



GREEN COUNTRY WALK TO EMMAUS

November - December 2014 Newsletter

From your Community Lay Director,

Greetings fellow Fourth Day travelers! What a joy it was once again to see the Body of Christ in action as we prepared for, and held, Walks 163 and 164. I'm reminded of the scripture in 1 Corinthians that says "... the many parts make up only one body." Each set of Walks takes many parts of the Body of Christ working together to bring the pilgrims to the closer realization of God's love for them. Is there anything better than seeing the faces of those to whom that realization has come? What a privilege to be able to experience this as we serve behind the scenes.

I'd like to say THANK YOU to each member of our community who came, prayed, setup, put away, cleaned, washed dishes, brought food, attended candlelight, and other unknown but not un-noticed ways in which Christ's agape love was shared and demonstrated. What a blessing it is to be a blessing.

I'm very excited about the coming year and what 2015 has in store for us. On January 10, Team Orientation for Walks 165 and 166 will be held and the teams for Walks 165 and 166 will gather for the first time. Later that day, our community will gather at 12:30 pm at the Community Food Bank of Eastern Oklahoma for a gathering unlike any we've had before! The following month, in February, our gathering will be hosted by Harvard Avenue Christian Church as we meet in their beautiful new worship center. On February 27-28, we will host a Leadership Development Event for Emmaus communities in Oklahoma. In March, we will gather and once again hold a Community-Wide commissioning service for Teams 165 and 166. In April, Walks 165 and 166 will be held at Bixby United Methodist Church. So, as you can see, there are some great things in store for 2015 ... and we look forward with great anticipation to what the Lord has for us in the new year!

As always, please keep your Emmaus community in your prayers. Our community began 31 years ago with prayer and prayer should still be the foundation in all we put our hands to. James 5:16 tells us "The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective." Let's heed this word as we enter 2015.

In Christ,

Brenda Nickels
Community Lay Director

Website updates!

Have you visited the website lately (www.greencountryemmaus.com)? We strive to keep our website current and up to date so you can find the information you need quickly and easily. We've recently added a section called "Sponsorship" as well as FAQ's (Frequently Asked Questions). If you have suggestions or comments on things you'd like to see but can't find on the website, let us know that too! Look under the Board of Directors tab for contact information. Happy browsing!

Upcoming Gatherings

November Gathering

Saturday, November 8, 2014

6:00 pm - New Pilgrim Orientation (open to all)

7:00 pm - Fellowship (bring a snack to share!)

7:30 pm - Worship (bring a friend!)

Faith United Methodist Church, 7431 E. 91st Street, Tulsa, Oklahoma



Childcare will be provided. Please RSVP by Friday, 11/7/14, with # and ages of children to Kathy Crow at gatherings@greencountryemmaus.com.

JANUARY GATHERING

Saturday, January 10, 2015

12:30 - 4:00 pm

Community Food Bank of Eastern Oklahoma

1304 N. Kenosha Avenue

Tulsa, Oklahoma 74106

Let's begin 2015 with being the hands and feet of Christ through volunteer service at the Food Bank in Tulsa.



Plan to arrive at the Food Bank by 12:30 pm when we will gather and share in a devotion and Holy Communion. At 1:00 we will be dismissed to begin packing Backpacks with food items that will be distributed to area children. Children above the age of 11 are invited to be a part of this gathering and participate in the activity.

Due to space limitations, the Food Bank cannot accommodate more than 60 volunteers packing the Backpacks. HOWEVER, since we HOPE our number of volunteers exceed 60 people, we will have additional activities planned for us at the Food Bank. Those activities will either be an additional food service-related activity directed by the Food Bank OR there will be a giant Agape-Making Party for Walks 165 and 166. Specific information to come as we get closer to January 10.

Mark your calendars and plan now to be a part of this special time.

For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me. Matthew 25:35 ESV

Helping in the Kitchen and with Snacks

Be part of the Kitchen/Snack Team for the next set of Walks to be Held at Bixby United Methodist Church in April 16-19 and April 30-May 3, 2015

Many willing workers step in to help the Kitchen and Snack areas during an Emmaus week-end, and YOU are greatly APPRECIATED!

THANK YOU to ALL of you who came during Walks #163-164 to serve in any capacity!!

In addition to willing workers, a key to success is having a small group of Emmaus members who are committed to organizing food services "behind the scenes". For the Fall Walks, a group of 7 individuals became a team. I am GRATEFUL for their service. We met several times prior to the Walk week-ends to discuss, plan, and coordinate among ourselves and the dining room staff. We did a "walk through" the week-end schedule and the areas of Christ Church we would be using for food preparation and serving. The goal was to be better prepared to meet the needs of the conference room. We found it helpful, so.....

I am looking for volunteers to be on the Kitchen/Snack Team for the Bixby Walks. Please prayerfully consider if you could serve in this way between February and the Bixby Walks. Contact me, Donna Bennett; my information is below.

Do we have any dietitians in the GCWE Community? We are finding more pilgrims have special diets. We are looking for a few members who can help us look at our week-end menu and make adaptations for special diets. Please contact Donna Bennett if you can help.

DeColores,
Donna Bennett,
Board Rep for the Kitchen/Snack Area
d.newby-bennett@cox.net
Cell-918-688-9795

NO December Gathering

Due to the increased activities throughout the month of December, there will not be a regular monthly gathering. May we bring the light and agape love of Christ to all this Christmas season.

And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. Luke 2:10-11 (KJV)



A Long Walk

The following article was written by Sandra Strange
(Piedmont Emmaus Community, Greensboro, North Carolina)
(mother of Susan Ekhoﬀ (Green Country Walk to Emmaus #48)).

This testimony is included in Sandra's soon to be released book titled "The Lamp."

In the fall of --1994 I had the privilege of participating in a spiritual retreat that impacted my life and ushered in a personal revival: *The Walk to Emmaus* (<http://emmaus.upperroom.org>) is a structured seventy-two hour spiritual retreat offered in many areas of the United States as well as internationally. These retreat weekends are generally held in the spring and fall, one for men, and one for women. The purpose of *The Walk to Emmaus* is twofold - to encourage personal, spiritual growth and to return Christians to their local churches better equipped to serve. It is based on the story in Luke 24:13-31. Two disciples were traveling from Jerusalem to the village of Emmaus the day of Jesus' resurrection. As they traveled together, conversing and reasoning about the troubling events of the past week, Jesus joins them. "And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, [Jesus] expounds to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luke 24:27). But they did not recognize Him until hours later when He broke the bread at supper. In the same way those who attend the *Walk to Emmaus* set apart a time to "walk" with Jesus that He may reveal Himself more fully.

My retreat was held one hundred miles away from Danville in an old school building with dormitory rooms, a dining room, and a bookstore - very comfortable surroundings. We were thirty-two women from all over south-central Virginia spending seventy-two hours away from the cares of the world, to be refreshed in the love of Jesus Christ, our Lord. We listened to fifteen teachings given by the clergy and lay members of the leadership team, learning deeper truths of God's grace. New friends were made as we laughed and cried together. We enjoyed good meals, lots of snacks, and sweet fellowship.

For me the most meaningful experience of the retreat was taking Holy Communion. Although I had taken Communion many times as a Christian, it was on the *Walk to Emmaus* that I more fully understood how important this symbolic meal is to Jesus, the Host at table. When I realized how casually I had received the symbols His body and blood, I repented. I now remember the Lord's sacrifice and more fully respect, honor and share in His suffering for sinners like me.

After this rich three-day experience I returned home overflowing with a new awareness of the fullness of God's love, ready to serve Jesus exuberantly. Soon after, I also knew I wanted to serve at upcoming Emmaus retreats, so I sent an application to the Emmaus Community in my area and was selected to serve on the leadership team of the very next walk (spring of 1995). The bimonthly team meetings would mean traveling two hundred miles round trip, but I eagerly committed nonetheless.

At our first training session, as the director outlined the plans and explained the goals of Emmaus, suddenly, I had a brief spiritual vision. This type experience was new to me. In the vision the Lord highlighted a portion of a Sunday morning twenty years before in the summer of 1973, not long after Bill's death and our move back to Danville. I had not thought about this experience in years. I was in church with my daughters, Susan, age 12, and Sandy, age 10. At that time we attended a very formal church. Imagine my surprise, when at the end of the service, the minister

gave an altar call - the first I ever remembered. And then imagine my terror as the Holy Spirit strongly prompted me to respond; I knew without a doubt that I was to go to the altar. My heart was racing as I instructed the girls to wait in our balcony pew until I came back for them. I made myself stand up, walk down the steps to the main level, then travel the length of the formidable aisle to the altar. I was the only one in the congregation who responded.

The vision was fascinating; I saw myself walking down the aisle from the perspective of an observer at the back of the sanctuary. I was wearing a cornflower blue, cotton dress with short sleeves; the skirt was paneled and flared slightly as I walked. I had forgotten all about that dress. I watched myself arrive at the altar, remembering that as I knelt, I had no idea why I was there. At that moment I had no pressing problems - just life in general. Having responded to the Spirit's prompting, I heard nothing from God, so I prayed a brief prayer that His will would be done in my life. Of course I still had to face the long aisle back to my seat with all those curious eyes looking at me. After a few moments the scene in the vision faded and I was aware again of the Emmaus orientation. Then the Holy Spirit spoke, saying, "For this, for the *Walk to Emmaus*, you went to the altar that Sunday."

I was more than overwhelmed by this revelation. I had been chosen for service in the Emmaus movement and accepted the call more than twenty years ago? I was astounded. As if in confirmation I suddenly remembered the gift Susan had sent as a remembrance for my Emmaus retreat several months earlier. It was a hand-made, fabric banner appliquéd with a hen and two chicks (roosters, hens and chicks are Emmaus symbols.) The attached note had read, "For such a time as this." I knew most certainly that I had been called to this very moment and this specific ministry as a sovereign direction for my life.

The vision was a glorious revelation. But what followed was the opposite of my expectations. One of the foundational principles of Emmaus is leadership through anonymous servant hood, offered with humble love. I had always enjoyed serving, but I was about to be deeply immersed in the unwelcome school of true humility. It all began on the day the leadership team received specific assignments for the upcoming retreat. All my Danville friends were given one of the fifteen teachings or decorating the chapel or some other seemingly glamorous job. My assignment was to be separated to the kitchen to prepare snacks for everyone else. What a waste of my people skills and spiritual wisdom! An isolated, insignificant job was certainly not one of the things I wanted to do: I wanted to do something influential. I wanted to be noticed. I mostly wanted to be *needed*. (My reasons for this emotionally depleted state in this season of my life come into the story in my next chapters.)

My disappointment gave the enemy an open place to attack and he came swiftly to insinuate that I had been separated from the rest of the team because I was only of any worth in the kitchen. I tried to resist and put on my best face, but inside I felt left out and unworthy of a speaking part. Wasn't I as spiritual as everyone else? On and on this enemy prompted self-talk went until misery settled in. I did push through enough to do the best job I could, putting extra effort into it, and did not complain aloud, but my heart was not in it.

I served on the leadership team for the next several retreats in the same place of service and crestfallen state of mind. On the third retreat I was assigned a teaching. But after all that longing for the prestige of speaking, it didn't go well; I couldn't seem to pull together the words I wanted

so much to express. I felt ill equipped. Insecure and vulnerable, I didn't ask for help and the whole teaching fell short of my hopes. Now I was more miserable than ever.

Over the next several years I was assigned more teachings, but felt I never "performed" well. I knew something was wrong but had no idea what it was. I don't remember reaching out to friends, or even asking Jesus for help. I think I was in a season of self-sufficiency and making do - and it wasn't working. Eventually, I gave up on my goal to dazzle and settled in to do the best I could. This forlorn plodding went on and on.

It took many years, but one day I realized that I had learned to graciously serve no matter what the assignment and here was the key: As I rested in the Lord's affection for me and my confidence in Him, He faithfully provided the grace to become genuinely supportive and to even rejoice with my friends - all good speakers and very creative in their assignments. Encouraging and uplifting my friends, praying for them before their teachings, gradually shifted my focus from my miserable self to the delight of undergirding others. Free of my self-talk and the lies of the enemy, I was no longer concerned with the showiness of my assignments or how my attempts to speak were perceived. I rejoiced instead in the unified service of the whole leadership team as we blessed those who attended the retreats. I had finally broken through to the goal of anonymous servant hood.

Now I praise my Father for His perseverance in my life, as I made the long walk through the school of humility to selfless love, His life lesson for me.

As I was writing this story, I wondered why I was required to go to the altar so many years before the *Walk to Emmaus*. It seemed reasonable to ask the Lord "the why" of this experience. He answered promptly. "I wanted you to receive humility, and this was your first step." Suddenly, I remembered the insecure and vulnerable feeling of walking down the isle to the altar. God Himself had given me the grace and courage to step out and obey despite my fear of what people would think. It had been a fitting parallel for the insecure and vulnerable walk of my Emmaus experience. But reflecting on the length of the journey and the pain of the lesson learned, I rejoiced. It had all been worth it. I had found my true self through serving.

I have learned that God really loves me; He truly cares about my character and spiritual growth. I am being made into the image of Jesus as He continues to lead me down the "Emmaus Road," walking by my side, expounding the scriptures to me.

I have also found that true humility doesn't produce pride. It produces gratitude. Since God is both our Creator and Redeemer our existence and righteousness rest in Him. And our service to others is an expression of our confidence in Him. The unity of our service to God is beautiful and powerful.

humility - a freedom from arrogance that grows out of the recognition that all we have and are comes from God (*Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary*)

*My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord
nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him
For whom the Lord loves He chastens,
and scourges every son whom He receives.*

Hebrews 12:5-6

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Welcome A BOARD!

Welcome to our new board members:

Chris Bunn, Dana Crow, Ron Hall, Sue Hayes, Bernie Henze,
Brian Merrill and Alan Perlingiere.
