



The Renewing Work of the Holy Spirit *Wisdom from the Early Church Fathers*

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Living Bulwark is committed to fostering renewal of the whole Christian people: Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox. We especially want to give witness to the charismatic, ecumenical, evangelistic, and community dimensions of that renewal. Living Bulwark seeks to equip Christians to grow in holiness, to apply Christian teaching to their lives, and to respond with faith and generosity to the working of the Holy Spirit in our day.

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Readings from Early Church Fathers on the Holy Spirit



The Living Water of the Holy Spirit

by Cyril of Jerusalem (313-386 AD)

The water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of living water, welling up into eternal life. - John 7:38

This is a new kind of water, a living, leaping water, welling up for those who are worthy. But why did Christ call the grace of the Spirit water? Because all things are dependent on water; plants and animals have their origin in water. Water comes down from heaven as rain, and although it is always the same in itself, it produces many different effects, one in the palm tree, another in the vine, and so on throughout the whole of creation. It does not come down, now as one thing, now as another, but while remaining essentially the same, it adapts itself to the needs of every creature that receives it.

In the same way the Holy Spirit, whose nature is always the same, simple and indivisible, apportions grace to each person as he wills. Like a dry tree which puts forth shoots when watered, the soul bears the fruit of holiness when repentance has made it worthy of receiving the Holy Spirit. Although the Spirit never changes, the effects of his action, by the will of God and in the name of Christ, are both many and marvelous.

The Spirit makes one person a teacher of divine truth, inspires another to prophesy, gives another the power of casting out devils, enables another to interpret holy Scripture. The Spirit strengthens one person's self-control, shows another how to help the poor, teaches another to fast and lead a life of asceticism, makes another oblivious to the need of the body, trains another for martyrdom. His action is different in different people, but the Spirit himself is always the same. *In each person, Scripture says, the Spirit reveals his presence in a particular way for the common good.*

The Spirit comes gently and makes himself known by his fragrance. He is not felt as a burden, for he is light, very light. Rays of light and knowledge stream before him as he approaches. The Spirit comes with the tenderness of a true friend and protector to save, to heal, to teach, to counsel, to strengthen, to console. The Spirit comes to enlighten the mind first of the one who receives him, and then, through him, the minds of others as well.

As light strikes the eyes of one who comes out of darkness into the sunshine and enables that person to see clearly things he or she could not discern before, so light floods the soul of the one counted worthy of receiving the Holy Spirit and enables that person to see things beyond the range of human vision, things hitherto undreamed of.

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The Holy Spirit Perfects and Renews Us

by Didymus of Alexandria (313 – 398 AD)

The Holy Spirit renews us in baptism through his godhead, which he shares with the Father and the Son. Finding us in a state of deformity, the Spirit restores our original beauty and fills us with his grace, leaving no room for anything unworthy of our love. The Spirit frees us from sin and death, and changes us from the earthly humans we were, men of dust and ashes, into spiritual humans, sharers in the divine glory, sons and heirs of God the Father who bear a likeness to the Son and are his co-heirs and brothers and sisters, destined to reign with him and to share his glory. In place of earth the Spirit reopens heaven to us and gladly admits us into paradise, giving us even now greater honor than the angels, and by the holy waters of baptism extinguishing the unquenchable fires of hell.

We humans are conceived twice: to the human body we owe our first conception, to the divine Spirit, our second. John says: To all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God. These were born not by human generation, not by the desire of the flesh, not by the will of man, but of God. All who believed in Christ, he says, received power to become children of God, that is, of the Holy Spirit, and to gain kinship with God. To show that their parent was God the Holy

Spirit, he adds these words of Christ: *I give you this solemn warning, that without being born of water and the Spirit, no one can enter the kingdom of God.*

Visibly, through the ministry of priests, the font gives symbolic birth to our visible bodies. Invisibly, through the ministry of angels, the Spirit of God, whom even the mind's eye cannot see, baptizes into himself both our souls and bodies, giving them a new birth.

Speaking quite literally, and also in harmony with the words of water and the Spirit, John the Baptist says of Christ: *He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.* Since we are only vessels of clay, we must first be cleansed in water and then hardened by spiritual fire – for God is a consuming fire. We need the Holy Spirit to perfect and renew us, for spiritual fire can cleanse us, and spiritual water can recast us as in a furnace and make us into new men and women.

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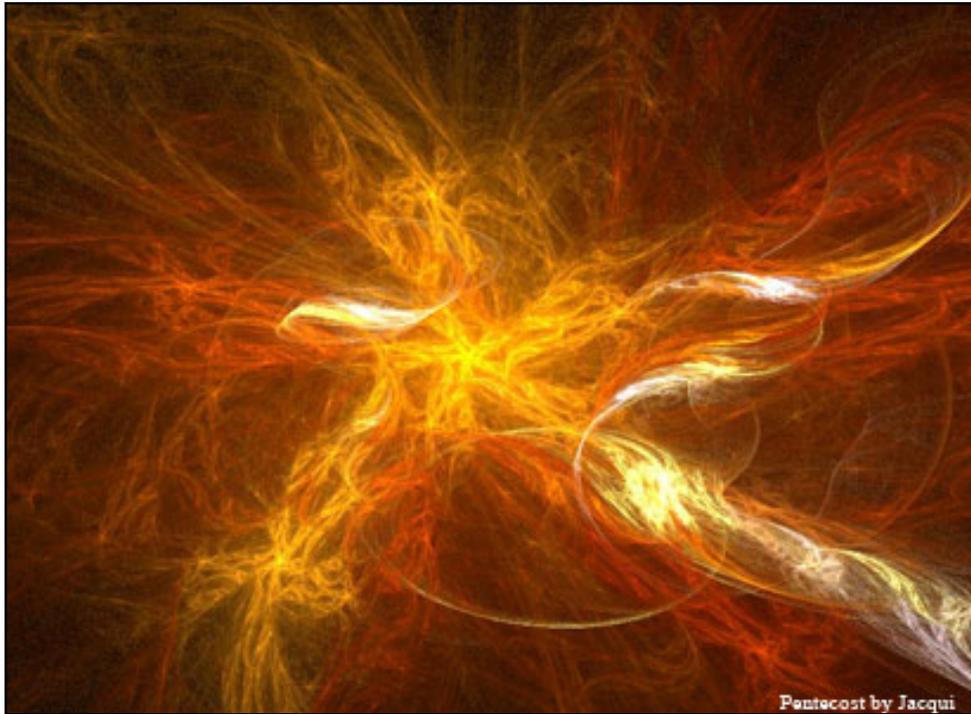
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The Work of the Holy Spirit

by Basil the Great (392-379 AD)

The titles given to the Holy Spirit must surely stir the soul of anyone who hears them, and make him realize that they speak of nothing less than the supreme Being. Is he not called the Spirit of God, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, the steadfast Spirit, the guiding Spirit? But his principal and most personal title is the Holy Spirit.

To the Spirit all creatures turn in their need for sanctification; all living things seek him according to their ability. His breath empowers each to achieve its own natural end.

The Spirit is the source of holiness, a spiritual light, and he offers his own light to every mind to help it in its search for truth. By nature the Spirit is beyond the reach of our mind, but we can know him by his goodness. The power of the Spirit fills the whole universe, but he gives himself only to those who are worthy, acting in each according to the measure of his faith.

Simple in himself, the Spirit is manifold in his mighty works. The whole of his being is present to each individual; the whole of his being is present everywhere. Though shared in by many, he remains unchanged; his self-giving is no loss to himself. Like the sunshine, which permeates all the atmosphere, spreading over land and sea, and yet is enjoyed by each person as though it were for him alone, so the Spirit pours forth his grace in full measure, sufficient for all, and yet is present as though

exclusively to everyone who can receive him. To all creatures that share in him he gives a delight limited only by their own nature, not by his ability to give.

The Spirit raises our hearts to heaven, guides the steps of the weak, and brings to perfection those who are making progress. He enlightens those who have been cleansed from every stain of sin and makes them spiritual by communion with himself.

As clear, transparent substances become very bright when sunlight falls on them and shine with a new radiance, so also souls in whom the Spirit dwells, and who are enlightened by the Spirit, become spiritual themselves and a source of grace for others.

From the Spirit comes foreknowledge of the future, understanding of the mysteries of faith, insight into the hidden meaning of Scripture, and other special gifts. Through the Spirit we become citizens of heaven, we are admitted to the company of the angels, we enter into eternal happiness and abide in God. Through the Spirit we acquire a likeness to God; indeed, we attain what is beyond our most sublime aspirations—we become God.

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Pentecost by El Greco, 17th century

The Coming of the Holy Spirit

by Leo the Great (400-461 AD)

"If I do not go," Jesus told his apostles, "the Advocate will not come to you. But if I go away, then I will send him to you" (John 16:7). "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait there for the gift my Father promised, the gift of which I told you. John baptized with water, but in a few days' time you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:4-5).

These were the Lord's parting words to his disciples, the promise that united them as they made their way back to the city to wait in joyful, expectant faith for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Not that the Spirit would only begin to work among men after Jesus had returned to the Father; he had been at work in the world since the dawn of creation. God's people were not to experience a hitherto unknown indwelling of the Holy Spirit, but those who already belonged to him would know a more abundant outpouring, an increase rather than a first reception of his gifts.

Pentecost is the culmination of the work of our salvation, that mighty plan of God's mercy which originated long ago when the Lord first began to form a people for himself. How many mysterious signs can be discovered in this feast which link the old dispensation with the new, teaching us that the law of Moses was the herald of the grace of Christ, in which it was to find its fulfillment! Fifty days after the sacrifice of the lamb marking the deliverance of the Hebrews from the Egyptians, the law was given to the people of Israel on Sinai; and fifty days from the resurrection of Christ after his immolation as the true Lamb of God, the Holy Spirit came down upon the new Israel, the people who put their faith in Jesus. The same Holy Spirit was the author of both Old and New Testaments; the foundations of the gospel were laid with the establishment of the old covenant. What a wealth of meaning can be found,

therefore, in the opening words of the second chapter of Acts, "When the days of Pentecost were fulfilled"!

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The Indwelling Spirit

by John Henry Newman (1801-1890)

"You are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God dwells in you" (Romans 8:9)

[Note: Minor changes, including capitalization style, were made to allow the text to be more accessible to modern readers. Sub-headings were also added. Editor]

God the Son has graciously condescended to reveal the Father to his creatures from without; God the Holy Spirit, by inward communications. Who can compare these separate works of condescension, either of them being beyond our understanding? We can but silently adore the Infinite Love which encompasses us on every side. The Son of God is called the Word, as declaring his glory throughout created nature, and impressing the evidence of it on every part of it. He has given us to read it in his works of goodness, holiness, and wisdom. He is the living and eternal law of truth and perfection, that image of God's unapproachable attributes, which men have ever seen, by glimpses, on the face of the world, felt that it was sovereign, but knew not whether to say it was a fundamental rule and self-existing destiny, or the offspring and mirror of the divine will. Such has he been from the beginning, graciously sent forth from the Father to reflect his glory upon all things, distinct from him, while mysteriously one with him; and in due time visiting us with an infinitely deeper mercy, when for our redemption he humbled himself to take upon himself that fallen nature which he had originally created after his own image.

The condescension of the Blessed Spirit is as incomprehensible as that of the Son. He has ever been the secret Presence of God within the creation: a source of life amid the chaos, bringing out into form and order what was at first shapeless and void, and the voice of truth in the hearts of all rational beings, turning them into harmony with the intimations of God's Law, which were externally made to them. Hence he is especially called the "life-giving"

Spirit; being (as it were) the soul of universal nature, the strength of man and beast, the guide of faith, the witness against sin, the inward light of patriarchs and prophets, the grace abiding in the Christian soul, and the Lord and Ruler of the church. Therefore let us ever praise the Father Almighty, who is the first source of all perfection, in and together with his co-equal Son and Spirit, through whose gracious ministrations we have been given to see “what manner of love” it is wherewith the Father has loved us.

The work of the Holy Spirit

On this Festival [of Pentecost] I propose, as is suitable, to describe as scripturally as I can, the merciful office of God the Holy Spirit, towards us Christians; and I trust I may do so, with the sobriety and reverence which the subject demands.

The Holy Spirit has from the beginning pleaded with man. We read in the Book of Genesis, that, when evil began to prevail all over the earth before the flood, the Lord said, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man" (Gen. 6:3); implying that he had hitherto striven with his corruption. Again, when God took to himself a peculiar people, the Holy Spirit was pleased to be especially present with them. Nehemiah says, "You also gave your Good Spirit to instruct them" (Neh. 9:20), and Isaiah, "They rebelled and vexed his Holy Spirit" (Isa. 63:10). Further, he manifested himself as the source of various gifts, intellectual and extraordinary, in the Prophets, and others. Thus at the time the Tabernacle was constructed, the Lord filled Bezaleel "with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to devise cunning works" (Exod. 31:3,4) in metal, stone, and timber. At another time, when Moses was oppressed with his labors, Almighty God graciously agreed to “take of the Spirit” which was upon him, and to put it on seventy of the elders of Israel, that they might share the burden with him. “And it came to pass, that, when the Spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease” (Num. 11:17,25). These texts will be sufficient to remind you of many others, in which the gifts of the Holy Spirit are spoken of under the Jewish covenant. These were great mercies; yet, great as they were, they are as nothing compared with that surpassing grace with which we Christians are honored; that great privilege of receiving into our hearts, not the mere gifts of the Spirit, but his very presence, himself, by a real not a figurative indwelling.

When our Lord entered upon his ministry, he acted as though he were a mere man, needing grace, and received the consecration of the Holy Spirit for our sakes. He became the Christ, or Anointed, that the Spirit might be seen to come from God, and to pass from him to us. And, therefore, the heavenly gift is not simply called the Holy Spirit, or the Spirit of God, but the Spirit of Christ, that we might clearly understand, that he comes to us from and instead of Christ. Thus St. Paul says, "God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts;" and our Lord breathed on his Apostles, saying, “Receive the Holy Spirit”; and he says elsewhere to them, “If I depart, I will send him to you” (Gal. 4: 6; John 20:22; 16:7). Accordingly this “Holy Spirit of promise” is called “the earnest of our inheritance,” “the seal and earnest of an unseen Savior” (Eph. 1:14; 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5); being the present pledge of him who is absent,— or rather more than a pledge, for an earnest is not a mere token which will be taken from us when it is fulfilled, as a pledge might be, but something in advance of what is one day to be given in full.

This must be clearly understood; for it would seem to follow, that if so, the Comforter who has come instead of Christ, must have condescended to come in the same sense in which Christ came; I mean, that he has come, not merely in the way of gifts, or of influences, or of operations, as he came to the Prophets, for then Christ's going away would be a loss, and not a gain, and the Spirit's presence would be a mere pledge, not an earnest; but he comes to us as Christ came, by a real and personal visitation. I do not say we could have inferred this thus clearly by the mere force of the above cited texts; but it being actually so revealed to us in other texts of Scripture, we are able to see that it may be legitimately deduced from these. We are able to see that the Savior, when once he entered into this world, never so departed as to suffer things to be as before he came; for he still is with us, not in mere gifts, but by the substitution of his Spirit for himself, and that, both in the Church and in the souls of individual Christians.

For instance, St. Paul says in the text, “You are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God dwells in you.” Again, “He shall quicken even your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwells in you.” “Do you not know that your body is the Temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you?” “You are the Temple of the Living God,” as God has said, “I will dwell in them, and walk in them.” The same Apostle clearly distinguishes between the indwelling of the Spirit, and his actual operations within us, when he says, “The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given to us”; and again, “The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God” (Rom. 8: 9,11; 1 Cor. 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16; Rom. 5:5; 8:16).

Evidence for the Spirit's divinity

Here let us observe, before proceeding, what indirect evidence is afforded us in these texts of the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Who can be personally present at once with every Christian, but God himself? Who but he, not merely ruling in the midst of the Church invisibly, as Michael might keep watch over Israel, or another angel might be "the Prince of Persia,"— but really taking up his abode as one and the same in many separate hearts, so as to fulfill our Lord's words, that it was expedient that he should depart; Christ's bodily presence, which was limited to place, being exchanged for the manifold spiritual indwelling of the Comforter within us? This consideration suggests both the dignity of our Sanctifier, and the infinite preciousness of his office towards us.

To proceed: the Holy Spirit, I have said, dwells in body and soul, as in a temple. Evil spirits indeed have power to possess sinners, but his indwelling is far more perfect; for he is all-knowing and omnipresent, he is able to search into all our thoughts, and penetrate into every motive of the heart. Therefore, he pervades us (if it may be so said) as light pervades a building, or as a sweet perfume [pervades] the folds of some honorable robe; so that, in Scripture language, we are said to be in him, and he in us. It is plain that such an inhabitation [by the Spirit] brings the Christian into a state altogether new and marvelous, far above the possession of mere gifts, exalts him inconceivably in the scale of beings, and gives him a place and an office which he had not before. In St. Peter's forcible language, he becomes “partaker of the divine nature,” and has “power” or authority, as St. John says, “to become the son of God.” Or, to use the words of St. Paul, “He is a new creation; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.” His rank is new; his parentage and service new. He is “of God,” and is not his own; “a vessel unto honor, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work” (2 Pet. 1:4; John 1:12; 2 Cor. 5:17; 1 John 4:4; 1 Cor. 6:19,20; 2 Tim. 2:21).

New birth in the Spirit

This wonderful change from darkness to light, through the entrance of the Spirit into the soul, is called regeneration, or the new birth; a blessing which, before Christ's coming, not even prophets and righteous men possessed, but which is now conveyed to all men freely through the sacrament of baptism.

By nature we are children of wrath; the heart is sold under sin, possessed by evil spirits; and inherits death as its eternal portion. But by the coming of the Holy Spirit, all guilt and pollution are burned away as by fire, the devil is driven forth, sin, original and actual, is forgiven, and the whole man is consecrated to God. And this is the reason why he is called “the earnest” of that Savior who died for us, and will one day give us the fullness of his own presence in heaven.

Hence, too, he is our “seal unto the day of redemption”; for as the potter moulds the clay, so he impresses the divine image on us members of the household of God. And his work may truly be called regeneration; for though the original nature of the soul is not destroyed, yet its past transgressions are pardoned once and for ever, and its source of evil stanchd and gradually dried up by the pervading health and purity which has set up its abode in it. Instead of its own bitter waters, a spring of health and salvation is brought within it; not the mere streams of that fountain, “clear as crystal,” which is before the throne of God, but, as our Lord says, “a well of water in him,” in a man's heart, “springing up into everlasting life.” Hence he elsewhere describes the heart as giving forth, not receiving, the

streams of grace: “Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” St. John adds, “This he spoke of the Spirit” (John 4:14; 7:38,39).

Such is the inhabitation of the Holy Spirit within us, applying to us individually the precious cleansing of Christ's blood in all its manifold benefits. Such is the great doctrine, which we hold as a matter of faith, and without actual experience to verify it to us. Next, I must speak briefly concerning the manner in which the gift of grace manifests itself in the regenerate soul; a subject which I do not willingly take up, and which no Christian perhaps is ever able to consider without some effort, feeling that he thereby endangers either his reverence towards God, or his humility, but which the errors of this day, and the confident tone of their advocates, oblige us to dwell upon, lest truth should suffer by our silence.

The Holy Spirit reveals the Father to us

1. The heavenly gift of the Spirit fixes the eyes of our mind upon the divine Author of our salvation. By nature we are blind and carnal; but the Holy Spirit by whom we are new-born, reveals to us the God of mercies, and bids us recognize and adore him as our Father with a true heart. He impresses on us our heavenly Father's image, which we lost when Adam fell, and disposes us to seek his presence by the very instinct of our new nature. He gives us back a portion of that freedom in willing and doing, of that uprightness and innocence, in which Adam was created. He unites us to all holy beings, as before we had relationship with evil.

He restores for us that broken bond, which, proceeding from above, connects together into one blessed family all that is anywhere holy and eternal, and separates it off from the rebel world which comes to nought. Being then the sons of God, and one with him, our souls mount up and cry to him continually. This special characteristic of the regenerate soul is spoken of by St. Paul soon after the text. “You have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” Nor are we left to utter these cries to him, in any vague uncertain way of our own; but he who sent the Spirit to dwell in us habitually, gave us also a form of words to sanctify the separate acts of our minds. Christ left his sacred prayer to be the peculiar possession of his people, and the voice of the Spirit. If we examine it, we shall find in it the substance of that doctrine, to which St. Paul has given a name in the passage just quoted. We begin it by using our privilege of calling on Almighty God in express words as “Our Father.”

We proceed, according to this beginning, in that waiting, trusting, adoring, resigned temper, which children ought to feel; looking towards him, rather than thinking of ourselves; zealous for his honor rather than fearful about our safety; resting in his present help, not with eyes timorously glancing towards the future. his name, his kingdom, his will, are the great objects for the Christian to contemplate and make his portion, being stable and serene, and “complete in him,” as beseems one who has the gracious presence of his Spirit within him. And, when he goes on to think of himself, he prays, that he may be enabled to have towards others what God has shown towards himself, a spirit of forgiveness and loving-kindness.

Thus he pours himself out on all sides, first looking up to catch the heavenly gift, but, when he gains it, not keeping it to himself, but diffusing "rivers of living water" to the whole race of man, thinking of self as little as may be, and desiring ill and destruction to nothing but that principle of temptation and evil, which is rebellion against God; – lastly, ending, as he began, with the contemplation of his kingdom, power, and glory ever-lasting. This is the true “Abba, Father,” which the Spirit of adoption utters within the Christian's heart, the infallible voice of him who “makes intercession for the Saints in God's way.” And if he has at times, for instance, amid trial or affliction, special visitations and comfortings from the Spirit, “plaints unutterable” within him, yearnings after the life to come, or bright and passing gleams of God's eternal election, and deep stirrings of wonder and thankfulness thence following, he thinks too reverently of “the secret of the Lord,” to betray (as it were) his confidence, and, by vaunting it to the world, to exaggerate it perchance into more than it was meant to convey: but he is silent, and ponders it as choice encouragement to his soul, meaning something, but he knows not how much.

The Spirit glorifies the Son

2. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit raises the soul, not only to the thought of God, but of Christ also. St. John says, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." And our Lord himself, "If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our abode with him" (1 John 1:3; John 14:23). Now, not to speak of other and higher ways in which these texts are fulfilled, one surely consists in that exercise of faith and love in the thought of the Father and Son, which the Gospel, and the Spirit revealing it, furnish to the Christian. The Spirit came especially to "glorify" Christ; and vouchsafes to be a shining light within the Church and the individual Christian, reflecting the Savior of the world in all his perfections, all his offices, all his works.

He came for the purpose of unfolding what was yet hidden, while Christ was on earth; and speaks on the house-tops what was delivered in closets, disclosing him in the glories of his transfiguration, who once had no comeliness in his outward form, and was but a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. First, he inspired the holy evangelists to record the life of Christ, and directed them which of his words and works to select, which to omit; next, he commented (as it were) upon these, and unfolded their meaning in the Apostolic Epistles. The birth, the life, the death and resurrection of Christ, has been the text which he has illuminated.

He has made history to be doctrine; telling us plainly, whether by St. John or St. Paul, that Christ's conception and birth was the real Incarnation of the Eternal Word, – his life, "God manifest in the Flesh," – his death and resurrection, the atonement for sin, and the justification of all believers. Nor was this all: he continued his sacred comment in the formation of the church, superintending and overruling its human instruments, and bringing out our Savior's words and works, and the apostles' illustrations of them, into acts of obedience and permanent ordinances, by the ministry of saints and martyrs. Lastly, he completes his gracious work by conveying this system of truth, thus varied and expanded, to the heart of each individual Christian in whom he dwells. Thus he condescends to edify the whole man in faith and holiness: "casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5).

By his wonder-working grace all things tend to perfection. Every faculty of the mind, every design, pursuit, subject of thought, is hallowed in its degree by the abiding vision of Christ, as Lord, Savior, and Judge. All solemn, reverent, thankful, and devoted feelings, all that is noble, all that is choice in the regenerate soul, all that is self-denying in conduct, and zealous in action, is drawn forth and offered up by the Spirit as a living sacrifice to the Son of God. And, though the Christian is taught not to think of himself above his measure, and dare not boast, yet he is also taught that the consciousness of the sin which remains in him, and infects his best services, should not separate him from God, but lead him to him who can save. He reasons with St. Peter, "To whom should he go?" and, without daring to decide, or being impatient to be told how far he is able to consider as his own every Gospel privilege in its fullness, he gazes on them all with deep thought as the church's possession, joins her triumphant hymns in honor of Christ, and listens wistfully to her voice in inspired Scripture, the voice of the Bride calling upon and blest in the Beloved.

The Spirit keeps us in perfect peace

3. St. John adds, after speaking of "our fellowship with the Father and his Son:" "These things we write to you, that your joy may be full." What is fullness of joy but peace? Joy is tumultuous only when it is not full; but peace is the privilege of those who are "filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you" (Isa. 26:3). It is peace, springing from trust and innocence, and then overflowing in love towards all around him. What is the effect of mere animal ease and enjoyment, but to make a man pleased with everything which happens? "A merry heart is a perpetual feast"; and such is peculiarly the blessing of a soul rejoicing in the faith and fear of God. He who is anxious, thinks of himself, is suspicious of danger, speaks hurriedly, and has no time for the interests of others; he

who lives in peace is at leisure, wherever his lot is cast.

Such is the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart, whether in Jew or Greek, bond or free. He himself perchance in his mysterious nature, is the Eternal Love whereby the Father and the Son have dwelt in each other, as ancient writers have believed; and what he is in heaven, that he is abundantly on earth. He lives in the Christian's heart, as the never-failing fount of charity, which is the very sweetness of the living waters. For where he is, "there is liberty" from the tyranny of sin, from the dread, which the natural man feels, of an offended, unreconciled Creator. Doubt, gloom, impatience have been expelled; joy in the Gospel has taken their place, the hope of heaven and the harmony of a pure heart, the triumph of self-mastery, sober thoughts, and a contented mind. How can charity towards all men fail to follow, being the mere affectionateness of innocence and peace? Thus the Spirit of God creates in us the simplicity and warmth of heart which children have, nay, rather the perfections of his heavenly hosts, high and low being joined together in his mysterious work; for what are implicit trust, ardent love, abiding purity, but the mind both of little children and of the adoring seraphim!

Temples of truth and holiness

Thoughts, such as these, will affect us rightly, if they make us fear and be watchful, while we rejoice. They cannot surely do otherwise; for the mind of a Christian, as I have been attempting to describe it, is not so much what we have, as what we ought to have. To look, indeed, after dwelling on it, upon the multitude of men who have been baptized in Christ's name, is too serious a matter, and we need not force ourselves to do so. We need not do so, further than to pray for them, and to protest and strive against what is evil among them; for as to the higher and more solemn thought, how persons, set apart individually and collectively, as temples of truth and holiness, should become what they seem to be, and what their state is in consequence in God's sight, is a question which it is a great blessing to be allowed to put from us as not our concern.

It is our concern only to look to ourselves, and to see that, as we have received the gift, we "grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption"; remembering that "if any man destroy the temple of God, him shall God destroy." This reflection and the recollection of our many backslidings, will ever keep us, please God, from judging others, or from priding ourselves on our privileges.

Let us but consider how we have fallen from the light and grace of our baptism. Were we now what that holy sacrament made us, we might ever "go on our way rejoicing"; but having sullied our heavenly garments, in one way or other, in a greater or less degree (God knows! and our own consciences too in a measure), alas! the Spirit of adoption has in part receded from us, and the sense of guilt, remorse, sorrow, and penitence must take his place. We must renew our confession, and seek afresh our absolution day by day, before we dare call upon God as "our Father," or offer up psalms and intercessions to him. And, whatever pain and affliction meets us through life, we must take it as a merciful penance imposed by a Father upon erring children, to be borne meekly and thankfully, and as intended to remind us of the weight of that infinitely greater punishment, which was our desert by nature, and which Christ bore for us on the cross.

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My Dear Wormwood...

Screwtape Addresses Ecumenical Community

by Dave Hughes

[Note: If you have not read C.S. Lewis' *The Screwtape Letters* the following may make little sense. *The Screwtape Letters* is a collection of letters from a senior demonic tempter Screwtape to his nephew Wormwood, a novice tempter. It is a Christian classic and I would heartily recommend you read it first.]



Illustration by Halva Myohandakiv

My Dear Wormwood,

It is with real alarm that I read the casual comment in your previous letter that your patient is getting involved in an ecumenical community – do you remember nothing of your lessons at the teaching college on this topic? I'm sure Slubgob has not let this lesson drop out of the curriculum. Do you not recall the special protocol for raising the alarm? Our father below himself takes special interest in these cases. You should have contacted me at once!

Our ultimate war aims are dependent on our success in keeping the Christians divided and dividing. Many of our best minds in research have been devoted to these schemes, and their work over the centuries has been truly impressive. Any attempt at real ecumenism, especially one that is expressed in practical daily life must be snuffed out at once.

As sobering as the situation is, all is not yet lost! Indeed, there are interesting possibilities in opening some deep veins of judgmentalism and hypocrisy that could be really entertaining over the long term. But we must be careful in how we proceed. There are several avenues of attack.

The first task is to focus your patient's mind on the concept of ecumenism and steer him away from the more mundane and practical implications of actually living together in love with those from other traditions. Let his mind fondle the concept and congratulate himself on being open-minded and big-hearted enough to be an "ecumenist" – a wonderfully inflating term. Let the train of thought develop – "it really is a sacrifice for me to relate to these people and not have as much time for my denominational life... but it is the cross I need to bear." I'm sure you see the

progression – the intermingling of pride and self-pity that can be developed in various interesting ways. I trust you are capable of the usual developments along these lines.

At all costs, keep from his mind the obvious lessons from their scriptures (you know, “May they all be one,” and such drivel) and the disgusting ultimate goal of the enemy – he really does profess to want to bring all the human animals into an ultimate unity with himself. The humans will be only too ready to overlook these points in favor of the immediate and more comfortable attractions of a purely sectarian approach. By the way, this teaching of the enemy on ultimate unity is all the more irritating in that it borrows so obviously from our father below’s own goal of ultimate unity. Of course our father’s approach is based on the infinitely more dignified principle of mastery and domination – “May they all be mine.” The enemy’s hypothesis of a voluntary unity of independent beings is a pale shadow of our ultimately more realistic approach.

I have checked the records on this particular ecumenical community and find with some dismay they teach the concept of convergent ecumenism. This approach is based on the concept (so painfully obvious to us but opaque to many humans) that the common ground shared by all adherents of the Christian faith is broad enough to spend a lifetime mastering. They seem to relish standing in this common area and working for the center instead of focusing on the more narrow areas of difference or distinctive. Make sure to encourage your man along the lines of “this convergence idea is all well and good but really we mustn’t over-simplify things.” Here you can appeal to his pride in wanting to avoid seeming common or dull. Play on your man’s alleged passion for truth (most of them are really not that serious about truth...) but get him to burrow deep on some truths (those held especially firmly by his church) to the neglect of the totality of truths (those held in common by all the Christian humans).

Finally I find the group also advocates what they call “ecumenical courtesy.” This is really alarming and perhaps the most dangerous teaching of the whole lot. This approach threatens to undo one of our most effective stratagems – building on simple misunderstandings and inflaming minor slights to drive a wedge between humans. Make sure your man categorizes those who offer these slights – carefully nurture the notions of “us” and “them” and make sure he keeps score whenever one of “them” offers a snub. Is your man’s church in the majority or the minority in this ecumenical community? You can play him either way on this point, but it is most helpful if he is in the minority. Play upon the normal human fears of being overwhelmed by a majority that does not understand him. Plant in his mind the notion that the group is really dominated by “them” and does not have room for “us.” Once you get him thinking along these lines the rest is child’s play.

Given the seriousness of the case, we need to increase our vigilance! I’m sure you’ve seen the new directive on upgrading our communications to this new tool they call “e-mail.” Henceforth we need to dispense with these letters and adopt the new technology! (By the way, it seems to offer some really interesting opportunities for creating discord and misunderstandings with the humans themselves. Our research indicates in sufficient quantities it can drive them quite mad.) In any case, I need to give a report to one of the under-devils later this evening on this case so please drop me an email yet tonight and catch me up on the latest developments.

Your affectionate Uncle,

Screwtape



Dave Hughes is Chairman of the Sword of the Spirit's [Assembly of Ecumenical Communities](#) and is a coordinator of [Word of Life Community](#) in Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA . Dave and his wife Jane have five children. They are members of Knox Presbyterian Church in Ann Arbor.

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Deeper Still

[Spanish version: [Más profundo aún](#)]

by Miguel Vargas

***This is a time of very special grace for you. Move forward,
go through the door that lies open before you.***

- International Coordinators Meeting, London, 2004

This past January I attended a Gap retreat in Monterrey, Mexico and around me were brothers and sisters from different communities and outreaches in Mexico, Guatemala, the United States, Costa Rica and Brazil. And I thought for a moment, “What a blessing to live and experience the same kinds of things that my parents had experienced when they entered the bulwark of the Sword of the Spirit.” But the Lord said to me: “No, you are not going to live the same things that your parents lived, you will go forward and you will go to places where they have not gone, and you will see things they have not seen.” Then I remembered a song we often sing: “Take us higher up, draw us deeper still,” and I understood that the Lord is listening to our prayer and has decided to take us beyond the place where he took our fathers in community.

At the Sword of the Spirit International Coordinators Meeting in 2008, where I was honored to serve as a translator, the Lord spoke about an open door of new mission opportunities, new grace, and new resources. And not only did the Lord speak about an open door, but he invited us very clearly as a community of communities to move forward, to go through the door.

Invitation to go deeper still

Many of our communities and outreaches have seen new signs and expressions of how this word is being fulfilled. I think this prophetic word has a particular application for those of us who have been born in community or who have joined an already formed community and who have benefitted from the effort of those who went before us. The Lord is inviting us to go deeper still, to move beyond what our fathers have already conquered when they established communities around the world.

This brings to my mind the image of the European explorers, back in the 15th century, who dared to cross the ocean to discover new lands. Their effort was a key contribution in advancing the history of human kind. They not only dreamed about what kinds of lands and peoples could be discovered on the other side of the ocean, they also built the necessary ships, and they set out on journeys that no one they knew of had done before. But many of the first explorers, who established beachheads along newly discovered coastlands, were not able to venture into the interior of the continents they had discovered. That job awaited those who came after them, who followed in their steps, and who consequently discovered new lands and peoples beyond the coasts.

I think there is something similar going on in our communities today. A whole generation of brave men and women decided to conquer a new land, not knowing what they would find and going on paths no one had walked before. They are our pioneers, our explorers and conquerors if you will. But, as the years go by we are the new generations, who are called to discover what lies beyond the coasts of this new land, and we are the ones who are called to conquer the land that the Lord gave to our fathers. Ours is the call the Lord gave to Israel in Deuteronomy 1:8: *Behold, I have set the land before you: go in and possess the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give to them and to their children after them.*

You are the ones, you who read these lines, who are called to deepen and move forward the work the Lord has given the Sword of the Spirit.

Conquering new lands for the Lord

It has been forty years since the first covenant community was founded, and in these forty years the effort of our founders has focused on shaping a bulwark according to the directions of the Lord. The foundations have been put in place and the structures have been organized. Our mission is to keep those foundations and those structures, and to conquer new lands for the Lord.

The times of building are over, the times of conquering approach. We will, I think be amazed by what the Lord has prepared for us. We will see new ways of mission, new opportunities of evangelization, new resources for the extension of God's kingdom that we had never imagined. The Lord has set before us an open door. Let us go through it! Let us break with our human plans and let us be opened to God's. Things that seem too bold or too daring or too radical are precisely the open doors that the Lord is inviting us to go through.

In my personal experience, in the last three years there have been, in the communities I have lived in, new ways of mission, opportunities to develop new programs, and new fields in which to evangelize. Some of these opportunities have been seized, some haven't. And those that we have seized, have truly been open doors of resources, gifts and new brothers and sisters. The Lord is fulfilling his promise, he is been faithful to his word, but we must do our part and answer; we must go through the door.

Courage to respond

Courage is needed to respond to the Lord's invitation. It isn't easy to go through a door when you cannot see what is on the other side. It isn't easy to go deeper still, into the land. But who said it would be? Our founders and those who came before us were brave men and women who dared to conquer for the Lord's sake something completely

unknown. It's now our turn. What will be our answer?

[Miguel Vargas is an underway member of the Jesed Community in Monterrey, Mexico. He has been actively involved in youth ministry and is currently an affiliate of the [Servants of the Word](#) living in Monterrey, Mexico. He majored in classical philology and graduated from the University of Costa Rica in December 2008.]

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Más profundo aún

[English version: [Deeper Still](#)]

por Miguel Vargas

“Este es un tiempo de gracia muy especial para ustedes. Avancen, crucen la puerta que está abierta frente a ustedes.” RIC, Londres, 2004

En enero pasado estuve en un retiro de brechistas en Monterrey, México. A mi alrededor había hermanos y hermanas de diferentes lugares de México, Guatemala, Estados Unidos, Costa Rica y hasta Brasil; y pensé por un momento que estaba teniendo la bendición de vivir las mismas cosas que habían vivido mis padres cuando comenzaron a insertarse en el baluarte de la Espada del Espíritu. Pero el Señor me dijo: “No, tú no vas a vivir lo mismo que tus padres, tú vas a ir más adelante y vas a llegar a lugares que ellos no han llegado, y vas a ver cosas que ellos no han visto.” Entonces recordé el canto que cantamos a menudo: “Llévanos, Señor, más profundo aún”, y entendí que el Señor está escuchando nuestra oración y ha decidido llevarnos más lejos de lo que llevó a nuestros padres en la comunidad.

En la reunión internacional de coordinadores en Santo Domingo en el 2008, donde tuve el honor de servir como traductor, el Señor habló de una puerta abierta, una nueva puerta de recursos, de gracia y de misión. Y el Señor no solo habló de que había abierto una puerta, sino que nos llamó y nos invitó muy claramente a todos como comunidad de comunidades a avanzar, a cruzar la puerta.

Muchas de nuestras comunidades y misiones han visto formas y expresiones de cómo esta palabra se ha ido cumpliendo. Yo creo que esta palabra tiene una aplicación particular para los que hemos nacido en comunidad o los que hemos llegado a la comunidad ya formada y nos hemos visto beneficiados por el esfuerzo de los que llegaron antes que nosotros. El Señor nos está invitando a ir más profundo, a avanzar la conquista que ya alcanzaron nuestros padres.

Se me viene a la mente la imagen de los conquistadores europeos del siglo XV que se atrevieron a cruzar el mar para descubrir nuevas tierras. Su esfuerzo fue crucial para la historia de la humanidad: ellos hicieron una gran labor en preguntarse qué habría al otro lado del mar, construyeron los barcos necesarios para atravesarlo, y se lanzaron a hacer viajes que antes nadie había hecho para encontrar nuevas costas y nuevas tierras. Pero muchos de ellos no pudieron adentrarse en los continentes que descubrieron; le tocó a los que vinieron después, a los que siguieron sus pasos, descubrir qué había tierra adentro, qué cosas había más allá de las líneas costeras.

En nuestras comunidades está ocurriendo algo similar. Toda una generación de hombres y mujeres valientes decidió lanzarse a conquistar una nueva tierra, sin saber lo que encontrarían y sin que antes nadie hubiera andado por los caminos que ellos anduvieron. Son nuestros pioneros, nuestros conquistadores. Pero, conforme pasan los años y comienza a ocurrir un relevo generacional, somos nosotros, las nuevas generaciones, los que estamos llamados a descubrir qué hay más allá de las líneas costeras de esta tierra nueva, y a conquistar la tierra que el Señor le dio a nuestros padres. Nuestro es el llamado que el Señor dio a Israel en Deuteronomio 1:8: *Mirad: Yo he puesto esa tierra ante vosotros; id a tomar posesión de la tierra que el Señor juró dar a vuestros padres, Abrahán, Isaac y Jacob, y a sus descendientes.*

Somos nosotros, tú que lees estas líneas, los llamados a profundizar y avanzar la obra que el Señor tiene para la Espada del Espíritu.

Han pasado ya cuarenta años desde que se fundó la primera comunidad de alianza, y en estos cuarenta años el esfuerzo de los fundadores se ha concentrado en darle forma al baluarte según las instrucciones de nuestro Dios; se han cimentado las bases y se han organizado las estructuras. Nuestra misión es que estas bases y estas estructuras se mantengan, y podamos lanzarnos a conquistar nuevas tierras para el Señor.

Los tiempos de construir han pasado y se acercan los tiempos de conquistar. Creo que quedaremos maravillados ante lo que el Señor tiene para nosotros. Veremos nuevas formas de misión, nuevas oportunidades de evangelización, nuevos recursos para la extensión del Reino que antes no habíamos imaginado. El Señor ha puesto delante de nosotros una puerta abierta. ¡Crucémosla! Rompamos nuestros paradigmas humanos y abrámonos a los paradigmas de Dios. Aquellas cosas que nos parecen descabelladas o muy atrevidas o demasiado radicales son precisamente las puertas abiertas a las que el Señor nos invita que entremos.

En mi experiencia personal, en los últimos tres años se han presentado, en las comunidades en que he estado, formas nuevas de misión, oportunidades para desarrollar nuevos programas o nuevos campos a dónde evangelizar. Algunas oportunidades se han aprovechado, otras no. Y aquellas que hemos aprovechado, han sido verdaderamente puertas abiertas de recursos, dones, y nuevos hermanos y hermanas. El Señor está cumpliendo su promesa, está siendo fiel a su palabra, pero nosotros debemos hacer nuestra parte y responder, debemos cruzar la puerta.

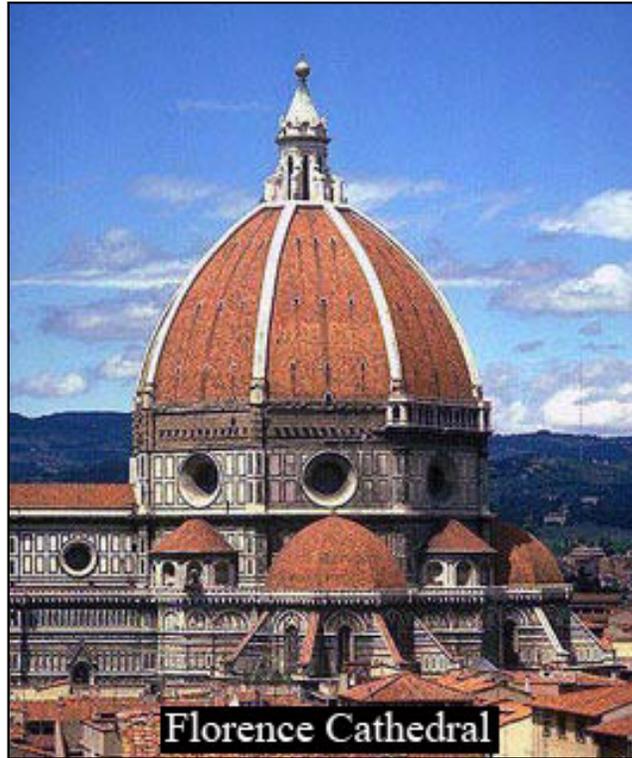
Se requiere valor para responder a la invitación del Señor. No es fácil cruzar una puerta cuando al otro lado no se ve nada. No es fácil ir más profundo, ir tierra adentro. Pero, ¿quién dijo que lo sería? Nuestros fundadores y los que han venido antes que nosotros fueron hombres y mujeres valientes que se atrevieron a ir a conquistar algo totalmente desconocido por el Señor. Ahora nos toca a nosotros, ¿cuál será nuestra respuesta?

[Miguel Vargas is an underway member of the Jesed Community in Monterrey, Mexico. He has been actively involved in youth ministry and is currently an affiliate of the [Servants of the Word](#) living in Monterrey, Mexico. He majored in classical philology and graduated from the University of Costa Rica in December 2008.]

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Quo Vadis?

Is Christian Youth Culture Possible?

an interview with Michael Shaughnessy,
Director for Kairos North America

KYCN: Mike, those who know you, know you have lot's of ideas about youth and youth work. What's next?

Mike: Christians pray that God's kingdom would come on earth as it is in heaven – on earth, not just in heaven. We shouldn't settle for something less than the kingdom. We too easily accept the prevailing culture as inevitable. Unfortunately, that means many young people are missing out on the hope, joy, beauty and goodness that God intends for them on earth (not to mention heaven.) Many Christian parents and youth workers are limited by a strategy that just tries to keep evil out. They must say "NO!" over and over again, or just give up and give in. In Kairos we see this challenge and are doing something about it. Our goal is to build a positive youth culture that promotes whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious (Phil. 4:8). This includes more than just whatever is spiritual. It includes every area of human culture: food, sports, games, music, art, dress...

KYCN: Why not just eliminate youth culture totally!

Mike: Eliminating youth culture is impossible to do. Isolating Christian youth from youth culture completely is also unrealistic. Even the Amish admit that. More importantly, we have a commission from Christ to bring the gospel to the world. We should not just write off youth culture. We should want to transform it and those who live in it.

Besides, shaping today's youth means shaping tomorrow's world leaders.

KYCN: Creating a new youth culture... That seems like a lot of work!

Mike: Oh, it will be. It was a lot of work to build Florence Cathedral, but it was done. I think we need to do this and for two good reasons. First, we lose too many young people to the powerful world of youth culture. Their lives get messed up. They lose what faith they have. We need to provide an alternative culture, a whole culture – not just a good youth group and some Christian music. We need to provide a place where youth can flourish. The second reason we should do it is exactly because this mission is big. Its vision is big. It will provide a place in mission for all sorts of our young people, not just youth workers. This mission will need businessmen and women, web designers, musicians, writers, clothes designers, video editors, sound geeks... That's a short list. I have a longer one and it's growing.

KYCN: Where do you begin?

Mike: Like with any good project – get the right people and the funding. I think I have some of the people. I am hoping our readers will help with the funding.

[Michael Shaughnessy is an elder in [The Servants of the Word](#) and the Director of [Kairos in North America](#). Kairos is an international federation of outreaches to high school, university and post university aged people.]

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The New Rebellion (The Rebellion Against Rebellion)

by Peter Stine

“Being surrounded with every conceivable kind of revolt, from infancy, Gabriel had to revolt into something, so he revolted into the only thing left – sanity.”

These words, from G.K. Chesterton’s novel *The Man Who was Thursday*, are (whether we want to admit it or not) very relevant for today’s world. We are surrounded on all sides by a culture screaming to be released from what it deems to be a restrictive and destructive mode of thinking and acting. Sometimes we ourselves can become caught in this; seeking freedom from governmental authority or independence from a parent. It seems to me that this rebellion against all things that were – even up to 15 years ago – held dear, has been slowly but surely eroding our culture. So the question becomes for people in their teens like myself, how do we respond to this slow moral decay? However, before we can create a solution, we must identify the problem.

In the human person, there is a natural tendency to rebel, a tendency that goes back to the Fall and continues throughout human history, leaving numerous examples of human rebellion in its wake. The example that probably jumps to the forefront of most of our minds is the example of teenage rebellion. Many of us have been around teenagers (some of us still are teenagers) and therefore are constantly reminded of rebellion. We see disobedience, disrespect for parental authority, and many other things. Although part of this is due to simple hormonal changes, in it we can catch a glimpse of what this deeply ingrained rebellious streak is.

This streak, or should I say, concupiscence (unruly desires), is more or less the assertion of one’s ego (or belief system) over that of another person. This is otherwise known as pride. Continuing with the example of teenage rebellion, the teenager is trying to find his place in the world, first by asserting himself towards everyone else to see what gets pushed over and what stands firm. When this is done in a constructive manner, the teenager finds his place in society and knows his role. But, when this practice is not checked early on, it can cause catastrophic results. If a teenager is allowed to challenge everyone he comes in contact with – parents, teachers, youth group/small group leaders, and pastors – he becomes disruptive, both to the people around him and to himself. As he continues to

posture and the authority figure continues to do nothing, he reinforces in his mind the idea that no authority has any sway over him, that he can do whatever he likes, and no one can tell him otherwise. From that point onward, he begins to see as freedom this being able to get away with anything he wants, and challenges everything that seems to get in the way of maintaining this idea.

So that's the problem. How do we combat it?

I would suggest a few things that might sound counter-cultural today, but I think are really timeless wisdom, especially from a Christian point of view:

Be an example of humility.

I know that this particular virtue is talked about a lot, so we tend to ignore it. However, it is the only way to combat pride, since it is the direct opposite of it. Giving deference where it is due, listening to other opinions, and not having outbursts of anger when things don't go exactly how you had hoped, these will go a long way in showing people that there is a different way of living. If you also do this with joy, it can show others what they lack in their own self-centered way of living.

If you are in a position of authority, exercise the authority confidently.

Even if you want to be a person's friend, not giving them boundaries isn't helping the relationship. In fact, it's probably showing them that you don't have much of a backbone. So, use the authority both for your own good, but especially for theirs, helping them to see how they are rightly related to others in a good way.

Define freedom.

This can be a very tricky area, but it is where the crux of the issue lies. Most people believe that "freedom" is the ability to do whatever you want, whenever you want, and however you want to do it. The truth, however, is the same truth that the Russian people discovered after overthrowing the Czar, in their attempt to establish a "free and common system of government." This "freedom" unfortunately did not lead to a just government. It resulted in a blatant, barbaric tyranny in which millions suffered and died and the rest became enslaved to a totalitarian regime. If we try to gain freedom by overthrowing legitimate authority (e.g. our parents), and say that we can do whatever we want, we actually lose what it means to be free. This is because we enslave ourselves to our passions, no matter how misguided they are and regardless of the consequences.

Define rules.

Most rules are put in place for our protection and wellbeing. Think of a children's playground. If it is near a road, more often than not there is a fence. The children could think: "I wish the fence wasn't there, it's hampering my freedom." But if a child decided to disregard the fence and play in the road, there is a very high chance that he would be hit by a car. So it is with most of the rules that are in place today. If you can explain to someone the logic of a certain rule and that it actually benefits them in some way, they are more likely to follow it.

Pray.

This cannot be emphasized enough. It is only by God's grace that people change, and while we can do what little we are able in order to catalyze change, it is only God who can truly bring it about.

Therefore, in short, the response to rebellion, as odd as it may seem, is rebellion itself. In order to make a difference, we must be the difference first. If we behave in a way that is upright – a rebellion against rebellion – then we are in a

better position to bring others along with us. Through our efforts and by God's grace, we can help end the rebellion. The words of St. Paul often echo in my ears: "Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:2).



Peter Stine, age 18, is from DeWitt, Michigan, USA and is part of the [Work of Christ Community](#) in Lansing, Michigan. He is currently in Belfast, Northern Ireland, doing a GAP year with [Youth Initiatives](#).

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Reflections from Founding Members of Covenant Community

Covenant Community began forty years ago in a very unlikely place – on a secular university campus in Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA, among a handful of students and local residents who were hungry for God and for the action of his Holy Spirit. Since that time numerous covenant communities have developed worldwide, including the Sword of the Spirit, a network of sixty-five member communities.

Over the next several months, *Living Bulwark* will feature articles on covenant community. This month we begin with a series of reflections by members of the Sword of the Spirit who were there from the beginnings in 1970 and have lived for 40 years in covenant community.

- [A Work of the Spirit: New Forms of Christian Living in Community](#), by Steve Clark
- [Our Beginnings in Covenant Community](#), by Bruce Yocum
- [Called Together: A Prophetic Sign of Restoration](#), by Don Schwager
- [Counter-Cultural in a Non-Christian World](#), by Tom and Ellen Gryniwicz
- [Transgenerational - You Bet!](#) by Van and Janet Vandagriff
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A Work of the Spirit – New Forms of Christian Life in Community

By Steve Clark

[This excerpt is from *Covenant Community and Church*, Chapter One, edited by Steve Clark, and published by Servant Publications, 1992]

The church, the body of Christ, has Christ and his Spirit dwelling within. It has every spiritual blessing

in the heavenly places. Yet it is in need of renewal. It is at the same time holy and always in need of being purified. It is continually pursuing the path of penance and renewal (LG 9). Recognizing the predestined call and nature of the glorious church of God (Eph 5:27) should not lead to a failure to recognize the actual state of the people of God and their need.

...The renewing work of the Holy Spirit is an ongoing part of the life of the pilgrim people of God. In every age, the Holy Spirit begins movements of renewal. Sometimes he does so through the ordinary forms of church life, sometimes through special interventions that may lead to new forms of Christian living.

We live in a special time of renewal... a time in which we cannot simply rely on the accomplishments or forms of life of the past. Rather we must live the unchanging life of Christ and his church in new ways. These have to be both more effective for our age and more faithful to what was entrusted to the church in the beginning.

As throughout the ages the Holy Spirit has been active among the Christian people to bring about renewal, groups of Christians have come together to respond. Many Christians have come together to perform some special services or foster spiritual growth with no further bond among themselves than that necessary for achieving particular goals.

But the human race is naturally social, and it has pleased God to unite those who believe in Christ in the people of God (see 1 Peter 2:5-10), and into one body (see 1 Co 12:12, AA 18). Therefore the very nature of the Christian people is to be brothers and sisters in the Lord, one in the Spirit in the bonds of peace and mutual love (Eph. 4:3). Consequently, when the Holy Spirit renews his people, he often leads groups of Christians to join themselves to one another to live more fully the life together of the Christian people. Such a coming together is not intended as an alternative to the life of the church. Rather, it is a renewed living out of what the life of the church should be and so signifies the communion and unity of the church of Christ.

In our day, desire for such coming together is felt with greater strength because of the loss of natural community in society and in [many parishes and congregations]... In recent years the Lord has brought into existence new forms of Christian life that are called covenant communities. They are covenantal because they are based on the voluntary commitment of members to one another in a serious way that is not necessarily lifelong and does not necessarily partake of the nature of a vow. The commitment is in the form of a personal covenant of brothers and sisters one to another that supplements and strengthens the relationship that comes from being baptized members of the church. They are communities because they share together their spiritual and material goods as a way of expressing their relationship as brothers and sisters in the Lord.”

[Steve Clark is past president of the [Sword of the Spirit](#) and founder of [The Servants of the Word](#).]

Go to next page > [Our Beginnings in Covenant Community](#), by Bruce Yocum

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Our Beginnings in Covenant Community - A Worldwide Work of God

By Bruce Yocum

Over the past several years in the *Sword of the Spirit*, we have presented a conference on “Our Call and Mission.” Its title is not accidental, for any God-given mission begins with a call from God. The initiative is always with God, and he takes that initiative by addressing his word to particular people at particular times and places.

The spirit of my reflections echoes what is repeated every year at the Jewish Passover meal, as the Jews recount the history of their life as a people who are called by God. At one point in the ceremony the leader says, “Let no one say ‘God called them (in the sense of those others).’ For if you belong to this people, it is because God called you.” A prophetic word given 40 years ago, perhaps even before some of us were born, is part of the living heritage of the *Sword of the Spirit*. It is as much a call to you personally as it was to those who first heard it.

In 1969, when I was at university in Ann Arbor, Michigan, about 30 of us prayed regularly together. We had not become a community at that point, just a loosely-knit group of Christians, mostly university students, who had been baptised in the Holy Spirit and were trying to take our faith seriously. We would meet each Monday evening in the large living room of a rented house to pray and seek the Lord.

During a meeting early in the summer of 1969, the Lord began to speak to us about repentance, about clearing away the obstacles to God’s work, obstacles which we had created through our unacknowledged and unrepented sin. In prophecy after prophecy during that meeting, we heard of the areas that needed to change, and the Holy Spirit opened the eyes of many of us to see what he was seeing. Mostly the sins were not big, but things that occupied a place in our life that God wanted for himself – our career plans, our cherished possessions, our immoderate interest in food, and so forth. This “prophetic examination of conscience” lasted several weeks and created in many of us a sense of anticipation: what was God preparing us for? He seemed to be addressing us as a group even as he was addressing us as individuals. He seemed to be “doing something with us.”

Midway through that summer we found our attention drawn to many passages in Scripture about covenant. That was the beginning of a year of discovery, as we learned about the covenant love and faithfulness between God and his people and between brothers and sisters who are part of the same people. So the Lord's call to covenant community had begun – with a corporate call to repentance.

God's Way of Living

One of the most striking things about being part of the community in the early days in Ann Arbor was the strong conviction that we had been caught up in a great action of God. We saw the evidence everywhere we looked: men and women were hearing God's word and were being changed by it. God speaking and was bringing about what he had spoken. And before our very eyes this work of God grew with astounding speed.

Those who had attended a tiny prayer meeting in Ann Arbor in December 1967 (there were perhaps 15 people present) heard a remarkable prophecy.

You will reap a harvest you did not sow. You will sow, and in years to come will see the harvest. The work you have seen begun here will spread....I will bring many to you... and I will baptize them in my Holy Spirit. I will raise up spiritual sons and daughters for my work. A shining cross of my body will be raised up among you...I will send people to you from all across the nation to receive a message they will take back [with them]....

Within a few short years this prophecy was fulfilled, as hundreds of people came every year to visit the community, not only from across the nation, but from around the world. Less than eight years after that prophecy was given, the community had to maintain guesthouses to care for the 1500 people who were coming each year to visit the community and see what God was doing there.

Just as had been prophesied, many came to Ann Arbor and caught a vision for Christian community lived in the power of the Holy Spirit, returned to their homes to pursue that vision themselves. In those very early years, the seeds were being planted which later produced a harvest of Christian community life around the world.

[Bruce Yocum is President of [Christ the King Association](#) and a member of the International Executive Council of [The Sword of the Spirit](#).]

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Called Together in Covenant Community - A Prophetic Sign of Restoration

By Don Schwager

I have lived in Christian community for over 40 years now, and I have visited over half of the 65 covenant communities in The Sword of the Spirit worldwide. Why do we call our communities covenant communities? And what is their significance for today? I can't write as an historian or a theologian, but I can offer an eyewitness account of God's action in establishing covenant community and in his faithfulness to us over the years.

In the summer of 1969 the Lord began to speak to a charismatic group of predominantly university students in Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA about his intention to do a new work among them. He said, "I want to make a covenant with you, but you must first smash all your idols." He then enumerated what seemed like an endless list of things which stood as idols in our lives in place of the Lord himself. Both conviction and wonder seized our hearts that night as we prayed and pondered, "What idols do I need to smash?" and "What is a covenant?"

In the following months the Lord led us in repentance and in deeper conversion of heart. He began to give us a burning desire to give our all for him, to throw our lot in with one another, and to serve the Lord together in whatever way he chose to lead us. While our 1960s idealism and youthful enthusiasm made us open to new forms of lifestyle and communal living, we weren't really prepared for committed relationships of covenant love. We studied the scriptures to see what we could learn about covenant and community and we prayed and discussed together how we could respond to the Lord's leading. We came to a renewed understanding of and appreciation for God's covenant love for his people. His love is marked by hesed, the Hebrew word which expresses committed love, faithfulness, mercy, and loving-kindness. We realized that since Christians shared in the New Covenant, we had a distinctive relationship with one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. We had a firm conviction that God was calling us to live a shared life of committed love as brothers and sisters in Christ, in a particular way, in community.

Called to a shared life

At the end of the summer of 1970 we took a retreat together at a camp in the hills of southeastern Michigan. After prayer and deliberation we agreed to make a covenant together as a community, and

we adopted a pattern of community life and order as close to that of the New Testament as possible. A community covenant statement was written, and we took a few weeks to pray in preparation for making our commitments. Our “Covenant Statement” summarized what we believe we heard from the Lord.

In order to respond to what God is doing among us and in order to be that people he is calling us to be, we desire to give our whole lives to him, to follow his Son, Jesus, and to live more and more in the Holy Spirit. We desire to love and serve him in lives of daily prayer and service; to praise and worship him always; to ever seek his face; to know and serve the truth of his Word in joy, peace, and love of the Holy Spirit; to believe what he speaks to us and to be obedient to the truth of his Word and the guidance of his Spirit; to offer hospitality to those whom he sends to us; to widen our hearts to those he adds to our number; and to carry out the mission that he is entrusting to us. Above all, we desire to be a people who always grow, by his great mercy, in the fervor of that first love he has given to us – he who is our all. We desire to consecrate our lives to him, not simply as individuals, but as members of a people – members of The Word of God.

In the fall of 1970 we gathered to offer our lives corporately to the Lord. Some 50 brothers and sisters each stood in turn and publicly made their commitments to the Lord and to one another: “I want to give my life fully to God and to live as a member of The Word of God.” A prophetic word was spoken after we had made our covenant commitments: “This is a night of importance for my church...tonight I am restoring much that has been lost...” That night we knew that God had changed us and knit us together as a people, as brothers and sisters in the Lord. And we knew that he had called us together, not just for our sakes, but for the sake of his work of renewal and restoration throughout the body of Christ.

A prophetic sign of restoration

Today there are many hundreds of covenant communities around the world. What is the significance of covenant community for today? First, it is a signpost of what God is bringing about through the gift of being baptized in the Holy Spirit. It is a visible public sign of the Lord's work of renewal in bringing people into a revitalized relationship with God, and it is a sign of the unity he desires for all his people. The unity we already have as brothers and sisters in Christ stems from baptism and the gift and working of the Holy Spirit. This gift of life together enables Christians of different traditions to recognize one another as brothers and sisters in Christ and to live together in real shared life. This unifying grace is a hallmark of God's work today.

Second, covenant community is a servant of the renewal. It is meant to be a prophetic sign to the rest of the charismatic renewal, and to the churches, and to the world. It's a message to everybody, but not everybody is called to this particular form of community. People should be able to visit covenant communities and see how the Holy Spirit is renewing his people and restoring to them a fuller shared life together. It is part of the nature of a sign that you cannot be everything. Covenant communities cannot do everything and cannot solve all problems. They are only a part, but, nonetheless an important part of God's work of renewal and restoration.

We are privileged to live in community

Living in Christian community is a gift and calling, and a privilege we should not take for granted. Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his book, *Life Together*, speaks of the privilege Christians have to live in

visible community with other Christians.

It is not simply to be taken for granted that the Christian has the privilege of living among other Christians. Jesus Christ lived in the midst of his enemies. At the end all his disciples deserted him. On the Cross he was utterly alone, surrounded by evildoers and mockers. For this cause he had come, to bring peace to the enemies of God. So the Christian, too, belongs not in the seclusion of a cloistered life but in the thick of foes. There is his mission, his work. ..So between the death of Christ and the Last Day it is only by a gracious anticipation of the last things that Christians are privileged to live in visible fellowship with other Christians.

We believe that the Lord has called the Sword of the Spirit, an international network of covenant communities, for this age, a time of significant change and upheaval in the world and a time of difficulty and spiritual conflict for many Christians. But it is also a time for great spiritual renewal and evangelism, and for building Christian communities throughout the world to stem the tide of evil and to strengthen God's people.

[Don Schwager is a member of [The Servants of the Word](#) and author of [Daily Scripture Readings and Meditations](#)]

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Counter-Cultural in a Non-Christian World

By Ellen Gryniewicz

We started out as students, barefoot and beaded, but when we started to build community, we needed more than that. We found what was needed in tradition, the traditions of the Jewish and Christian people of God. The Lord's Day – setting aside Sunday for the Lord – entered our life fairly early, and became a mainstay in anchoring family and household life in stable patterns. Community daily prayers, often done as evening prayers, also helped. Celebrating the seasons of the Christian year further enriched us, and sometimes set us apart. Try celebrating Advent, not Christmas, in the weeks leading up to the feast of the Incarnation, and you will experience going against the stream of our culture.

A less ceremonial, but essential, custom which has woven together the lives of God's people whenever they have experienced being his people, is mutual care. We met together for support in small groups, provided meals when babies were born, helped one another move (endlessly, it seemed), and baked cakes for many, many weddings – sometimes two or even three a weekend. And we prayed with each other and for each other and over each other. And we sang an ever-increasing repertoire of songs, many of our own composing. All of these things had been done by others before us, and had worked for them. They worked for us also. We became a people – a people who were noticeably different, set apart to be dedicated to serving our God. And this identity made us able to resist, at least in part, the powerful influences trying to pull us away from Jesus and the way of life he calls us to live. Forming a culture as a people of God helped us to counter the non-Christian culture we live in.

[Ellen Gryniewicz is a senior woman leader in [Word of Life Community](#) in Ann Arbor, Michigan]

Long Distance Commitment

by Tom Gryniewicz

As the first Thursday night prayer meetings grew from 12 people in November of 1967 to hundreds over the following year – many came from Michigan, Ohio, and even Canada! – we “regular” attendees who lived in Ann Arbor felt the need to begin meeting on an additional night of the week to

have a chance to focus on our own spiritual growth and worship of the Lord. A few of us also met together outside of these prayer meetings to seek the Lord for what he wanted to do with us all.

I went into the U.S. Navy as my friends continued these gatherings. One day on my ship, the captain sent word that I had a ship-to-shore phone call. It's the only time I saw anyone receive such a call, and I thought as I went to answer it, "This must be something big." It was. People from the Ann Arbor prayer group were calling to let me know that God was calling them to bind themselves together to him in something called a "covenant," and could I pray that we would understand what it all means and respond to it.

My long distance call led to a long distance prayer, and the prayer group was able to accept God's invitation 40 years ago and make our first public commitments as individuals joined together in community. After a few years, I completed my time in the navy, returned to Ann Arbor and was able to publicly affirm my own commitment to that same way of life. God deals with us no matter where we are, as long as we love him and want to please him – and he is never a long distance from us.

[Tom Gryniec is a coordinator in [Word of Life Community](#) in Ann Arbor, Michigan]

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Transgenerational? You Bet!

By Van and Janet Vandagriff

In our 55-plus years of marriage, our family has moved many times, but two of those moves were especially significant. In 1965, we moved from Grand Rapids, Michigan, to Malawi in southeast Africa for three years; and in 1976, we moved to Ann Arbor to be a part of the Word of God community.

The culture in Africa put us in a situation that unified us as a family, so that we came into community life in Ann Arbor as a “unit.” Our commitment to one another as family expanded and grew to become a broader commitment to our brothers and sisters in community. From being a family unit amidst a new and different culture in Africa, we found ourselves becoming part of a bulwark that involved not only our family and our brothers and sisters, but others who were just coming into community life.

Through the teachings of the community and through serving others, we have experienced ourselves becoming stronger as individuals, as a family, as members of Word of Life, and as a part of a bulwark for others. And it has been a source of great joy for us to watch our family plunge enthusiastically into community life!

There is so much strength to be gained from living one’s daily life with other committed Christians.

But there is extraordinary strength to be had from knowing that we – our children and their spouses, our grandchildren, and, in our case, our great grandchildren – are living out the Christian life precisely where God wants us to be!

[Van and Janet Vandagriff are members of [Word of Life Community](#) in Ann Arbor, Michigan]

Rooted Together in God's Word

by Jeanne Kun

I have taken root in a privileged people, in the Lord's property, in his inheritance.

For the past forty years my life has been rooted in this people, a people among whom I have found a home. It has also been among this people that I have put roots down more and more deeply in God's word, making my home in God's word and letting it find a home in me. I often think of this as "making God's word my own" – not only reading Scripture, but taking in God's word in all the ways it comes to us, loving it, embracing it, pondering it, allowing myself to be molded and taught by it, obeying it, speaking it and sharing it with others, holding it in the front of my mind. And in the community I have been surrounded by brothers and sisters trying, together, to make God's word "our own" – our guide, our way of thinking, our way of life. Over the years, gradually but steadily, it has been shaping us, building us up, transforming us, taking deeper and deeper root in us. Let's continue to allow God's word to "find, in all its richness, a home with us" (Colossians 3:16, JB).

[Jeanne Kun is a senior woman leader in [Word of Life Community](#) in Ann Arbor, Michigan and President of [Bethany Association](#).]

Putting God at the Center

by Sue Cummins

As a teenager I had a close relationship with the Lord. I wanted to live for God and to help others know his love. I was very moved by the words from John 15:13, "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends." I asked God to give me opportunities to lay down my life for others. I longed to share my life with people who put God at the center of their lives. I didn't realize it at the time, but I was longing for and praying for Christian community. God heard my prayers and brought me into Christian community when I was 20 years old.

As I look back over 40 years of life in community, I am grateful to God for his faithfulness and love. He gave me a group of people who love him and who loved me. More importantly, he gave me a place to love, and many opportunities to lay down my life for others. Christian community has provided me a context in which to live out my life as a disciple of Christ.

As a woman living single for the Lord, I am encouraged by those who share the same vocation, but I am also encouraged and called on to greater holiness by the dedicated married couples who share their lives with me in community. Seeing them face trials and temptations with courage and perseverance gives me the courage to persevere. Their children bring me joy. I am grateful to my brothers and sisters for responding to God's call. I am grateful to the Lord for giving us the grace to commit our lives to one another. May we never take this great gift for granted!

Go to next page > [Calling Out the Best in Us in Christ](#), by Bob Bell

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Calling Out the Best in Us in Christ

By Bob Bell

A while ago I was giving a talk about covenant commitment to people interested in joining Antioch, the Sword of the Spirit community here in London. We were nearing the end of the course and I was supposed to review for the participants what the ceremony would be like when they made their underway commitments. As I spoke to them, the scene came easily to mind of that prayer meeting in Ann Arbor 40 years ago when the first ones of us, in what now has become the communities movement, got up and said, one by one, “I want to give my life fully to God and live as a member of the Word of God.”

I was 21 at the time and a bit nervous, but not at all about whether I was doing the right thing. What the Lord had been speaking to us about covenant relationship and what we had been experiencing living as brothers and sisters made me sure that this was just the thing I wanted to be doing with my life. I was nervous because I sensed that this was a solemn occasion: that the Lord was doing something of massive proportions in the world and that he had invited us, imperfect as we were, to cooperate with him in it.

Since then I've had the privilege of living in other communities, even helping to build some, and each time I've had the same experience: that this business of living together in committed relationships is normal Christianity – that it's the way he meant all of his people to live, and that when people enter into it, even through all the challenges and relationship difficulties and sometimes tears and sorrow, it's not a bizarre way of life but eminently reasonable. It fits the human person and calls out the best in us, in Christ.

In the early 1990s I had to be away from the States and saw from a distance some of the hard times of division. By the time circumstances allowed me again to choose where I should plant myself, I looked at the various options and realized that what I had initially signed up for on the day of my public commitment had stood the test of time – to be in a long-term, covenant relationship with men and women who wanted the Lord to use them, not as individuals but as members of a whole people. I wanted to be doing what I had set out to do as a young man, and the natural consequence was to fully invest myself again in the life of the Sword of the Spirit.

For over 16 years now, I've been part of Antioch, a member community of the Sword of the Spirit in London, and I experience the same rich life that was such a delight to me (and opportunity for personal growth) in the early days in Ann Arbor – a common way of life, a common understanding of how to live for Christ with my brothers and sisters, a common mission to be something for him in the world today. I don't experience this as particularly easy and I don't think most of the brothers and sisters in London do either. It's a stretch almost every day, a walk of faith in the Living God. But I'm pleased to be traveling this road and thankful to the Lord for his faithfulness to his word. He who invited us to this life together is faithful, and he is bringing about what he promised. Even now we see it growing and maturing from those first commitments we made in our youth. One thinks of mustard seeds. May all the glory go to him.

[Bob Bell is a member of the [Antioch Community](#) in London, UK.]

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Giving Thanks with a Grateful Heart

By Nancy L. Murphy

I believe that God works with us wherever we are. And he achieves his purposes no matter what our circumstances, our challenges, or our human abilities or tendencies.

God's plan is always the right plan. When he acts, whatever he does, it is for the benefit of his people, even if the events themselves do not seem to be all that advantageous at first glance. When he speaks, it is to our benefit to hear him and take to heart his words.

Throughout the years of living in Christian covenant community, I have seen time and again how God protects those who rely upon him; and how he is always faithful to sustain and help in every need.

From the time I began attending prayer group meetings in 1969 in the basement of St. Mary's Newman Center in Ann Arbor until the present, I have experienced the Lord's nudging to know him more and more deeply. I have learned that these "Holy Spirit impulses" are his way of encouraging me to serve him, both in logical, easily discernable ways, as well as ways that have seemed to stretch me beyond my "comfort zone."

As I was a University of Michigan music student when I first attended prayer meetings, it was somewhat logical that I became part of the community's music group at its very beginning.

Now, 40 years later, I would have to say that he continues to provide new and astounding grace for my service to him. I continue to participate in the music ministry at our local community gatherings. And he has led me to seek his graces along several other pathways: I have sung regularly at my church for the past 30 years; I have provided administrative support for 20 years at my husband's entrepreneurial business; and I have participated for many years in several extra-community activities, e.g. attendance at a local bible study group as well as involvement in the local chapter of an international music fraternity.

Through all of these ways, I have experienced God inspiring me to understand that, as I serve others with mercy and love, I am serving him.

God calls us, his people, to be a light to the nations and to hold out to others his word of truth. I've

experienced him strengthening and encouraging me along some of the unlikeliest of ways; yet, when I see that others have experienced his mercy and kindness through me, it is clear that he has orchestrated these events and opportunities.

Being in Christian covenant community has enabled me to know God and follow him in ways that I never would have done without this environment, and I'm deeply grateful.

[Nancy and her husband Michael are a members of [Word of Life Community](#) in Ann Arbor, Michigan]

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Reflections from Founding Members of Covenant Community

These reflections are written by members of the Sword of the Spirit who were there from the beginnings in 1970 and have lived for 40 years in covenant community:

- [A Work of the Spirit: New Forms of Christian Living](#), by Steve Clark
- [Our Beginnings in Covenant Community](#), by Bruce Yocum
- [A Prophetic Sign of Restoration](#), by Don Schwager
- [Counter-Cultural in a Non-Christian World](#), by Tom and Ellen Gryniec
- [Transgenerational - Youb Bet!](#) by Van and Janet Vandagriff
- [Being Rooted Together in God's Word](#), by Jeanne Kun
- [Calling Out the Best in Us in Christ](#), by Bob Bell
- [Putting God at the Center](#), by Sue Cummins
- [The Servants of the Word, a lay brotherhood in community](#) by Dick LaCroix
- [Giving Thanks with a Grateful Heart](#), by Nancy Murphy

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The Servants of the Word in Covenant Community

The early beginnings of a lay ecumenical brotherhood of men
living single for the Lord in community

By Dick LaCroix

As a young teenager I unmistakably felt God's call on my life, and although I strayed away from God's ways in my late teens, it all came back together when I was baptized in the Spirit in the fall of 1969. It was as though God said, "Okay, you're done fooling around, I hope? So, where were we..." Once again I was awed by God's majesty, humbled by his merciful love, thrilled by his invitation to come follow him.

So it was very natural that at the age of 22, for me to consider the call to live single for the Lord with 10 other young men who were also being drawn in the same way to a life of prayer, service, and common life. The brotherhood was formed in the fall of 1971. In January of 1976 we sensed the Lord leading us to choose the name The Servants of the Word. Ecumenical from the beginning, it was very clear to us that the Lord was doing something new among us, and that it was intricately tied to what he was doing in raising up covenant community. When a number of communities from around the world joined together to form the Sword of the Spirit in 1981, it then became possible for men from different countries to come together as one brotherhood. Today we have 60 brothers living in eight households in five countries in Sword of the Spirit communities.

In 1975 God spoke powerfully to a community of communities conference, "You are a bulwark that I have set up to stem the onslaught of the enemy; you are a part and not the whole; you are my servants and my people." The men in the brotherhood are honored to have received our unique call to live single for the Lord in the midst of many brothers and sisters who have chosen to live their married life as radically and single-heartedly as we live out our own call. Our call as The Servants of the Word is to be a witness to the kingdom that is to come, but we draw great strength from the witness of our married brothers and sisters whose hearts are also set on that kingdom.

As for me, after 40 years, my conviction of God's call has deepened, not lessened. The importance and urgency of that call has become more real, not less. I look forward with great hope to pressing on toward the upward of call of God in Christ Jesus.

[Dick LaCroix is a member of [The Servants of the Word](#) and [Word of Life Community](#) in Ann Arbor, Michigan]

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