

January 2010 Bartimaeus Institute Report

On the week of the M.L. King holiday we held our 6th Institute. We had 21 full-time participants from six states and two countries, representing thirteen ecumenical traditions. It was a rich time of bible study, social analysis and storytelling, with the focus on our recent *Ambassadors of Reconciliation* books. Though invited guests Nelson and Joyce Johnson of the [Beloved Community Center](#) in Greensboro were unable to attend at the last minute because of a family emergency, there were many highlights:

Murphy Davis and Eduard Loring (*right*) of the [Open Door Community](#) in Atlanta spoke about their advocacy for the poorest of America: those on the streets and those on Death Row. We heard poignant stories and disturbing analysis about the related issues of homelessness, prison, death row, poverty, class, and racial segregation.



Two restorative justice colleagues of Elaine's spoke about their respective journeys as victim and offender of severe violence. One told of being handcuffed for the first time at age seven, of his decision to co-found a gang at 13 for protection, and of his life of violence, prison, and eventually resurrection. The other described her experience of a home invasion when she was 16 years old, in which her mother was shot; a number of years later she survived an even more traumatic murder-suicide. Both spoke about the trauma-bond that exists between victims and offenders of severe violence, and how their healing has only been found in working with "the other."



(*Left: the Institute group*). Geoff Broughton from Sydney, Australia led an inspiring bible study on Saul's Damascus Road conversion as restorative justice (Acts 8 & 9). In Saul's dramatic encounter with Jesus, Geoff pointed out that while Saul's wrongdoing is named and forgiven,

Paul is immediately required to make restitution to all those he had harmed, and devotes the rest of his life to "making amends."

Wednesday morning we were graciously hosted by Ojai Valley Community Church, and we experimented with a video-conference, connecting to a group of youth organizers from [Cookman United Methodist Church](#) in Philadelphia, PA. Participant Donna Jones, pastor of Cookman, has brought her adult and youth leadership teams to our Institutes since 2008. She is helping with a campaign in Philadelphia against gun violence that focuses on repentance, atonement, liberation and healing. Though our technology was somewhat cumbersome, we were able to interact, hear each others' stories and provide some mutual encouragement with 15 youth leaders in Philadelphia. (Right: David Fetcho films videoconference)



Wednesday brought Sabbath time in the afternoon. We gathered at our house for dinner, singing and conversation. We "played" late into the night and were re-freshed to get back to intensive study the next morning (right, Donna and Elaine lead a group in hymn singing). Participants confirmed the importance of this Sabbath.



Friday's final session was an energetic conversation around a model Ched and Elaine have developed called "Full Spectrum Peacemaking." It describes an escalating process of non-violent responses to conflict, injustice and violation. We believe that these different practices of peacemaking have become balkanized, and we discussed how to weave them back together.



Thank you to those who attended this Institute, enduring a week of steady rain! (Left: Thursday night "banquet" at the local Thai restaurant)! We value the time spent together building friendships, courage and capacity to continue the work of restorative justice and peacemaking.