

Broken Bread

EXTRA!

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TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING!

As the summer issue was being assembled, it became apparent that we had too many stories to fit in the edition to be printed and mailed to our hard-copy recipients. So here are a few more great pieces about young people and compassion, peace and justice—the issues they face, the service they offer, and the vision, creativity and determination they bring to the table—for our email and online recipients!

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OFFERING SABBATH

by Chad Schwickerath

My days begin at midnight. After graduating from seminary, hardly did I imagine I would be working overnights, yet rarely does ministry, mission, and service work hold the highly sought after nine-to-five time slot. I suppose this one reality should have been made most clear during my time at seminary: that even while we sleep (or don't sleep), our needs and our desires, our emotions and the qualities which make us human do not rest. And so I find myself sitting quietly alone in an office over looking a room lined with bunk beds as steady and unsteady snores fill the space. Sleep comes to weary youth, and here I stay until morning.



Homeless youth face the double challenge of lacking both consistent shelter and creditable age. Even when finances abound many do not have the skills needed to hold onto stability. This inability does not seem to stem from laziness or passivity, but rather from the simple absence of support from a society which marginalizes and ostracized both the poor and the young. Jobs are hard to come by for those without experience, access to phones, stable addresses, and sufficient hygiene. Even those working full time jobs are often unable

to meet their basic needs without sustainable wages. Many of the youth I work with are regularly confronted with additional challenges making their own fruition appear to them nearly impossible. Women suffer under oppressive patriarchy and the burden of societal expectations. Racism and xenophobia dominate the political as well as internalized dialogue. Gay and transgender youth face rejection from previously loving communities. Cultural stigmas on mental illness keep individuals undiagnosed, untreated, and unhealthy. The challenges these youth face are overwhelming, and they are offered little rest from the struggle.



The organization for which I work is not coy in naming these obstacles to fruition as violence—naming the blatant stigma on homelessness; the rampant homophobia, racism, and sexism; the income inequality; the culturally imposed challenges which prevent access to education, jobs, and services—all as violence. La Casa Norte approaches homelessness through a praxis of violence reduction by meeting the basic need for stable housing. In turn, this empowers individuals and families to live beyond the violence, transforming their own lives and communities for the better. My work with youth homeless shelters is but a part of this vision. When the young

men women and men enter our doors they receive a warm meal, a clean shower, and a safe place to sleep. They are offered a break from the violence which fills their days, a break from the uncertainty of Chicago streets, and a break from the judgment and stigma placed on their predicament. When they enter our doors they are offered, at least for the night, indiscriminate Sabbath.

Chad Schwickerath is a member of Ankeny Presbyterian Church. After graduating from Iowa State University in 2010, he moved to New Jersey to complete a Masters of Divinity at Princeton Theological Seminary. Chad now lives in Chicago where he works with homeless youth as part of La Casa Norte's emergency beds program. He is currently discerning his call in the ordination process with the Des Moines Presbytery. Chad has a passion for social justice especially in the areas of income inequality, racial justice, and LGBT inclusion. These issues appear most frequently in his reading, writing, and his sermons.

WHAT ARE THE KIDS UP TO IN...

DES MOINES

Central Presbyterian Church

Our Wednesday evening youth program has focused on fellowship and service in the community. A few years ago, Christian Education organized an intergenerational trip to El Salvador. It was very well attended.

Service projects in the community have been scheduled approximately two times a month. They have included: DMARC warehouse

(sorting and stacking), Animal Rescue League, Hawthorn Hill: fleece blankets, scarves and bagging donated toiletries, making valentines and favors to take to a Valentines Dinner with Central; 3801 Grand retirement home residents, making cookies and cards for Veterans, caroling at retirement homes, Red Cross (filing), building sets at the DSM Playhouse, Shoebox Ministry for CFUM at Christmas, scavenger hunt to collect food for DMARC, Midwest Pet Project, reading with children at Greenwood Elementary, playing bingo with Wesley Acres residents and assisting in making and/or serving meals for the Central Iowa Shelter.

Service within the church has included: mulching the playground, cleaning church pews, leading worship on Youth Sunday, hosting a dinner (Dinner With Friends), for older members in our church, leading worship for Easter sunrise Service, serving as greeters, ushers, and in the lectern during worship, Souper Bowl Sunday, hosting and making pancakes for Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper, making casseroles and serving Easter Breakfast, assisting with serving Christmas Pageant Supper, serving for Valentines Dinner and Auction.

Central has been blessed to have continued support from youth and their families to provide these services in the community as well as in our church.+

Mary Gordon, Director of Christian Education, Central Presbyterian Church

NECKLACES, BRACELETS & HOPE

by Rev. Katherine Pater,
Presbytery of Des Moines'
Mission Co-worker in El Salvador



In October 2010, a delegation from Covenant Presbyterian Church of West Des Moines traveled to Berlín, El Salvador with the Our Sister Parish mission of the Des Moines Presbytery. After spending a week learning about El Salvador's difficult history and visiting three different villages in the Berlín area with the Pastoral Team and Mission Co-Worker, they recommended that their church enter into a sister-parish partnership with the village of San Isidro. From the beginnings of the partnership, both the leaders of San Isidro and the people of Covenant wanted to do more than help the village families with basic needs; they also wanted to help them find sources of income and community development outside of subsistence agriculture. Out of these conversations, a dream was born: to help the youth group of San Isidro learn how to make artisan jewelry.

San Isidro asked Covenant for startup funds for materials and jewelry-making training to begin the project. Through their work with the Joining Hands Network (a division of

the Presbyterian Mission Agency), the Pastoral Team knew of a man from Santa Ana who was willing to teach the young women of the community how to make jewelry. So many young people wanted to learn that he had to find another instructor to help him teach! It was decided that he would train them in an intense, 12-day long workshop in the village of San Isidro. In January 2012 the training finally began, and after 16 days of intense instruction (the teachers stayed for four extra days without pay!) these young women knew how to make beautiful bracelets, necklaces, key chains, and other small artisan crafts. The project has continued making jewelry for almost 2 1/2 years, and at any given time, 12-20 young women from San Isidro and surrounding communities are participating.



The project is now self-sustaining: the young women earn enough money to purchase the materials to create more jewelry and still make a little extra money for themselves with the proceeds of what they sell. Most of their earnings come from delegations and other Americans who purchase their jewelry, but they hope to sell more of their beautiful work to other Salvadorans in the future. More importantly than material

earnings, however, these young women have learned a new skill, taught that skill to other young people, and gained knowledge about maintaining a business and working together as a team. They now have more hope and more skills for building stronger families and communities. Poverty can seem like an endless, inescapable cycle, and helping people to learn a craft that does not involve their everyday chores or farm work can help them to envision a different future even a better society for themselves and their children.

WHAT ARE THE KIDS UP TO IN...

Indianola

The Trinity United Presbyterian Church High School Youth Group has just finished a week-long work trip to Imperial, PA. As a church family we've traveled all over the USA helping communities & residents find comfort in new paint, new patios, wheelchair ramps, newly shingled roofs, new skirting around their homes, new friendships, newly found or refreshed faiths. Throughout the year we also do small mission projects but touch lives in very large ways.+
Becca & Nick VanDam, Trinity High School Youth Leaders

Middle School mission activities last year: we participated in Trick or Treat for UNICEF, and collected money and went Christmas shopping for needs at Hope Ministries. Many of our youth also participated in the Meals from the Heartland event during the church school hour this spring.+
Sarah & Todd Keyser, Trinity Middle School Youth Leaders