

SERVING JESUS  
AMONG THE POOREST OF THE POOR

# THE CRY FOR HUMILITY

THE CRY: AN ADVOCACY JOURNAL OF WORD MADE FLESH SPRING 2007 – VOL. 13, NO. 1



## WMF LIFESTYLE CELEBRATIONS

### INTIMACY

We celebrate intimacy with Jesus to be our highest calling and created purpose.

### OBEDIENCE

We celebrate total obedience, which intimacy demands. Our obedience is our response and responsibility to the grace of Jesus.

### HUMILITY

We celebrate humility before God and humanity.

### COMMUNITY

We celebrate community with each other because in community, we find the greatest potential for discipleship, service and growth.

### SERVICE

We celebrate service, which fulfills our fellowship.

### SIMPLICITY

We celebrate simplicity as our privilege in identification with Jesus and the poor.

### SUBMISSION

We celebrate submission to Christ Jesus and each other as a visible sign of our humility.

### BROKENNESS

We celebrate our own brokenness as our responsibility in ministry among the broken.

### SUFFERING

We celebrate suffering as part of a willing sacrifice in serving Jesus among the poor.

*The theme of each issue of "The Cry" is based on one of nine WMF Lifestyle Celebrations. In this issue, we focus on the topic of HUMILITY.*

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR: from daphne eck

# Enter the Worship Circle

We recently purchased a prayer rug for our chapel at the Omaha office. The rug is red shag and is rolled out under an altar of candles. An icon of the San Damiano cross is hung on the brick wall above the candles. When our community meets for prayer, we take our shoes off before stepping onto the rug, not only to keep it clean from winter snow and salt, but because we have set apart the space within the rug's hem as sacred.

Sitting together on that rug, our community has some of its most vulnerable, real, truthful conversations and prayers. It's where we sit low, look inward, listen, worship, intercede and confess. Only the safety that community provides allows the rug to be a place of humility rather than a humiliating experience of exposing all your "stuff." In this "low place," as Gautam Rai calls it (p. 8), we discover and rediscover the prayers the Holy Spirit is praying; our prayers join those age-old ones, and flow outward into action in the moment. Today.

Lately I've been listening to *Enter the Worship Circle* (Aaron Strumpel, Chair and Microphone; Vol. 2). I own quite a few of the worship series but must admit that I've never actually considered the name of the albums until now: *Enter the Worship Circle*. It's an imperative call to worship – a command to step in, sit in an empty space and join a song that's already being sung.

Jubilee Sunday was January 21; it was also a snow day here in Omaha. Jara (WMF staff) and I met up in my warm apartment and read about the jubilee in Leviticus 25 and in Luke 4 where Jesus read the scroll in the synagogue and said those shocking words: "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." We shared communion with thankful, redeemed hearts and united our hearts with all the millions who were also partaking of Christ's blood and body. We said a prayer for the redemption of the debts of the poorest nations. Churches everywhere prayed a similar prayer. These kinds of opportunities allow us to join in unity with other believers and

celebrate something bigger than ourselves. This type of prayer involves deep listening, hearing the groans of the Holy Spirit and joining in the movement of God with others who have also heard the prayer.

Every day, WMF has many prayer and financial needs, which we invite you to join in so that God can continue the work he began in WMF more than 15 years ago. Many of the opportunities to enter in can be found within the photos and articles in *The Cry*. More can be found on our website at [www.wordmadeflesh.com/support](http://www.wordmadeflesh.com/support). I also urge you to participate in the Worldwide Weekend of Prayer for Children at Risk (*See the back page for more information or go to www.viva.org*). These are all opportunities to enter in to unique and unified movements.

Emily Timm's article about humility as opposed to heroism (p. 4) indicates that the prayer rug and the worship circle are not for people who want to be heroes. I've attempted to keep Emily's words in mind as our team has edited this issue. I hope you, the reader, will do the same as you journey through its pages. Entering the worship circle means letting go of a desire to go solo, be significant, relevant or history-making. It means joining an ancient prayer and entering into on-going action, something even as old as Torah's jubilee. It means becoming participants, not just readers, in an epic Story. It probably won't make us heroes. But it will make us true worshippers. So this is your call to prayer – your invitation to take your shoes off, step across the hem, get low and enter the worship circle. ■



**New!** You can now subscribe to **WMF podcasts**. Podcasts include messages from WMF staff and board members and speakers at Beggars Society meetings.

Check out them out on our homepage: [www.wordmadeflesh.com](http://www.wordmadeflesh.com).

## COVER PHOTO

Stephanie McGuire took the cover photo while participating on a Servant Team in Freetown, Sierra Leone. The image is of two children who are friends of WMF. They are also the cousins of one of the boys who is a part of the Lighthouse education and discipleship program for youth.

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Editor: Daphne Eck  
Associate Editor: Chris Heuertz  
Assistant Editors: Jara Sturdivant, Mandy Mowers  
Design: Jara Sturdivant

Editorial Committee:  
Brent Anderson, Andrea Baker, Clint Baldwin,  
Brook Birch, Caron Easley, Adriana Forcatto, Walter Forcatto, Sonya Gray, Steve Hill, Kristin Keen, Sarah Kim, Monica Klepac, Brian Langley, Rachel Langley, Mandy Mowers, Matt Neher, Rebecca Nichols, Rob O'Callaghan, Jenna Pashley, Christine Pohl, Angelene Samuel, Maggie Schroeder, Cami Sigler, Cara Strauss, Rachel Simons, Amanda Timm.

*The Cry* is an advocacy publication of Word Made Flesh. In addition to serving Jesus among the poor through ministries of compassion and proclamation of the Good News, Word Made Flesh is committed to serving the church as a prophetic voice for the poor. We strive for *The Cry* to be a voice to the church, articulating the cry of the poor for God and the cry of God for the poor.

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# Staff Profiles

## TIM and AMY HUPE



Photo: Helen Hupe

Amy grew up in a Christian family with four brothers and one sister in Waltham, MA. She accepted Jesus as a young child and grew up in the church. During her teen and early college years, Amy's heart strayed, but various events, including a soccer injury, led her to times of solitude when she could refocus and hear God. One of those times was spent in Lima, Peru, on a Servant Team with WMF. There, God both reclaimed her life and passion for Him and planted in her heart a passion for service overseas, specifically among women trafficked into sexual slavery.

Tim was raised in a Christian family in Natick, MA, attending church every Sunday and youth group on Wednesdays. As he grew older and matured, his maturity in Christ also grew. Tim always knew that he would follow God down a path paved for him, but he never thought he would be asked to follow Him down the "not so easy path." Tim and Amy met in high school and remained just friends until their college years. They then began dating and married in 2002. Shortly after they married, they made a visit to Peru together. There, Tim began to sense a call to serve among the poor, but he wasn't yet ready to travel down this path.

In 2005, Amy and Tim did a three-month internship with WMF in Asia, spending time in India, Nepal and Thailand. While Tim was overseas and faced with the reality of the poor, he allowed God to speak and change his heart. At that point, Tim realized he did want to live his life for God, even if it meant to walk down that "not so easy path."

They are now living in Massachusetts, while Amy finishes her master's degree in counseling at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Amy also works as a rape crisis counselor, and Tim works at a local restaurant. The Hupes will move to Bangkok, Thailand, this year, where they will serve as Servant Team Coordinators.

## ELIANA CARRILLO TOLEDO

Eliana Carrillo Toledo is 56 years old and was born in the province of Tartagal, Argentina. When she was 18 years old, she met a friend who invited her to work as a waitress in Bolivia. A need to escape family problems led Eliana to accept the offer. However, this "friend" had lied and tricked her; in reality she had been hired to work in a cabaret, where she was forced to begin a life of prostitution. Two years later, she met the man who would be the father of her children, and Edwin and Elizabeth were born. Sadly, her children were taken away from her when they were very young.

Later she moved to La Paz and continued working in the brothels where she met Andy Baker. She was afraid to get to know this *gringuito* (white guy), but the other girls told her that he was a friend who wanted to help. Knowing her need to change, she decided to go to *La Casa de Esperanza* with a friend to look for work. She was received with open arms and soon began the new life that she so greatly desired. She began working in *La Casa de Esperanza* as the housekeeper.

During that time, the Bakers invited Eliana to participate in their church, which she enjoyed very much. Although she did not know how to read the Bible, she was able to hear the Word in the services (she has since learned to read the Scriptures for herself!). In September 2005 she was baptized, and that confirmed her decision of faith in her Lord. She counts this as the most important decision of her life. Upon baptism, she took her new name, "Eliana," to symbolize her rebirth. Her desire is to continue serving and praying for her friends who prostitute, with the wisdom of her Lord.



Eliana dancing with Heather Goertzen

Photo: Cara Strauss

## JOSHUA and ROBIN FOWLER

Robin grew up in Crawfordsville, IN, nourished by the love of her parents, two younger brothers and a church that encouraged her in the Christian faith. After high school, she traveled with her youth group to Honduras, where she met for the first time a child living on the streets. She felt the Lord reminding her, "To whom much is given, much is required." She explored her growing desire to serve among the poor during her college years at Indiana Wesleyan, where she studied nursing. In the fall of 2004, she participated on a Servant Team to Galati, Romania.



Photo: Jana Shurdivant

Joshua grew up in Logansport, IN, in a Christian home with loving parents and two older sisters and surrounded by amazing friends. He remembers praying to Jesus at a young age, yet it wasn't until late high school that he began to truly commit his life to Christ. He began to read theology books and to see more of God's heart for the world. After high school he attended Indiana Wesleyan University, where he studied intercultural studies and writing. There, through mentors and books, he began to sense Christ's call to serve among the poor.

Joshua and Robin were married in July 2005 and lived in Marion, IN, finishing college. Robin began working as a nurse at a local hospital, and Joshua worked at a local retail store. They also enjoyed gardening, reading books and living life with their good friends. In the spring of 2006, they journeyed together to Galati for an internship to discern if that was where God might be leading them. They joined the WMF community in October 2006. In February they moved to Galati, where Joshua is the Servant Team Coordinator and Robin serves as Field Staff.

ON HUMILITY:

# Heroism vs. Humility

by emily timm

“A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, ‘Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly.’ Jesus did not answer a word. So His disciples came to Him and urged Him, ‘Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us.’ He answered, ‘I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.’ The woman came and knelt before Him. ‘Lord, help me!’ she said. He replied, ‘It is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to the dogs.’ ‘Yes it is, Lord,’ she said. ‘Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master’s table.’ Then Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted’” (Matthew 15:22-28).

I must admit that I would have fit right in with the confused bunch of disciples who were always asking Jesus to explain His parables. I even wrote in my journal about this passage and confessed that it did not make any sense to me. Why would Jesus call this woman a dog and then moments later commend her great faith and heal her daughter?

The problem is that the idea of humility is still somewhat foreign to me. I attended a very competitive high school and come from a fairly competitive family. We all did well in school. I usually feel pretty good about myself for my achievements and have proudly accepted all the praise that my grades have earned me.

In church we used to sing a song with a line in it that said, “I’m going to be a history maker.” This line was the high point of the song, when the guitar went the loudest and the most passion was required. I thought the song was cheesy then, and definitely misinterpreted the message; but somewhere deep inside, maybe a little unconsciously, I took it as my life’s theme song. I was willing to do anything for God, with



Two of the young women who participate in the WMF Peru community programs

the one condition that it would be something truly great.

Last summer I went on my first WMF field visit, along with my friend and co-worker Jara Sturdivant, to Peru and Bolivia. I had studied Spanish all through high school and college, and was confident in my communication skills. One night in Peru we joined the community to visit the streets. Jara and I were standing together, and 18-year-old Ana came up to talk. She began asking questions about where we were from, how long we were staying and what we thought of Peru. All of these questions were directed to Jara, but after a week of traveling I had gotten used to translating for Jara, and like an annoying person at a party I arrogantly began to answer the questions myself. I did not even notice my rudeness in “heroically” taking over the conversation. Ana turned, looked at me and simply said, “I was asking her, not you.”

I laugh at myself now. At that moment, all my Spanish skills meant nothing. This girl did not care that I could speak well or use the correct tense and pronunciation to respond to her questions. I stood there with all my pride emptied out onto the street. I was not doing anything great; all I was doing was standing there embarrassed.

I quietly listened to the rest of the conversation.

Ana asked Jara to ask her questions. Jara asked the “polite” questions: favorite food, favorite color, what she liked to do. “Ask me

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Emily Timm serves in the Omaha office. She is completing her final semester of classes at the University of Nebraska at Omaha before student teaching. Her quick, dry wit keeps everyone in the office entertained.

Photo: Jara Sturdivant

# ON HUMILITY: Sheku's Humility

by faye yu

Our Lighthouse boys remember the days when they lived on the street and had to fend for themselves. We go on walking tours of Freetown with many of our visitors and the boys serve as our guides, taking us through some of the burned-out, condemned buildings where they used to live. When we go with them to the busier parts of town, one boy walks in front and another behind, like bodyguards protecting us and our things from some of their “friends” who steal in that area. Our boys know all the tricks and are observant of the things around them.

Now our boys are learning to be carpenters and tailors. They can walk with their heads held high; they are not *alaki* (Krio swear word meaning “good for nothing”) like so many people call them, but dearly loved princes of their Papa God. They are designing beautiful clothes, bags and blankets from fabric, and crafting doors, tables and crosses out of wooden boards. They are little creators, living out their *imago dei*, the creator image of God in them. Isn't He pleased! I love seeing the look of pride on their faces as they show me one of their new creations, the grins that stretch from ear to ear as the other kids strain to get a look.

However, some people still see them as *alaki* street kids. During a Lighthouse meeting a couple of months ago, the manager of one of the offices in our building came in, furious. He told us that one of our kids had urinated outside his office, and he demanded one of them go clean it up. When I asked him how he knew that it was one of our kids, he laughed at me and said I don't know anything about the character of street kids. When I asked the boys about it, they all denied responsibility. The man did not believe them. The kids were angry and humiliated about being blamed for something they didn't do, and the manager was unyielding in his demand for someone to clean up the urine.

As the tension escalated, I didn't know what to do. If I asked our boys to clean the mess, it would be like siding with the manager. However, not doing it could create problems with the hall usage. Sheku, one of the young men who is involved in our tailoring apprenticeship program, overheard our conversation and asked where the mess was. He quietly told the manager that he would go clean it up. Both the manager and I stood stunned at the humility he displayed. The tone of the manager softened as he began to see our kids in a different light – no longer as *alaki* street kids, but human like himself. In that one act, Sheku restored the Lighthouse boys' humanity – he became the bridge over the gulf of mistrust that existed between the “saints” and “sinners.”

How do we react when we are being humiliated and when our right to be treated as human is being robbed from us?

“In your relationships with one another, have the same attitude of mind Christ Jesus had: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to His own advantage; rather, He made Himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness” (Philippians 2:5-7).

Jesus asks us to leave our “rights” and our desire to be understood when we have been misunderstood; He asks us to leave our positions of privilege, comfort and power for a place that seems like a waste and foolishness to our friends and family. Taking on the attitude of Christ is an enormous challenge. But in doing so, humility becomes more than a lofty ideal; it becomes flesh in the upside-down kingdom of our Lord Jesus.

As we enter into the season of Easter, when our Lord Jesus exhibited humility in the face



Photo: Cami Sigler

*Sheku lived on the streets from age 7 until he joined the Lighthouse program at 13. Now he is a talented tailor. He likes to draw and loves to dance. Although he's never attended school, he taught himself to read Krio.*

of false accusation and humiliation, we are reminded that our Lord asks of us humility not just because we shouldn't think too highly of ourselves, but because humility is His posture and He asks us to imitate Him. James 4:6 says that God resists the proud and gives His grace to the humble. As humility was a bridge over the gulf of mistrust between the office manager and Lighthouse, so, too, is humility a bridge for us, a bridge between God and us, a bridge to receive grace and faith from our Father. Can we depart from the lofty ideals of humility and become the radical embodiment of the humility of God's kingdom? ■



Photo: Cami Sigler

*Faye Yu serves in Freetown, Sierra Leone. She enjoys air-conditioning, quiet evenings, Mom's Chinese food and being clean – all rare treats these days.*

ON HUMILITY:

# Look Toward Him and Be Radiant

by joel klepac

“**B**eauty crowds me till I die.  
Beauty, mercy have on me!  
But if I expire today,  
Let it be in sight of thee.”  
- Emily Dickinson

While traveling, we missed the planting season for our flower garden. The fall before, Monica had put some sunflower seeds out in the garden for the birds. To our surprise, upon returning home to Romania with our new baby boy, we had a strong new sunflower stalk climbing its way past the other weeds and marigolds. The rest of the year I have occasionally meditated on the sunflower as I drew and painted in my studio, which looks out onto the garden that is squeezed between the end of our house and the neighbor's fence.

I watched the sunflower's great yellow head grow. It quickly stretched up toward the sun until its own weight turned its head to the ground in a graceful curve, the bowed head of a knight receiving his commission from a king, or the head of Christ no longer lifting the thorns, hanging limp from the cross.

*she dropped her seeds  
redemptive bombs  
to lie dormant  
under winter*

*slowly entering  
dark soil cocoon  
awaiting night  
time to grow*

- Poem from Oct. 13, 2006



By experiencing something transcendent, we willingly step aside and stand in awe of something else for a moment – our attention is momentarily diverted from our own drives, our passions, our self-interested pursuits.

In her book *On Beauty and Being Just*, Elaine Scarry challenges us to see that when we experience beauty we are “de self-centered.”<sup>1</sup> By experiencing something transcendent, we willingly step aside and stand in awe of something else for a moment – our attention is momentarily diverted from our own drives, our passions, our self-interested pursuits.

When we behold something beautiful, we are glad to step aside, to be quiet, to give the beautiful subject our voluntary allegiance. It is the love-struck boy who abandons all common sense for the new girl, or the parents who, at the

sight of their newborn child, suddenly find that all their plans and ambitions can surely wait a while to make room for this beautiful new person. It is Alyosha from *The Brothers Karamazov* who, in the revelation of the beauty of every atom of the world, is ready to lay down his life for any piece of that world that might require it. It is our response to the revelation of the beauty of the cross, grace descending from heaven, gently curving to the ground offering life through Jesus' own death. Moments of experiencing beauty evoke this kind of willing “step aside” response. As in the movie *The Princess Bride*, we suddenly find ourselves saying, “As you wish.”

*(continued on next page)*

## LOOK TOWARD HIM AND BE RADIANT

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Scarry argues that this “de self-centering” naturally leads to becoming more just. I agree, and I see this basic movement caused by the experience of beauty and humility as another basic necessity for the realization of justice in the world.

St. George the Dragon Slayer is depicted in icons and religious images as a knight riding on a white horse, slaying a snake-like dragon with a long, spaghetti-thin spear. Though in the icons he is depicted as a soldier, it is likely that his armor makes visible his spiritual armor, and his thin spear represents his power to defeat spiritual enemies through prayer.

A Romanian friend shared with me her understanding of the story of St. George. In her version, St. George was a great warrior, fighting for the emperor, leading armies in conquering one people after another. That went on until Christ revealed Himself to St. George. In the

days that followed, St. George came to believe that the demons he had been fighting on the battlefield were in fact demons that needed to be exorcised from within himself. He could, therefore, no longer kill, realizing that the true enemy lies within.

St. George was taken before the emperor to account for his choice to no longer go to battle. St. George described his majestic revelation of Christ – his new King – and the discovery of the true enemy being the demons we must fight within ourselves.



Oil Painting, Joel Klepac

The emperor ordered St. George's death by beheading. The emperor's wife descended from her seat next to the emperor, stood next to St. George, and said that she now believed in Christ as well and that if St. George should be beheaded, so should she.

Unlike the movies full of slick getaways, St. George and the emperor's wife were beheaded. Their heads tumbled down into the grave, two more sunflower seeds willingly planted in the dark soil to await resurrection. Two more sunflowers gladly bowed their necks before the executioner's blade, to be set aside so that Christ, the beauty they beheld, could be reflected. Though details may vary, St. George's death is a life-giving witness to this willingness to be set aside, to be “de self-centered” by the majestic beauty of Christ.

*the sunflower has grown  
old leaves warped  
bloated, head cast down  
cloves that held up wide*

*yellow masses now thorns  
towards the ground  
crowning the massive head  
what pride what arrogance  
high, bright, bigger than all  
flowers plants wide veins  
pumping water to the  
shower head spraying yellow*

*your seeds are bird eaten  
your petals ground under  
with the grand show over  
closed eyes and deep bow*

*you turned the sun to seed  
who shall find you guilty  
of ego pride and greed  
you poured out all you could gather*

*your power not wasted in you  
but carries life through winter  
into the next year, the next life  
another day for extending us into the sun*  
- Poem from Sept. 5, 2006

In the sunflower, as in the life of Christ and its reflection in the lives of saints, we are challenged to a different kind

of humility: to experience a radiant revelation of the beauty of Christ, of creation, of our neighbor, of the poor, of every atom of God's creation. With this revelation we make the love-sick resolve to be set aside, to live and die for another, to be turned into seed for another generation. May we together joyfully stretch toward the sun, become so full of seed for the next generation, that we gracefully and with great gratitude, bow our heads in humility and let the seed fall. “Look towards Him and be radiant” (Psalm 33:6).<sup>2</sup> ■

### ENDNOTES:

<sup>1</sup> See Elaine Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

<sup>2</sup> See *The Psalms: A New Translation – Singing Version*. (England: The Grail, 1963; Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press) 66.

**Paintings (this page):** Joel started these six-foot oil paintings with blind contour sketches on unstretched canvas. The blind contour drawings were done while observing the sunflowers outside his studio window.

To view the paintings in full-color, as well as more artistic reflections from Joel Klepac and others in the WMF community, please visit:  
<http://artincommunityamongthepoor.blogspot.com>



Oil Painting, Joel Klepac



Photo: Sandy Mills

Joel Klepac, his wife, Monica, and children, Simeon and Abram, serve among marginalized children and families in Galati, Romania.

# ON HUMILITY: Humility Lived Out

by gautam rai

I struggle with understanding the meaning of humility. Humility is so hard to see here in Nepal, a country where caste and class are still realities, where everyone is trying to get ahead of someone else – anyone else, just as long as they aren't at the bottom.

I read Matthew 23:12 in English: "For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted." But it was from our Nepali Bible that I began to understand what humility really means. That same verse reads, "Whoever willingly puts themselves in the low place for the sake of others will be lifted up, but whoever lives to lift themselves up will be humiliated." That was something I could understand better than its English equivalent. And it was something I have seen with my own eyes – something I am in the process of learning for myself.

I have had the privilege of being involved with WMF since 1998. Since that time, I have seen humility lived out in so many ways. Who would know just by spending time with him that David Chronic (WMF Europe/Africa Regional Coordinator) has a mind like he does? He should be a high-ranking professor somewhere, but he does not choose to take that kind of place or bring any attention to himself. Chris Heuertz is another example of humility. When he comes to visit, no one believes that he is our International Director. His appearance is not that of someone of his authority, rank and responsibility. Rather, it's an appearance of approachability. My children don't think of him as Daddy's boss. Instead, they get excited about his visits because one of their uncles is visiting.

And Kara, Brook, Maggie and the Wests (WMF Nepal staff) are here as family members and friends. They are unlike so many foreigners,

who come to visit Nepal wanting to see the Himalayas and visit the temples. Those people come for themselves and leave as soon as they tire of the scenery. My friends, however, are here to give life – to give their lives.

By position, so many of my friends in WMF should be living differently, dressing differently, acting differently. But it's not so. I have access to some of the most important people in my community because they choose to be available to me. This is the meaning of willingly putting themselves in the low place for the sake of others.

Being involved in children's ministry is another area where I see the meaning of and need for humility every day. Whatever you do or say will be caught in their little minds. And sometimes it comes back to haunt you! Children mirror our behavior and actions better than any tape recorder ever could. Here is where humility is essential as a daily practice. I can't say or do whatever I want just because I am a parent. Sometimes it hurts to hear myself in my kids' voices. And it takes humility to go back, admit I was wrong and make it right.

I also have learned that children have a great deal to offer us. I see humility in my two newest



*The children of Karuna Ghar (Home of Compassion) in their school uniforms. Children in Nepal start school at age 2!*

Photo: Gautam Rai

daughters, Parbati and Sri Devi. When they first came to live with us a few months ago, they were overcome with fear and anxiety, so much that I may never know what had affected their hearts before coming to live with us. But their childlike hearts were perfect to receive the love and constant nurturing in our home. And the result is that they have grown in self-confidence and assurance that they are loved. They are like little flowers. When they came to us, their blossoms were wrapped up tight and beginning to wilt. But now they are in full bloom, and our home is filled with their sweet aroma. It took

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Photo: Chris Heuertz

*Gautam Rai is the Director of Karuna Ghar and chairperson of the WMF Nepal board of directors. Most importantly, he is husband to Rekha and father to the eight children at Karuna Ghar. Before he became a Christian and started working with WMF, Gautam and Rekha owned a "momo" (Tibetan dumplings) shop. Gautam still enjoys cooking momos for WMF guests to Nepal.*

## ON HUMILITY: Childlike Humility

by patrick samuel

**W**hat is so special about humility? Humility is the basis of Christian living as revealed through the life of our Lord Jesus Christ during His earthly ministry as he “made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant” (Philippians 2:7-8). Moreover, the Lord Jesus taught His disciples about the requirement of humility when they were engaged in argument and rivalry among themselves. To illustrate, Jesus held a child in His arms and said, “Therefore, whoever takes a humble place – becoming like this child – is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven” (Matthew 18:4).

The aspiration of the disciples to find out who would be the greatest in heaven was answered by Jesus looking at the life of a child (Matthew 18:3). Jesus longs for humility to be present in our lives, the same humility that is evident in the lives of children. No doubt childlike humility is special, and that is the reason the Lord asks it of His disciples. It is because of humility that children, even when being punished, never brood like adults. After being punished, our children in the Home of Happiness quickly forget their punishment and easily approach me, enjoying friendship and renewed fellowship with me. Only when we become like children can we exhibit this kind of humility – the humility the disciples were missing when they were arguing, which led to rivalry. We must decide: will humility or rivalry be the controlling factor in our lives?

The humility of our childhood is soon overshadowed. Few adults naturally possess humility; hence, the Apostle Peter insists that we need to be clothed anew with humility. Humility is like a garment to be put on with the help of the Lord when we commit our lives to Him. For it is stated:

“... clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, ‘God opposes the proud but

shows favor to the humble and oppressed.’ Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time.” (1 Peter 5:5-6)

Likewise, the Apostle Paul spoke with the church elders of Ephesus just before meeting with humiliating experiences for the sake of the Gospel and the consequent imprisonment for years on end. He said:

“You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia. I served the Lord with great humility and with tears and in the midst of severe testing ...” (Acts 20:18-19)

Paul’s words emphasize the need for humility in our lives today – living with humility is basic for followers of Christ.

In 1 Samuel 10:20-22, King Saul began his career as king as a good example of humility. When the Prophet Samuel cast lots to discern who would be king, Saul, with all humility, withdrew from the crowd and hid himself. When the final lot fell on Saul, he was too humble to take up the coveted post of kingship. Perhaps he realized his own inadequacy at the beginning.

In our day, we are familiar with the saying, “It’s not the entry but the exit which counts.” The word of God also says that “the end of a matter is better than its beginning” (Ecclesiastes 7:8). Saul’s beginning was admirable, but what happened later? Was he not a failure because he gave way to self-will and disobedience?



Photo: Chris Heuertz

*One of the children of the Chennai Home of Happiness on the day of the new home’s dedication. Many thanks to all who helped to make the children’s wonderful new home a reality.*

How about us today? As children, each of us exhibited a natural humility and simplicity of spirit. As we grow to adulthood, we lose some of the natural humility of childhood. But, as we grow in faith, we can become more childlike each day. Let us grow in humility and childlike faith, growing into the good work He has begun in us (Philippians 1:6). ■



Photo: Chris Heuertz

*Patrick Samuel is the Director of Children’s Ministry for WMF Chennai. He and his wife, Victoria, operate the Home of Happiness in Chennai, India, where they are parents to 37 children. Patrick has a special and unique love for each child in the home.*

# Country Updates

## OMAHA, NE U.S.A.

### NOVEMBER

- The Omaha staff take a retreat in Nebraska City.
- Hilary Wilken (Community Care Intern) begins serving in the Omaha office.
- Nov. 17, Joe and Mindy Eichorn's (Sierra Leone staff) first child, Natalie, is born in Orlando, FL.

### DECEMBER

- The Kolkata staff take a retreat in Omaha, NE, with the time focused on team-building and prayer.
- Chris Heuertz speaks at Taylor University for World AIDS Day (Dec. 1).
- Chris Heuertz, Jara Sturdivant, Sarah Kim and Cesia Gonzalez attend Urbana Missions Conference in St. Louis, MO.
- InterVarsity Press approves Chris Heuertz's book proposal. Congratulations, Chris!

### JANUARY

- Chris and Phileena Heuertz travel to Atlanta, GA, where Chris speaks at the Passion Conference.
- Chris speaks at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, TN.
- Chris and Phileena speak at the George Fox University Missions Conference in Portland, OR.

## EL ALTO, BOLIVIA

### NOVEMBER

- Heather and Wes Goertzen return to Bolivia after their honeymoon and have a Bolivian ceremony with the community on Lake Titicaca.
- The Bolivian Servant Team joins the Lima team for a retreat on the Bolivian/Peruvian border. The Lima team then visits El Alto.
- Andy and Andrea Baker take emergency medical leave for their son, Luke. Luke is stabilized at Boston Medical Center. The Bakers move to Kentucky for a leave of absence. Please pray for the Bakers during this time.
- Former WMF staff Mark Menjivar and wife Rachel visit and bless the Bolivian community.

### DECEMBER

- The fall Servant Team returns to the U.S.
- One hundred women and their children attend the Christmas party at *La Casa de Esperanza*.
- Workers and volunteers from *La Casa de Esperanza* sing carols in 14 El Alto brothels on Christmas Eve.

### JANUARY

- *La Casa de Esperanza* staff participate in 2007 ministry planning meetings.
- Erica Guyton arrives for a four-month internship.

## LIMA, PERU

### NOVEMBER

- An important member of the Peru community, Sebastian Sevilla Ruiz, was mistakenly left out of the winter issue's World Map. Sebastian serves as the volunteer coordinator. Please pray for the tenuous financial situation regarding his support.
- Craig Curell, Peru staff since 2002, completes his term and returns to the U.S. to wed Jennifer Green (also former Peru staff).
- Linsey Higgins begins six weeks of intense language study in Arequipa, Peru.



Sebastian Sevilla Ruiz,  
Peru Volunteer Coordinator

### DECEMBER

- Natalia Marie is adopted into the family of Brian, Rachel and Isabel Langley. After Natalia's birth May 1, in Iquitos, Peru, the Langleys first meet her Dec. 11 and take her home the following week.
- The Servant Team organizes and leads a day outing with the group of 11- to 17-year-olds who are part of WMF Peru's adolescent ministry.
- Peru staff, Servant Team and volunteers, along with Mustard Seed ministry, celebrate Christmas together at the CMA church with 140 children and young people.
- The fall Servant Team returns home after four months of service.
- Chris Heuertz and Sarah Kim visit Lima to discuss the International Partnership Platform with the Peru staff and board.



Natalia Langley and her daddy

### JANUARY

- South America Regional Coordinators Walter and Adriana Forcatto visit Lima.

## RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL

### NOVEMBER

- *Projeto Vidinha* kids work on supporter Christmas letters and crafts.
- Glouciette (friend of WMF and mother on the streets) gives birth to Lindieira.
- David Bayne (intern and US board member) leads a retreat with reflections on consolation and desolation.
- WMF staff go on several small field trips around the city with the children from the *Projeto Vidinha* home, which offers a chance to give more personal attention to each child.

### DECEMBER

- Diana (street mother) gives birth to Mirelle.
- WMF staff and 80 children attend a Christmas party that ends with everyone standing at the place drugs are sold, singing "Silent Night."
- Ben and Rich take eight street kids to the movies and give them small gifts to celebrate Christmas.

### JANUARY

- Dande Cohen begins employment with WMF Brazil as the community's first Brazilian staff member.
- WMF Brazil begins the search for a building where they can open a center to care for mothers on the street. Please pray that God would lead.

## BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA

### NOVEMBER

- The Bible study in the Forcattos' home takes a break during the summer. Please pray that more youth from the streets will attend in 2007.

### DECEMBER

- Dec. 5, Amani Maria is born to Walter, Adriana and Cora Forcatto.
- The Forcattos and friends from their church have a Christmas party with friends who live on the street.



Amani Forcatto with her "papi"

### JANUARY

- Several youth and two volunteers come to church for an afternoon of games and friendship building.

## GALATI. ROMANIA

### NOVEMBER

- Frank and Ann Summers from Wolverhampton, England, donate their time and electrical skills to install a new electrical system in the office and attic area. Joel Hanson volunteers as an English teacher for kids and staff.
- The staff share at Maranatha Brethren Church about the activities of Cuvantul Intrupat (WMF Romania) through song, audiovisual presentation and a sermon by David Chronic.

### DECEMBER

- The staff of WMF Romania have their annual Christmas party, with the ever-surprising gift exchange.
- The schoolchildren put on a Christmas show for parents and teachers. Through poetry, skits and songs, they share the joy of Christ's birth. They also present to their parents gifts they bought by working at the Community Center.
- A special Christmas party is thrown for young men living on the streets that includes T-shirt painting, food, games and the story of Christ's birth.
- The schoolchildren and staff go caroling for two nights at homes of their families and supporters in the community.
- On Christmas night, the community celebrates with an all-night party, complete with songs, games, good food, gifts and movies.
- Erin Osner, former Peace Corps worker, comes to volunteer three months of her time at the Community Center.

### JANUARY

- As of Jan. 1, Romania is officially a part of the European Union. Please pray for the changes this means for Romania and that the benefits of the EU would reach the poor also.
- WMF Romania's website is launched! [www.wmfromania.com](http://www.wmfromania.com)
- Fanel Ursachescu makes a two-year covenant with the Romania community.

## FREETOWN. SIERRA LEONE

### NOVEMBER

- Cami, Faye and the Servant Team take a retreat at Otamba-Kilimi National Park in northern Sierra Leone.

### DECEMBER

- WMF and the Lighthouse youth throw a Christmas party for more than 200 kids who live in Kroo Bay.
- The youth from Lighthouse attend camp.
- Cami and Faye throw a goodbye party for the Servant Team. The party is attended by over 50 friends.
- Faye and the Servant Team take a three-day debriefing retreat to prepare the team members to return to the U.S.
- The fall Servant Team is completed.
- WMF staff and volunteers create new rules and consequences for the Lighthouse youth, then discuss them with the families and guardians of the youth. WMF also shares rice and food assistance with those present.
- Cami and Faye take a three-day retreat to evaluate their time in Freetown and to plan for the future of the field. Please pray for this small community.

### JANUARY

- The first Servant Team made up of entirely Sierra Leoneans begins.
- David Bayne (WMF USA board member) visits Freetown.
- One of the youth is removed from the Lighthouse program because of continued misbehavior.
- Jan. 25, the Eichorns end their staff contract while on maternity/paternity leave in the U.S.

## KATHMANDU. NEPAL

### NOVEMBER

- Nov. 1, "Jose" Raju Thapa, friend of WMF Nepal staff, dies at the age of 37 from complications because of IV drug use.
- Nov. 27, Gopi Krishna Khatri, friend of WMF Nepal staff, dies at the age of 21 from complications because of IV drug use.

### DECEMBER

- Dec. 4, fellowship among young men addicted to IV drugs begins again in Thamel. Within one month, 12 boys accept Jesus as their Savior!
- Dec. 13, the fall Servant Team is completed.
- Dec. 18, the *Prem Ghar* (Home of Love) home for elderly women celebrates its six-year anniversary.

### JANUARY

- Jan. 27, Margaret Wachsmuth's two-year term with WMF is completed.

## CHENNAI & KOLKATA. INDIA

### NOVEMBER

- Sari Bari moves into a new business location, allowing them to employ more women – a huge answer to prayer! The new space has three large rooms and storage space, and is near the women's homes.
- Silas West (Asia Regional Coordinator) makes a field visit to Kolkata.

### DECEMBER

- The WMF Chennai Christmas program takes place Dec. 9, with the children from both the Home of Happiness and Home of Peace participating enthusiastically.
- While Sarah and Kristin are in the U.S. on holiday, the Indian staff run the day-to-day operations of WMF Kolkata and do a wonderful job.



*The WMF Chennai Christmas program*

### JANUARY

- Jan. 27, the much-awaited building dedication of the Chennai Home of Happiness takes place. Chris and Phileena Heuertz visit from the U.S. to attend.
- The children of the Home of Happiness attend a camp organized by Child Evangelism Fellowship. Of the children attending, 24 dedicate their lives to full-time ministry. It is a blessing to see them growing in the Lord, and we appreciate your prayers for them.
- After leaving Sari Bari to work in prostitution in Bombay, "Asa" has returned to Kolkata! She is living with a woman from church and is back sewing blankets.
- WMF Kolkata staff help a young woman from Sonagachi leave the sex trade. It is always more challenging for the younger women to escape the trade; please pray for her!
- Sari Bari begins interviews to hire seven more women and develops a comprehensive six-month training program that includes literacy, basic math skills, counseling, budgeting and team-building.
- The community joyfully welcomes Beth Waterman (Servant Team Coordinator) to Kolkata.

ON HUMILITY:

# A Foundation of Christ

by brook birch

When I read 1 John 3:16, “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for one another,” I feel eager to do just this. I treasure the privilege I’ve had to watch lives redeemed and strongholds of sin, addiction, violence and hate crumble. Even more precious are the people freed from these strongholds: my brothers in Kathmandu, the boys from the streets of Thamel who have captured my heart. However, recently I’ve been reminded that even more important than my heart overflowing with love for the people that God has called me to serve among in Nepal is my heart overflowing with love for Christ *Himself*.

In 2003, I took part in the Servant Team program with Word Made Flesh in Nepal. I was changed in many ways and loved my Servant Team experience, but I returned home without a burden for the people. I had experienced a burden for a people group before in my life, but I just did not have that for the people of Nepal. When I returned to the U.S., I tucked away all the experiences from that time in the deepest part of my heart, wondering what God had in store for me next.

Within two months, a stirring had begun again, and I knew that God was revealing to me His plan. Everything in my mind told me that, in order to be overseas serving God, I needed to be burdened in my heart for the people. But within my heart I began to feel a call to trust simply in my love for Jesus, and nothing else. It was a desire to step out in faith in a way I had never experienced and to follow not my emotions in regards to a people, but to simply obey the voice of the Lord.

I returned to Nepal determined to be faithful to the stirring in my heart, yet still unable to feel connected to the Nepali people themselves. I began working with young men who use IV drugs



*The young men of Kripaa Sadhan (Home of Mercy) in Kathmandu, Nepal. These men have found freedom from drugs in Christ.*

in a part of Kathmandu called Thamel. I drank tea with them, and I talked. I spoke about Jesus, and they didn’t listen. I ran around the city day in and day out, and I began to wonder why. Did I miss the call? Was I in the right place? Was my love for Jesus really enough to make a difference?

And then one day it happened. Everything changed. After nine months of fighting, pressing in and building relationships with the boys, I found myself standing alone one night on my rooftop. I was listening to music under the stars, thinking about these boys and about what I could possibly do that would ever make a difference in their lives. It wasn’t my first time on that rooftop. In fact, it was the same as almost every other night I spent there. But as I began to pray, my heart caught fire. The desire in my heart for them to be set free was so strong I felt a physical pain inside of me. I was flat on my face weeping before the Lord, crying out for the lives of my

precious brothers, when I realized it. They had become precious to me! I had pressed into the secret places of the Lord’s heart, and He had been faithful to fill my heart with His love for them. I watched through the next year as one after another of the boys gave their lives to Jesus, leaving behind their lives of drugs and addiction on the streets.

However, as long as there are people coming to Christ, there are still more waiting in line. When one of my brothers gets clean and is set free, I

**(continued on page 18)**



Photo: Carol Birch

*Brook Birch lives in Kathmandu, Nepal, where she serves at Kripaa Sadhan (Home of Mercy), a rehabilitation home for men. Brook has a passionate love for God and deep longing for freedom and healing to those addicted to drugs. Brook is also well-known as a lover of her coffee and her computer.*

# ON HUMILITY: No Other Name

by cara strauss

**E**lisa was the first girl I tried to save.

I met her during my first visit to El Alto's red-light district. It was a frigid night, as always. There were hundreds of men milling in and out of each dark brothel, as always. As always, they stared the girls up and down like cattle. And as always, the girls stood in their doorways, looking defiant or nervous or bored, but never happy.

This was my first visit, though, and everything was an ugly novelty. Every woman's sad, dazed or insolent face added to the knot in my stomach. All I wanted to do was make these women smile, or laugh – anything to take their minds off of what they were doing. So, as I nervously handed hot chocolate to each, I tried to joke in my broken Spanish and invite them to our center, *La Casa de Esperanza*, where they could share lunch with us.

That first night I met Elisa. She looked nervous. She was young. And she broke my heart when she told me her story.

Her father, she told me, had abused her and her 12-year-old sister. When they ran away from home to escape him, Elisa couldn't find work. She started prostituting to feed her sister.

"Now I work so my sister can eat and go to school," she told me. "As soon as she graduates, she can get a job, and I can stop working."

"How old are you?" I asked. "I'm 18," she said, looking at the floor. I didn't believe her. In Bolivia, prostitution is legal at 18. But she didn't seem more than 16.

I asked her how long she'd been working. "A week."

I suddenly felt nauseous. A week? I couldn't think straight in Spanish anymore. I hugged her quickly and left the brothel, doubting the sovereignty of the God who had left her there with no way out.

I wanted to save her. This beautiful, illiterate, broken girl was selling her body so that her sister would never have to. I wanted to take her and her sister each by the hand and run away from this dirty city. I wanted to run them a hot bubble bath, wrap them in flannel nightgowns, and make popcorn for us. I yearned to have been there a week ago, to snatch her from the grime of the brothel before she knew the horror and pain caused by the drunken men who paid for her. I wanted to be her salvation. And I did not understand why God had not let me save her.

Elisa soon became my favorite sight in the red-light district. She would break into a smile when I walked into her brothel. We would share a dinner of flavorless hot dogs in the dull red brothel light while she motioned men away. She began coming to literacy classes at our center. She enrolled in a beauty school.

But I never saved her. She is still prostituting. All my fumbling efforts to rescue her have come



*A woman of El Alto*

to nothing. Though it is difficult, I am slowly realizing that I am not called to save Elisa. If I had been called to save her, I failed.

But I am not her salvation. I am no one's salvation. I can do no more than I was asked to do. I was called to show her my Lord, who can and does save. Elisa's salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given by which we must be saved. ■

*Elisa's name has been changed to protect her privacy.*



*Photo: Jara Sturdvant*

*Cara Strauss is the Servant Team Coordinator in Bolivia. She loves the Bolivian mountains and plans to climb all six Andean peaks that are over 6,000 meters (19,600 feet) high.*

## A REFLECTION: Pop Christianity

by rich nichols

The sun was setting over the aqueducts of Lapa. We had already been in the park for several hours with our friends on the streets, so we began to say our goodbyes for the night. As we headed to the bus stop, Tiago, one of the street kids, came running up to us – eager for us to stay a little longer. “Come on, come on, I need to show you this,” he said. So we followed him over to a little corner snack shop where he showed us the music machine. He convinced us to shell out one *real* (Brazilian currency), so we put the money into the jukebox. The television screen showed a foggy dark alley, and then all of a sudden we heard the familiar tune, “So just beat it, beat it, beat it, beat it.” Michael Jackson is still the “King of Pop” in Brazil.

As I watched the video, I thought about how easy it is for people to be consumed with popular culture. Twenty years ago, Jackson idealized what was popular and represented the modern culture. We who follow Jesus don’t fall for the “King of Pop,” but we sometimes succumb to a type of “Pop Christianity.” Pop Christianity is expressed in the religion of superficial Christians, who see Christianity more as a social club than a revolutionary affront to the world. It is the blending of what a society desires as convenient, fun and worldly while wrapping it in cellophane faith. It is the expression of common or default Christianity.

This brings a real and dangerous threat to the Gospel, because it creates its own theology and behavioral beliefs apart from the Gospel. We are raised in a society where Christianity is the cultural norm while the faith that Christ taught and modeled is frequently ignored. Christ taught about difficulty, sacrifice and often suffering. Although the early church grew in an environment of poverty, imprisonment and martyrdom, today we live in a culture of WWJD



The WMF Rio staff (here, Ben Miller, Rich and Rebecca Nichols) can often be found playing dominoes, coloring and hanging around in the parks and plazas with their friends.

Photo: Laura Igram

bracelets and fish bumper stickers. We use these trinkets to demonstrate our faith. It is easier to be identified as a follower of Christ because of a T-shirt, bracelet or tattoo than because of our joy of life, our love for others or our caring for the poor and marginalized. We have seen true, sacrificial, life-transforming faith exchanged for a cheap brand of materialistic, “happy” Christendom.

Writing at a time when most of his fellow Christians in Germany had declared loyalty to Hitler, Dietrich Bonhoeffer addresses this topic of shallow Christianity in *The Cost of Discipleship*. He writes, “Cheap grace is the deadly enemy of our Church.” “Cheap grace, therefore, amounts to a denial of the living Word of God, in fact, a denial of the Incarnation of the Word of God.”<sup>1</sup> When our belief in Christ becomes nothing more than a reciting of words and shallow acknowledgement of Christ’s gift, the church will begin to decay. The living,

breathing Word of God announces a Gospel that dwells among the people and opens us up to relationship. Bonhoeffer continues to argue that cheap grace is a simple belief in God and acceptance of forgiveness while lacking any life transformation. This is a denial of what Christ offers and intends for each of our lives.

Members of the early church were faced with many questions as they set out to be followers of Christ. They knew Jesus as Lord but then were asking the questions, “What does it mean to be a follower of Christ?” and “How do Christians live?” These questions were asked by people living in a pagan land. The 21st-century version of the question might state, “How do I set myself apart from the world and follow Christ when church and society have become so woven together?” James 2:17 states, “... faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.” James responds to these questions, writing, “Religion that God our  
**(continued on next page)**

## POP CHRISTIANITY

(continued from previous page)

Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world” (1:27). We cannot simply hear the Word and ignore it. We have been commissioned to challenge this world with values and actions that mirror the Kingdom of God.

Most of us can quote John 3:16. We memorize it, we hear sermons on it, and we even see it at ball games. In a conversation Jesus had with Nicodemus, He offers us the core doctrine of Christianity. He says we must be born again, believe in Christ as the Son of God, and accept that He died for our sins. This, however, is but one glimpse into the beauty of the whole Gospel. What about the dozens of teachings and parables in which Christ speaks on other topics? Jesus teaches that the path to heaven is not easily obtained. He says that the path is narrow, and few will pass through (Matthew 7:14). He instructs us not to hinder the little ones from coming to Him (Luke 18:16). He says sell all your possessions and give all that you have to the poor (Matthew 19:21). If you are mistreated, turn the other cheek. Don't simply love your friend, but also your enemy (Luke 6:27-36). Love the one who begs, steals, murders and the prostitutes. The teachings of Christ were revolutionary 2,000

years ago, and they are just as extreme today.

These teachings have drawn us into ministry in Rio de Janeiro and our decision to live in a *favela* (slum). As we looked around the city of Rio, we asked ourselves, “Where is oppression the greatest, and where does God desire to move in a mighty way?” In being faithful to that call, we moved into a *favela* in Rio and began working with kids in the downtown area. These communities represent an oppressive world the light of Christ desires to break into. The children of the streets come from these communities and from varied backgrounds and situations. Some are orphans, some have been abandoned, some kicked out and some have run away from horrible homes.

Sadly, the world often looks at my friends as dirty and ugly. I don't always understand the things they do; yet in their hurting, there is hope, and in their brokenness, I see beauty. In Matthew 5:3, Jesus says, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.” I see the Kingdom of God at work each day in them. I watch Juan get up to help an elderly man up and cross over a cracked sidewalk, then refuse to accept money for it. I watch Adriana, who has nothing and has been given nothing by her parents, raise and care for her four girls. I see Jose's tears break through his hardened exterior as he talks about his mother's death and his father's jailing and the life they dealt him.

What did Jesus bring to His ministry here on earth? It wasn't His money, connections or academic degrees. He brought words of encouragement, a healing hand, a meal around the table and the love of a friend. Jesus could have been a distant chairman or begun some far-reaching development project to tackle the world's injustices. But He didn't. Instead, He became the intimate friend, radically offering the way and solution to end our world's injustices. His solution: relational love.



The kids and staff at the Projeto Vidinha children's home in Rio de Janeiro

Photo: David Bayne

Jesus calls us to be radically different. We must ask ourselves this question, “How differently do I live from my neighbor?” Jesus says that few will pass through the gates of heaven. If our actions mirror those of the world, the non-Christian, then maybe we need to rethink the life we are living. Christ asks us to boldly, radically enter this world and bring about transformation for His Kingdom. God empowers us to take the risks and imagine a life sold out to sacrificial discipleship.

In *The Irresistible Revolution*, Shane Claiborne writes, “For us, belief is only the beginning. What really matters is how we live, how what we believe gets fleshed out.”<sup>2</sup> As we take the teachings of Christ and the words of the Gospel, how will we breathe life into these ancient manuscripts? Do we desire to be controlled by this culture, which tells us who we are as Christians, or do we strive to be obedient to the pure message of Good News? Let us choose a faith that is not polluted by this world but seeks the least of these, announcing a message of hope and a spirit of action. ■

*The children's names were changed to protect their privacy.*

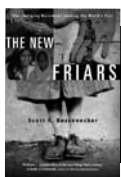
### ENDNOTES:

<sup>1</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (St. Mary's Plain, Norwich, UK: SCM-Canterbury Press Ltd., 1959) ch. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Shane Claiborne, *The Irresistible Revolution* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006) 147-148.

*Rich Nichols (pictured above, upper left) and his wife Rebecca (and baby Anna) serve as Brazil's Field Directors. They have lived in Rio de Janeiro for three years. Rich is a huge fan of all that is Sylvester Stallone and is getting geared up about the sixth Rocky movie, which hasn't been released in Brazil yet.*

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# What Do We Mean by ‘Prophetic’?

**POSITION PAPERS:** “Position Papers” do not necessarily represent the opinions of the entire WMF community, but seek to articulate alternative positions on issues of mission and spirituality. These positions find their basis in the WMF identity statements (preamble, philosophy of ministry, lifestyle celebrations and vision statement) as well as in the commitment to living out these statements in practical application.

by chris heuertz and sarah kim

In the WMF vision statement, we collectively commit to serving Jesus among the poorest of the poor. This calling is realized in being a holistic, incarnational community among the poor as well as a prophetic community for the poor. In previous Position Papers we have explored what we mean by “poverty,” “holistic,” “incarnational” and “community.” So, what do we mean by “prophetic”?

## THE NEED FOR UNDERSTANDING

Depending on differing faith traditions, the term prophetic may evoke a variety of meanings and concepts for different people. In WMF, “prophetic” is understood through the lens of the historic prophets from the Scriptures. WMF can only qualify as a prophetic community for the poor as we reflect the examples lived out by the biblical prophets.

The prophetic is naturally drawn from what was embodied by the original prophets. “What Do We Mean By ‘Prophetic’” is a two-part WMF Position Paper that seeks to establish and support a biblical understanding of the prophetic by identifying contemporary deformations<sup>1</sup> in order to construct a biblical prophetic paradigm. The multifaceted character of the biblical prophets according to their office, nature, function, role and message informs this biblical prophetic paradigm.

## NAMING CONTEMPORARY DEFORMATIONS

There is a crisis in our contemporary understanding of the prophetic. Go to most Western Christian bookstores, and you will be

bombarded by countless titles from individuals claiming to have a prophetic message or a handle on explaining prophecy. Competing extremes claim that the prophetic is either something very propitious in a constructive and mystical way, qualified by the supernatural and miraculous, or that the prophetic is something very grave and ominous with a harsh message and merciless tone. This crisis has precipitated deformations that have led to great confusion regarding the prophetic.

Contemporary deformations of the prophetic are polarized between the liberal and the conservative, perpetuating stereotypes that caricature prophetic ministries as either overly social or hyper-personal. On one hand, a liberal deformation of the prophetic focuses solely on political- and justice-related concerns, suggesting that a social reading of the gospel and its subsequent application are signs of prophetic ministry. On the other hand, a conservative deformation of the prophetic is often future-oriented, attempting to speculate on answers and explanations to existing prophecies as well as making claims and predictions about new prophecies. The conservative deformation also has a tendency to become very esoteric and

over-individualized, demanding special attention from God.

These liberal and conservative deformations of the prophetic are further aggravated when the prophetic lacks submission to the rest of the ministry gifts<sup>2</sup> of the church. In Ephesians 4:11-12, Paul lists the offices or ministry giftings that are dispersed to help build up the church. In many settings, one of these five ministry giftings is leveraged against the others, setting it above the rest as if we are able to suggest a hierarchy within the list. When the prophetic is assumed to be the most important or trumps the impact and influence of the other ministry giftings, a new deformation takes place. The prophetic is merely one gift among a community of gifts that are dependent upon each other for the completion of the body.

Another common deformation is the perception that one can participate in a prophetic ministry from outside a worshipping community. It is often the case that individuals who perceive themselves and their ministry as prophetic

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Sarah Kim, Chris Heuertz and Rachelle Serlet make up the Office of the Director for WMF USA.

Chris Heuertz (center) is the Executive Director of WMF and resides in Omaha, NE, when he's not traveling and speaking. This year Chris sealed a book deal with InterVarsity Press and is soon going to be writing up a storm.

Sarah Kim (left) is the International Partnership Coordinator and Assistant to the Director. She is full of life and is one of the few people in Omaha who can keep pace with Chris!

Rachelle Serlet (right) is the Secretary to the Office of the Director. Chris and Sarah insist that they're just trying to keep pace with her.

## WHAT DO WE MEAN BY 'PROPHETIC'?

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lack the credibility of being an integral part of a worshipping community. This deformation assumes that one can volley prophetic messages into a worshipping community from the periphery. This often occurs when a worshipping community rejects a prophetic gifting or message, thereby pushing the prophetic presence from the center. However, the biblical model of the prophet was one who remained within the worshipping community – at times even going into exile with them.

Finally, a predictive element of things relating to prophecy is often assumed when speaking of the prophetic. Though this is one element historically related to the biblical prophets, the qualifying term “prophetic” speaks to a greater gifting and calling than merely speaking and interpreting prophecies. In fact, if the prophetic were to only apply to predictive abilities, then most “modern prophets” would have been stoned under the laws of the Old Testament for their inaccuracy. Sadly, future-telling, prophecy-explaining “modern prophets” give themselves license to get their own prophecies wrong from time to time<sup>3</sup>, leading many in the church to become rightfully skeptical and weary of such prophetic mishandlings.

### CONSTRUCTING A PROPHETIC PARADIGM

In WMF, our attempts to cultivate the prophetic do not merely seek to deconstruct contemporary deformations, but hope to build up a biblical alternative to these contemporary misunderstandings. Further, rather than suggesting a disembodied conceptual understanding of the prophetic, it is necessary to live into a reality that is guided by the biblical prophets.

Biblical scholar Irving Jensen suggests that though the prophet was “a combination preacher, herald, teacher, spokesman, intercessor, reformer, and even shepherd (Isaiah 40:1-2),” the prophet was also “the moral conscience of the people, exposing and rebuking their sins (Isaiah 58:1; Ezekiel 22:2; 43:10; Micah 3:8).”<sup>4</sup> We draw our understanding of the prophetic from the biblical texts and biblical prophets. Avoiding a fragmented and caricatured view of the prophets, we integrate the office, function, nature, role and message

of the prophets in an effort to extrapolate our understanding of the prophetic.

This composite understanding demonstrates the prophetic and offers a holistic view of the complex tensions that are held together by the prophets. Here we will seek to hold in tension writings on the prophetic from both the Protestant Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann and the Jewish Rabbi Abraham J. Heschel to work out the implications of a Judeo-Christian prophetic understanding.

In his groundbreaking work *The Prophetic Imagination*, Brueggemann postulates that the task of the prophet is simultaneously to criticize *and* energize while working toward the formation of a new community. He writes, “The task of prophetic ministry is to nurture, nourish, and evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us.”<sup>5</sup>

Brueggemann suggests that the prophet should not only criticize social and spiritual shortcomings, but also energize people with the hope that alternatives are possible: “Prophetic ministry seeks to penetrate despair so that new futures can be believed in and embraced by us.”<sup>6</sup>

In the introduction to his work *The Prophets*, Heschel states, “The prophet was an individual who said no to his society, condemning its habits and assumptions, its complacency, waywardness, and syncretism. He was often compelled to proclaim the very opposite of what his heart expected. His fundamental objective was to reconcile man and God.”<sup>7</sup>

Reconciliation, bringing humanity back into right standing with God, is ultimately the purpose of the biblical prophets. We find in even a cursory reading of Scripture that God called forth prophets when His people had simultaneously turned their back on Him and the poor. The task of the prophet was then to criticize the spiritual and social fallout of this turning as well as to energize the hopeful reconciliation and restoration of God's people.

In recent history, the martyred Archbishop Oscar Romero illustrated this beautifully and tragically.

Archbishop Romero fought to reconcile the church with the poor. In 1977, Oscar Arnulfo Romero became an unthreatening choice to be the Archbishop of San Salvador. An oligarchy of 14 families controlled El Salvador, owning nearly two-thirds of the nation's arable land. Through a series of stifling laws and systemic repression, the landless poor of El Salvador were routinely detained, tortured and executed. An academic who was uncomfortable challenging the status quo, Romero dutifully went about his clerical responsibilities. Not until two of his friends, also priests, were assassinated by the government did Romero have a conversion to the poor as a symbol of his desire to see true reconciliation take place.

In one of his many passionate pastoral addresses, Romero stated, “To the oligarchy, I repeat what I said before: Do not look on me as a judge or an enemy. I am only the shepherd, the brother, the friend of this people, the one who knows of their suffering, of their hunger, of their affliction. In the name of their voices, I raise my own to say: Do not make idols of your riches; do not preserve them in a way that lets others die of hunger. One must share in order to be happy.”<sup>8</sup> In yet another address, he said, “The church is calling to sanity, to understanding, to love. It does not believe in violent solutions. The church believes in only one violence, that of Christ, who was nailed to the cross. That is how today's gospel reading shows Him, taking upon Himself all the violence of hatred and misunderstanding, so that we humans might forgive one another, love one another, feel ourselves brothers and sisters.”<sup>9</sup>

Prophetic proclamations bolstered by his simplicity and solidarity with the poor are what ultimately led to Romero's assassination. But even in the face of death, Romero kept his hope on the promise that God's purposes for humanity could be realized – a hope that many dismissed as impossible. His hope was purely an imagination of what could be. As Brueggemann writes, “The prophet does not ask if the vision can be implemented, for questions of implementation are of no consequence until the vision can be imagined. The *imagination* must come before the *implementation*.”<sup>10</sup> Oscar Romero was shot and killed on March 24, 1980,

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**A FOUNDATION OF CHRIST**  
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step outside my door to find another one hungry, alone and hurting. Recently that one happened to be my brother Jose. Jose had been hardened from many years of addiction and loneliness. As much as we pressed in to love Jose, Satan fought back and pulled him down, until one day it appeared that Jose was losing the fight.

Fellow staff member Kara DeBruyn and I found Jose very sick and in need of hospital care. But as soon as we got him checked in, I came down with pneumonia. Everything in me wanted to run to the hospital and serve him and to help ease the burden on my community of being on watch in the hospital, but I was physically exhausted. I didn't know what to do. I wanted to run straight into the battle with them, but I could not!

A day went by, and then three, and I was still too weak to step in. I prayed and asked God to heal my body so that I could get back to work. His reply was not what I was expecting. He said no. I was not to serve. I was not to stand beside my brother during his suffering. I was to sit and be with Jesus. My eyes were opened to see that my own heart had become so involved in my ministry that I had neglected my own precious relationship with my Savior. For the next week, I did nothing but intercede from my bedroom.

Every time I asked the Lord for permission to go back out and serve, I received the same reply, a simple no. I knew that my only command for that time was to sit in the presence of God. I was reminded that God loves to see us fight for His beloved poor. His heart bursts with joy to see us pursuing them in His love, but the moment that those things take priority over Him, all of our efforts come to nothing. Jesus died for me. He died for my brothers. I love to pour out my life as an offering on behalf of them. But God was asking me that week to simply remember that more important than anything I could ever do with my hands was to love Him first and foremost with my whole heart.

The next week our friend and brother Jose went home to be with Jesus. His last moments on earth were filled with peace, tears and a sense of love and belonging that he had not experienced in nearly two decades of life on the street. I am so thankful that I had the privilege of walking beside him on earth. And I am even more thankful that I will be rejoicing with him for an eternity in heaven. My prayer now is that I will be constantly reminded that my job is simply to love Jesus, and from that place flows the transforming love that has the power to change lives. "We love because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). ■

**HUMILITY LIVED OUT**  
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humility for them to trust us and receive from us just like it takes humility for me to be vulnerable with others, and honest about myself and my faults. But the fruit of it is incredibly rewarding.

I recently had an opportunity to practice humility in the aftermath of a traumatic bus accident. My friend and co-worker Top Magar and I were returning to Kathmandu with his new bride when our bus' steering column broke, leaving our driver with no way to control his speeding bus. We rolled over and struck a tree. The driver was killed. Top and his wife were injured badly. But I was physically fine. Once we got them situated in the hospital, I began to think of home. Others around me suggested I go home. They said, "Why carry this tension of staying to care for them on your head? Let their own families come and care for them. You don't have to do this."

"Yeah," I said. "I have my own family to think about." But then I remembered that I have chosen to live by the law of love, which dictates that I willingly put myself in the low place for the sake of others. I will never regret my decision to stay with my friends.

I am grateful for these lessons in humility. My children, my co-workers, even my own weak opportunities to let Christ's law of love shine through my life, have all brought me closer to God. I know that I have come so far. To God be the glory. ■

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## WHAT DO WE MEAN BY 'PROPHETIC'?

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while celebrating the Eucharist.<sup>11</sup> His death is a witness to Christians everywhere of a prophetic hope in the body and blood of Christ.

"Hope is the refusal to accept the reading of reality which is the majority opinion; and one does that only at great political and existential risk," Brueggemann writes. "On the other hand, hope is subversive, for it limits the grandiose pretension of the present, daring to announce that the present to which we have all made commitments is now called into question."<sup>12</sup>

In the face of death, disobedience and disunity among humanity and with God, the prophetic finds its integrity and authenticity from within the worshipping community of God. The prophetic must remain connected to the living body of Christ as a reminder of the presence of Jesus within the message of the prophet. This solidarity is a sign and symbol of the love that drives all things prophetic. It also validates the truth that "The prophet does not scold or reprimand. The prophet brings to public expression the dread of endings, the collapse of our self-madness, the barriers

and pecking orders that secure us at each other's expense, and the fearful practice of eating off the table of a hungry brother or sister."<sup>13</sup> Thus, the prophet is a truth-teller, demonstrating God's love for all humanity.

This compels us in WMF to keep the imagination provoked and hopeful. This reality and calling, grounded in our solidarity with the oppressed and our commitment to the church, provides the framework for our service with and among the poor to be hopeful and simultaneously remain prophetic. As Brueggemann writes, "It is the vocation of the prophet to keep alive the ministry of imagination, to keep on conjuring and proposing alternative futures."<sup>14</sup>

With these affirmations and assumptions stated, the second part of this paper will dig into the biblical text. We will demonstrate how the historical office, function, nature, role and message of the biblical prophets further inform and define what WMF means by "prophetic." ■

## ENDNOTES:

<sup>1</sup> Deformation as not simply a misunderstanding but, simultaneously, a perversion of expression.

<sup>2</sup> The five offices or gifts Paul lists in Ephesians 4:11-12 (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers) are here referred to as "ministry gifts."

<sup>3</sup> Rick Joyner's book, *The Prophetic Ministry*, dismisses this concern by questioning the worthiness of prophetic utterances in the section, "What About Mistakes?" by stating, "While I hope there will ultimately be a prophetic ministry raised up in the church with 100% accuracy, at the present time the only people I know who may claim 100% accuracy have never made a significant prediction worthy of a prophet." (Charlotte: MorningStar, 1997) 29.

<sup>4</sup> Irving L. Jensen, *Minor Prophets of Israel* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1975) 7.

<sup>5</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001) 13.

<sup>6</sup> Brueggemann 111.

<sup>7</sup> Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001) page xiii.

<sup>8</sup> Address given on January 6, 1980. Oscar Romero, *The Violence of Love* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988) 180.

<sup>9</sup> Address given on November 20, 1977. Romero 10.

<sup>10</sup> Brueggemann 45.

<sup>11</sup> *Oscar Romero: Reflections on His Life and Writings*, by Marie Dennis, Renny Golden and Scott Wright, is one of the most accessible accounts of the life and ministry of Romero. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2000).

<sup>12</sup> Brueggemann 67.

<sup>13</sup> Brueggemann 50.

<sup>14</sup> Brueggemann 45.

## HEROISM VS. HUMILITY

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why I am on the streets," she said. Jara asked. "Because of problems at home, because I use drugs and because I prostitute," she responded.

In WMF, we often say that the poor are our teachers. They are the ones who can show us the way to God's heart. In her way, Ana taught me what it means to be humble. Her answer shocked me, even though I knew all of those things about her. In the kingdom of heroism, shameful things are always hidden. In the Kingdom of God it is the humble – those who are willing to let all of who they are show and lay down their lives at the feet of Jesus – who will be lifted up.

Returning to the passage in Matthew, I try to make sense of Jesus' words to the Canaanite woman. The previous chapter is the story of one of the numerous times that the Pharisees, who thought they were the greatest, tried to catch

Jesus and the disciples not following the rules. So Jesus left and went to the land of the Gentiles, and along came this woman, a Canaanite – the ones who were the previous inhabitants of the Promised Land, the ones with whom God commanded the Israelites not intermarry. She begged for help, and at first Jesus did not answer her. She continued to ask, and He answered her in the way that puzzled me so much, "It is not right to throw the children's bread to the dogs." The woman knew she was not an Israelite. But, as John Wesley writes, she referred to Him as the Son of David and realized that He was the Messiah. She knew who He was more than the Pharisees did.<sup>1</sup> My sister-in-law offered this insight, "Perhaps Jesus was calling her out on what she thought of herself, what the disciples thought of her and what society thought of her." In a posture of complete humility, the woman answered, "Even the dogs eat the crumbs that are tossed from their master's table." Jesus accepted her humility and healed her daughter.

Humility is not about serving that deep selfish desire to be a hero – to do something spectacular. Instead, it is coming to Jesus as the Canaanite woman did, with great faith and great humility. Over the past two years of working with Word Made Flesh, I have let go of much of my desire to be a hero and have found Jesus in the small things. I still desire to be an instrument, a tool in God's hands, but all that I thought that meant is changed through the lens of humility. It is praying for and working with the poor, knowing that my actions alone will never be enough to repair the state of poverty in the world. It is calling out to Christ as one who is not great, but broken and desperate for my Father to have compassion and hear my cries. ■

*Ana's name was changed to protect her privacy.*

## ENDNOTES:

<sup>1</sup> <http://bible.crosswalk.com/Commentaries/WesleysExplanatoryNotes>

JUNE 2-3, 2007

# World Weekend of Prayer for Children at Risk



Photo: Brook Birn

This is "Samuel," the son of one of the men of the Home of Mercy (WMF Nepal rehabilitation home for men). Samuel was born HIV positive and addicted to heroin. Now he's living and thriving at the Home of Mercy with his dad. Please pray for Samuel and children like him on the World Weekend of Prayer for Children at Risk.

Arise, cry out in the night, as the watches of the night begin; pour out your heart like water in the presence of the Lord. Lift up your hands to Him for the lives of your children, who faint from hunger at every street corner.

- Lamentations 2:19

Children are among the most vulnerable victims of poverty. Considering the great need for prayer, we encourage you to take part in the World Weekend of Prayer for Children at Risk. This prayer weekend is celebrated around the world; it will take place June 2-3 this year.

Each year at the WMF Romania community center, the staff organize a day of prayer for the children. Every child receives a "passport," complete with stamps, and "travels" to other WMF countries of service. At each station, they learn about a different country and pray for the kids who live there. Costumes, music, art and ethnic foods to taste help make it a fun and interactive experience.

We hope this example inspires you to consider attending or hosting your own prayer event. Invite kids and adults from your church, community and neighborhood to intercede on behalf of at-risk children. You can focus on prayer for one child, like Samuel (pictured left), on a country, or on a specific issue that affects children. Educate yourself about the needs. You can find a prayer event near you or obtain resources to hold your own event at [www.viva.org](http://www.viva.org). ■

*Samuel's name was changed to protect his privacy.*



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