a "walk and roll" with residents at Calvin Community. +
Martha Slocombe, Christian Education Director, Heartland Presbyterian Church

CAMBIALO: KIDS' MOVEMENT OF LA OROYA, PERU

La Oroya, Peru is one of the ten most contaminated cities in the world. 97% of the kids have lead poisoning because of a lead smelter owned by a billionaire from New York.

CAMBIALO is a group of 14 kids from La Oroya, Peru, all of whom have severe lead poisoning. They have organized themselves in order to start an international campaign to tell their story. They are writers, speakers, journalists, activists, filmmakers, editors, artists - but above all, they are kids! And they're out to change the world that is.



CAMBIALO is an acronym that means "Change It". Spelled out it says, "Construyendo un AMBIente AdeCuado en La Oroya" which means "Building a Better Environment in La Oroya."

The mission of CAMBIALO is simply that: to let their voices be heard. Their agenda is:

- 1) stop the contamination in La Oroya;
- 2) get the health attention they and everyone in La Oroya deserves, and;
- 3) never let this happen again -- anywhere!

In 2013, Jed Koball, PC(USA) Mission Co-worker in Peru, shared this Advent reflection in the Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study.

It was nearly three years ago when we were attacked on the mountain. The children of CAMBIALO, accompanied by university students from the U.S., were painting a mural in their hometown of La Oroya, high in the central Andes of Peru. In this town, often referred to as one of the five most contaminated cities in the world due to the pollution from a metals smelter, the kids of CAMBIALO wanted to share their hopes of a healthier, cleaner and greener world by painting a picture of green mountains and blue waters on a wall in the middle of the town. When they were not even half-way done with their mural, a mob of over two hundred men representing the lead smelter attacked us - stealing our buckets and paint brushes and turning them into weapons against us, along with their rocks and fists. It was a dark day in La Oroya.

A year later, a ray of light shined through that darkness when the university students from the U.S. sent the kids of CAMBIALO a replica of the mural they tried to paint that day on the mountain. The students had visited churches in their presbytery, telling the story of the plight of the children of CAMBIALO and the

horrid conditions in which the people live in La Oroya. The people from the churches responded, each one painting a piece of the mural, letting the children know that they are not alone in their struggle and that their voice has been heard.

The YAVs enjoy playing games with the CAMBIALO kids.

Nearly three years later the struggle continues. For a time, it appeared that the government of Peru would enforce new and stricter environmental laws in La Oroya. Indeed, a law was passed to significantly reduce permissible levels of toxic emissions by the end of 2013. However, when the owner of the lead smelter (a U.S. citizen) filed an international lawsuit for \$800 million against the State of Peru, claiming that its enforcement of new environmental regulations would cost him profits, and thus violate his rights as foreign investor as stipulated in a Free Trade agreement between Peru and the U.S., the new law was "re-interpreted," and the company is no longer being held responsible for excessive toxic emissions. What does this mean for the people of La Oroya and the children of CAMBIALO? It means they continue to breathe poisoned air. And to add salt to their wounds, the company has now painted its own murals around town . pictures of green mountains and blue waters, claiming that they are restoring the environment in La Oroya.

But, amidst all the lies, treachery and injustice, a voice of truth stands out.

Two CAMBIALO kids present their plan to build a rooftop garden.

Not long ago, Jenny and I traveled to La Oroya to introduce our friends from CAMBIALO to this year's group of Young Adult Volunteers (YAVs). We expected to hear their story of struggle. What we did not expect to hear was their voice of renewed hope. Today the children have a new plan . a vision. If the company and the politicians and all the other citizens of La Oroya will not actively work to restore Creation in La Oroya, then they will do it themselves. Their plan begins with their very own rooftop greenhouse garden. As of this month, they are learning how to start an organic garden, care for it, and harvest it. Soon they will not just be planting seeds, but Hope. Soon, they will not just be nurturing plants, but Peace. Soon, they will not just be sharing the bounty, but Joy. And, soon, they will not just partaking of delicious and healthy meals, but communing in Love.

For your prayerful support and gracious giving towards this ministry we share, I thank you! And I pray that the Hope, Peace, Love and Joy proclaimed from the mountaintops may fill your lives this Christmas so that together we may continue to walk in the light of the Lord.

With heartfelt gratitude,
Jed

<http://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/global/seeking-justice-peru/>

WHAT ARE THE KIDS UP TO IN...

DES MOINES

Westminster Presbyterian Church

Our youth (grades 6-12) have been engaged in learning about social justice issues all year. Our Wednesday night curriculum centered around various social justice themes, beginning with hunger and poverty. We went to the Central Iowa Shelter, served a meal and took a tour. We heard a presentation and did activities about food security from Aubrey Martinez with Eat Greater Des Moines and Carlyn Crowe, a member and Drake professor who teaches a seminar on hunger issues. We watched documentaries. We invited our state representative Marti Anderson to talk to us about her work with the legislature. We learned about Family Promise and decorated the Family Promise Day Center for Christmas. Over the winter we looked at elder care issues, doing experiential activities to better understand what it is like to get older, and conducting interviews with older adults in the congregation. In the spring we focused on earth care learning, about our responsibility to take care of the earth, and then dialogued about what that means in real life. We started seeds for Westminster's God's Garden project. We are working to develop this curriculum more fully for the next academic year.+

Rev. Michelle Parsons, Director of Youth & Outreach Ministries, Westminster Presbyterian Church

KIDS FOR PEACE

Kids4Peace is a grassroots interfaith youth movement dedicated to ending conflict and inspiring hope in Jerusalem and other divided societies around the world.

Their mission is to build interfaith communities that embody a culture of peace and empower a movement for change

VALUES:

DIVERSITY in family background, political perspective, and religious practice

EQUALITY among women and men, religions and cultures, nations and peoples

SENSITIVITY toward the pain, struggle and risk of living together

SPIRITUALITY as a source of strength, courage, and wisdom

CONNECTIVITY across our global community

RESPECT for the experiences, beliefs, and choices of others, including those most different



Hagop is an Armenian Christian living in Jerusalem. He was a K4P camper in 2004 and has been involved ever since, as a counselor and now a Christian advisor.

The last time I went as a camper was in Atlanta, 8 or 9 years ago, but I remember it like it was yesterday. It was an amazing experience that really exceeded my expectations. I learned so much, and it helped

my personality develop. We have all this conflict between Jews, Christians, and Muslims here in Jerusalem, and the experience taught me to accept everyone.

It's not that the conflict is between only Muslims and Jews, it's more between Arabs and Israelis. I never felt left out of the conversation. The media often triggers tension by focusing on religious differences, but that's not always how it is. Living here, you see it. There is also conflict between Christians and Muslims, but less often because we feel as though we are one united nation.

When you speak about peace anywhere in the West Bank, people will say, "We've been talking about peace for 60 years and we haven't seen anything different." People are tired of talking about peace, they want action, they want all that's been said to be done.

You can't teach an old dog new tricks. You'll almost never get an older person to believe there will be peace. When you work with young kids whose minds are open and who want to learn, they learn from their surroundings and their personalities are built through what they see on TV, what their families think and what their parents say.

So when you teach those kids that peace and harmony is possible between conflicting parties, they grow up and teach their children who then teach their children and so on. Just one child taught about peace can get excited, interested, and serious about

the matter can make a real change.

My family descended through the Armenian genocide. What happened to us then was not easy, and what we are going through now as Palestinians is also not easy. As a Christian we have to forgive, but not forget. It's stressful having that history, all the torture and evil things my ancestors experienced. It's not easy, but for now we have to learn to get along and hope for the best.

Kids learn everything from their surroundings, their parents, and especially the media. I never thought I'd have Jewish friends. All the talk is about how they're treating Arabs badly, killing them in cold blood. As a 12 year old kid, you just get the wrong idea. At first participating in K4P was a little hard, but then I started to notice those kids are exactly like me aside from language and religion. I was then able to accept Jews and realized there is no bad nation, just bad individuals.

At a meeting before we left to Atlanta, there was a guy called Amichai, and we started to become close friends. I was trying to talk in Hebrew so the Jewish families could understand better, even though there was an interpreter. I wanted to be challenged. Amichai came over to me as I was speaking some in Hebrew and some in English and he starts helping me remember certain words. That was the moment I thought, "Wow, this guy is nice. I like him, and he's not as bad as I thought he was."



A few years ago I was asked to become a leader in K4P. I was very excited when I learned that Michal was going to be the girls leader. We had been at the same camp in 2004, and stayed in touch. So to see how the kids were learning and interacting, it brought us back to how we were. We never realized any of it would matter in the future, but having that history with each other really helped us both.

I go to Bethlehem University in the West Bank. Conflict comes up every single day, especially coming and going, dealing with the checkpoints. There are many conflict related topics to study at school as well. It's sad to say but I wouldn't see an organization like K4P as very popular at my school. Even my close friends think that what I'm doing with the organization is a waste of time. They tell me, "You know it, I know it, there will never be peace." But deep down inside I like to hope and pray for peace worldwide.

Business wasn't my first choice as a major, I always wanted to be a pilot or engineer. Flying planes as a Palestinian person, especially after 9/11, is nearly impossible. My father owns a business, and any job in the

world requires business, medical or anything else. So I thought that was a wide goal for me, and after I get my BA I can decide if I want to go in a particular direction. My dream is to make what my father built - a travel agency - bigger and stronger by widening the horizon with new partnerships, and see what happens from there.

Communication is so important. I try to keep in touch with K4P alumni to see how they are doing, where they are in life, how they are progressing. Even just a 5 minute check-in goes a long way. These relationships are built stronger by communication.

Having K4P in my life really changed me, I never thought I'd be the man that I am today. Back when I was a kid I had thoughts about revenge, and I have experienced an amazing 180 degree change - I'm really happy. I have hope and faith that there will be peace, maybe not my generation or my kids' but we have to work for it and teach our kids the right way.

I'm interested in recruiting for K4P, helping to grow our diversity. We're not teaching religion, it's the door we come through to teach kids peace. I consider us farmers, planting peace seeds in the kids' hearts and we can grow with them, teach them how to stand up straight so in the end they will be fruitful with their children and grandchildren.

Read more stories by K4P campers at:

<http://www.k4p.org/stories/>

WHAT ARE THE KIDS UP TO IN... MONROE

The focus of our youth ministry is to look beyond themselves toward what they can offer of themselves to the community and to the community of faith. We have done "The Flamingo Project" for a number of years. Each fall and spring we invite the kids to pick what they would want to give the proceeds from the Flamingo Project to benefit. (The kids move the beautiful pink flamingos around town on Wednesday nights). We charge \$10 in order to get the birds out of a yard or \$10 for a "hit" on an unsuspecting friend or family member.

Fall 2013: the kids chose to buy items for the Prairie City-Monroe Food Pantry housed in our church. After we raised the money, the kids went shopping with the money collected and selected cleaning products, personal items such as shampoo and other items. The Pantry stores the personal care items and the cleaning products on a table upstairs for the people who use the Pantry to take along. These are very needed and popular items. The kids kept an eye on how quickly these items went. As the kids "live" with the Pantry, they have often been recruited to haul items to the Pantry. What differed with this project is they had "skin" in the game: they had purchased items from their fundraiser. We always talk to kids about what the needs might be that would lead people to be in these positions to use the Pantry.

Spring 2014: The kids raised funds for Parkinson's Disease research. They always request that the money goes toward research into a problem. Often, with this project, we have someone directly affected by the disease or condition speak to the kids so they can understand it better.+

Rev. Ann Johnson, pastor of Monroe Presbyterian Church

THE PROMISE

by Joe Ellis

In the news today and more recently are reports of hundreds of minors waiting at the United States borders to enter this county. Across the border are shouting US citizens with signs threatening the children to stay in their own country and letting them know that they are not welcome in the United States. Not long ago, the story was different. The United State opened its borders to immigrants. The policies at that time changed lives, helped population areas like Iowa with declining populations and reflected a compassion that seems lacking today. This is a story of one family that immigrated to the United States during that time.

With heightened tensions and threats of China building up forces along the Vietnam border, Heip Luan and Hung Nhieu faced the frightening possibility that their fifteen year old son, Hai Chi Luan, would be conscripted into the Chinese Communist Army. In an agonizing decision they chose to pay for their son to

board a boat that took him to Indonesia. With that choice, Hai Chi became one of the 800,000 Southeast Asians between 1975 and 1995 who survived leaving their country by any means necessary to avoid the conflicts and political strife in their homelands.



Hai Chi grew up in Song Be, Vietnam with his two sisters, three brothers and his parents. The main source of the family's income was the meat market run by Hai's mother, Hung Nhieu. Every day she she purchased freshly butchered pork for market. When neighbors purchase their pork for the day, she wrapped the purchase in a banana leaf and tied the bundle with a string before giving the bundle to her customer. Her home business provided for her family and she operated her market without a meat locker, refrigerator or freezer.

The news of Hai Chi's departure swept the neighborhood. The day preceding his leaving all their neighbors visited Hai and his family and the family, in almost a procession, went to the Buddhist temple to pray that Hai found blessings of life on his journey. A neighbor with a video camera recorded these activities during this last day as a keepsake for the family. One day, Hai would view the video and reminisce about his

childhood in Song Be and the family he left there.

Before Hai departed, he promised that they see each other again and that he would bring them to the United States. It was a promise that he never forgot and one he continually strived to achieve. The trip Hai took to Indonesia was not an easy one. Many boat people did not survive the journey and became victims of over-crowded boats, pirates or other hardships. They also faced countries unwilling to accept or care for the boat people.+ Hai survived the trip and upon entry to Indonesia was assigned to a camp where he waited a year before he was sent to the United States. At the camp, he was on his own to see that his needs were met. He made acquaintances during his time there and one of the individuals he knew there was Tai Tran. Tai was a boy about Hai Chi's age who was also sent to Iowa along with Hai. After a year in the Indonesian camp, the opportunity for Hai Chi to be sent to the United States became a reality. He travelled as an unaccompanied minor and was sent to Des Moines where he entered foster care supervised by Lutheran Social Services.



Iowa Governor Robert Ray took the initiative in 1979 to open Iowa to receive and resettle Southeast Asian immigrants, boat People,+

fleeing political upheaval in their home countries. He also contacted other states and encouraged them to do the same. Though nearly 9,000 miles away, Hai Chi was one of the individuals whose life would be forever changed by these Iowa policies. Hai Chi traveled to Des Moines with his friend Tai Tran and they were greeted at the airport by a social worker from the Department of Human Services. The new Iowans were escorted to a visitor room where they waited for their lives in America to begin. They were also waiting for the families to arrive that would foster them. Joe and Sandy Ellis were chosen to foster Hai Chi. With two young children already, they thought that they still could make a difference in the life of one of the new Iowans. Joe and Sandy took the training to become foster parents, had their house inspected and then waited until they got the call from the social worker.

Following the introductions of Hai Chi to the Ellises and to the social worker representing Lutheran Social Services, Joe and Sandy took Hai Chi home. He spoke no English and Joe and Sandy were equally unable to communicate with Hai. Soon they learned that between gestures and their two children interacting with Hai, communication improved day by day. Chris, their son was three and immediately liked Hai. He climbed on him whenever he could. Kate was just one year old and was about to learn to speak at the same time as Hai Chi was learning to speak English. Chris and Kate made Hai feel

at home and appeared to remind him of the brothers and sisters he left behind in Vietnam.

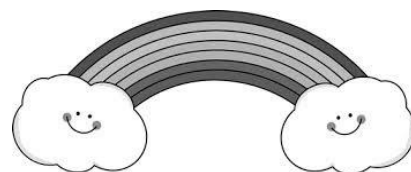


In time, Joe and Sandy also learned how close Hai was to his family in Vietnam. Through the social worker and other resources, Joe and Sandy were able to locate an address for Hai's family and he quickly started writing to them. As Hai began to speak English and interpreter resources were more available to Joe and Sandy, they learned the circumstances that resulted in Hai's immigrating to the United States. They learned about the promise Hai Chi had made to his parents.

Hai Chi graduated from North High School in Des Moines and attended one year at Grandview College. The friendship and sense of family he developed with the Ellis family continued beyond foster care. Hai is still regarded as a member of their family and they continue to keep in touch with him. In their eyes, Hai Chi is a hero because, in the end, he kept a promise that most would think impossible. After leaving college, Hai Chi worked at various manufacturing plants under such severe conditions that he often had to soak his hands when he came home because they hurt him so badly. He also studied for and obtained his citizenship. With his citizenship and the money he painstakingly saved from his employment, Hai began the

process to bring his family to the United States.

Seeking assistance from various resources, friends and others who had successfully sponsored their family to enter the United States, Hai succeeded in getting his family to the United States. He arranged an apartment for them and when they were about to arrive, he asked Joe and Sandy to go with him to the Des Moines International Airport, the airport that Hai arrived at fifteen years earlier.



As he waited for his family to arrive, Sandy told Hai that she and Joe could no longer be called mom and dad because his real parents were here now. Hai responded that he would continue to call them mom and dad but he would call his parents mom and dad in Vietnamese. The reunion was beyond joyous. Hai's brothers and sister crowded him with hugs and his parents were visibly overwhelmed with seeing their oldest son again. When the greetings calmed down, the newly united family of eight walked to the baggage area. As they walked they spanned the width of the corridor. Individuals passed by them going about their own business but it was apparent that they were oblivious to the monumental accomplishment and event that had just happened.

Since the arrival of the Luan family in 1994, Hai's school aged siblings all completed high school and his youngest

sister My (Amy) graduated from college with a degree in accounting. As a family, they bought a house in Des Moines and later moved to Reno, Nevada where they purchased another house. Hai Chi and his parents continue to live in Reno and the children are all spread out in Nevada and Texas. They all have families of their own now and all are happy with their lives in the United States and productive citizens.

¹ Joe also hoped that in some way, it would pay forward the kindness that was shown to him by Pete and Mary Lou Pederson after he left the Angel Guardian Orphanage in Chicago. Joe lived with the Pederson while he was in college.

WHAT ARE THE KIDS UP TO IN... JOHNSTON

From June 1-6 we went on a (YouthWorks) mission trip to Newport, TN in the Smoky mountains. The emphasis on the trip was on demonstrating Jesus' love to the world. We did that by painting a barn for the community, running a kids club for low income children, and engaging the seniors at a convalescent home.+
Rev. Bill O'Connell, pastor of St. Paul Presbyterian Church

DALLAS CENTER

The main thing that the youth in our congregation have done recently to practice social justice was to complete a service project for one of the members of our congregation who was in need of several home repairs but could not complete them financially. The kids repainted a hallway and laundry room, put in new flooring, varnished a window,

placed door stops on bedroom doors, and painted trim.+
Betsy Bejarno, Moderator of the Christian Education Committee, First Presbyterian Church

CROSSING BORDERS

22 youth from Westminster Presbyterian Church, Des Moines spent a week in July with BorderLinks on the Arizona-Mexico border. They have wonderful stories to tell. Contact Rev. Michelle Parsons to connect with them.

MParsons@westpres.org

I admit that before the week began, I was not particularly excited for the mission trip. I wasn't educated on border issues and I didn't want to spend a week hearing presentation after presentation. The morning after we arrived at BorderLinks, my opinion changed. We started off doing a legal immigration simulation, in which you drew a card with a scenario on it. After a scavenger hunt of sorts, we came back as a group to discuss our results. The majority of us weren't able to immigrate legally, and those who were had to wait many years. Just after that small activity, my whole perspective about the upcoming week took a quick u-turn. I was excited and interested to hear more presentations and already wanted to take action. The rest of the week passed in a similar manner, with each presentation I grew more passionate about the issue and more eager to learn.

The day after the legal immigration simulation, we went to Mexico, which was by far the most life-changing part of the trip. The place that stands out the most to me was *Grupos Beta*, where we all

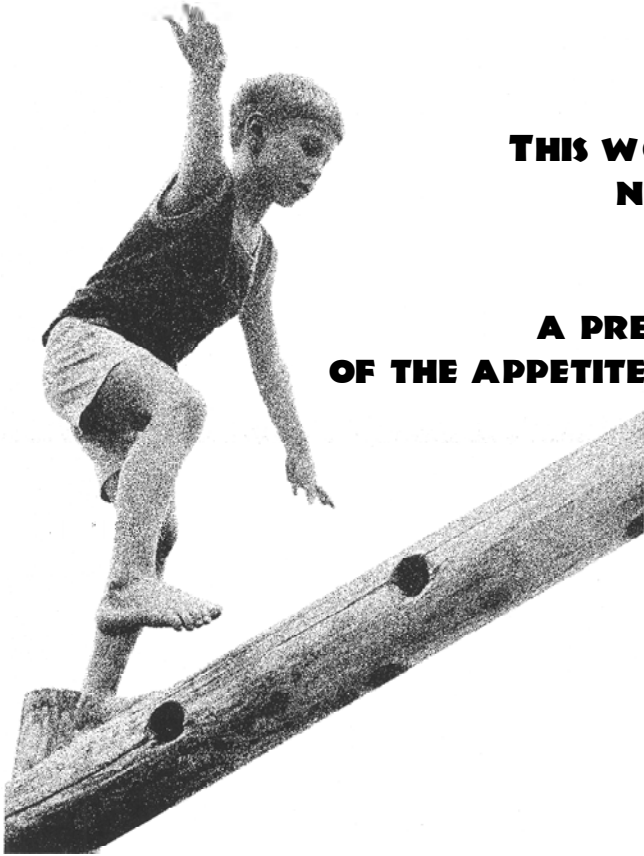
crowded into a room with a loud fan to try and relieve us from the hot, humid air. There was a group of men in the room, lounging at various tables and chairs. We spoke to one man in particular, who had crossed the border six times, gone through Operation Streamline, and was preparing to cross once more. He had gone through numerous hardships, yet he was still willing to try again to get back to his wife and two children in Phoenix. He said that he hadn't seen them in seven months, and hadn't been able to contact them while in jail. That's my family up there, he said, I'd do anything to be with them.+



That night, when I prayed, I was close to tears thinking about him and his family. Why had God left him to go through such struggles? What had the other people done? But I felt God's pain and realized that he had not left them. He was driving them forward, giving them the faith to continue. It was then that I saw God, the same experience lasting throughout the trip. I saw him in the couple that help to put water in the desert, in the man that did all he could to stop a father from being deported, and in a man who was driven to tears by his faith.

God is not the pain or the struggle, God is the one who will reunite that man with his family, who will help the unaccompanied children, and maybe, most importantly, God is hope.
-Kathryn

GRAINS OF TRUTH



**THIS WORLD DEMANDS THE QUALITIES OF YOUTH;
NOT A TIME OF LIFE BUT A STATE OF MIND,
A TEMPER OF THE WILL,
A QUALITY OF THE IMAGINATION,
A PREDOMINANCE OF COURAGE OVER TIMIDITY,
OF THE APPETITE FOR ADVENTURE OVER THE LIFE OF EASE.**

-Robert F. Kennedy



“Mother Dear, one day I'm going to turn this world upside down.”
(from *My Brother Martin*, by Christine King Farris)

Martin Luther King Jr.

Broken Bread

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