



**NEW WINE  
AND  
NEW WINESKINS**

Issue No.: Vol. 6 Fall 2022

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# NEW WINE AND NEW WINESKINS



## Letter From the Editor

By Mary Ann West

My best friend growing up was a Godly middle-aged woman. She was actually a second mother. We would sit for long stretches, and talk about Jesus, and she in such a personal way. Somewhere I had picked up that one had to be Roman Catholic to go to heaven. Her witness, however, demolished that belief. She just loved Jesus too much for God to turn her away. These were my first ecumenical encounters, and my earliest memories of hearing that God loved me personally.



17, where Jesus says that by the unity and love of the disciples the world will recognize that the Father sent him. There is no greater vision than that. If only we fight our way through to this unity, God will give us the strength to carry out both forms of mission, and every member will take part.”(page 231)

A couple of quotes from J. Heinrich Arnold (1913-1982) are pertinent to our topic of Ecumenism. Arnold served as elder for the Bruderhof Movement, a community movement. The book, Discipleship: Living for Christ in the Daily Grind, ( Plough Publishing House,1994) is a compilation of writings from his articles and letters.

This edition of New Wine, New Wineskins contains a wide variety of articles around the theme of Ecumenism. After reading Peter Poppleton’s article, a question posed might be: How do/can we as Charismatic Covenant Communities unpack the divine gift of ecumenism? Anne Hamrick, New Creation, poses questions about “receptive ecumenism”. that Bob Garrett, Alleluia, answers from community experience. Rachel Balducci, Alleluia, gives testimony to living in an ecumenical community. Lee Defendorf shares on the ecumenical outreaches of Glory to God Community. Bishop Frank Allen, Church of God, and missionary to the poor, writes a guest article on his ecumenical engagement and growing ecumenical family. Bill Kohler writes an in-depth review and personal reflections of the book, Costly Love by John H. Armstrong.

“It is not enough to live together in community, to love one another and make each other happy...More is demanded...It is a crucial hour. Everything depends on whether our lamps are trimmed...Jesus’ farewell words in the Gospel of John make it clear: the church must be so united that the world can recognize God as the Father who sent Jesus. It shakes me to the depths of my heart to ask, Are we really showing this to the world?” (page 95)

Congratulations to Mother of God Community on their 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary! May the Holy Spirit continue to grow you all in His love! May you continue to bear much and even unexpected fruit! Rick McKinney shares on the celebration.

“I long for apostolic mission-to go to the roadsides and fences and invite men to the great festival of the kingdom of God. But every day lived in true unity is mission too. Read John

Finally, Peter Poppleton shares a special “thank you” letter from Ukraine.



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### *From the Desk of the NAN Moderator*

**By Peter Poppleton, NAN Moderator**

The introductory commentary to the Gospel of John in the original Jerusalem Bible (1966) recently sparked my attention. In commenting on history, a real distinction is drawn between the concept of modern historians and the presentation of history in the Gospel of John. “The absorbing concern of the evangelist is the *meaning* of those historical events which were at once both divine and human, events which were at one and the same time both historical and theological; events which flowered in time but were rooted in eternity.” (pg. 143 of the New Testament)



experience of a variety of gifts. One of the gifts poured out in our time of history is the gift of ecumenism. This was an explicit experience in the early days of the 20<sup>th</sup> century’s outpouring of the Holy Spirit. It manifested itself in a variety of ways. Some communities were ecumenical from the beginning. Others remained a particular denomination but were very comfortable with brothers and sisters from different denominations.

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit enabled us to see that the events happening around us have both a sense of the historical and the eternal. We can ask: where, in current history is this grace now active? This isn’t only in signs and wonders. It is also where the hand of the Lord is actively working in the Body of Christ right now.

It is easy to see that the Holy Spirit entered history in a new way in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This was an eternal act brought into the realm of history. We all carry this grace of eternity within us—explicitly and implicitly, divinely and humanly. It is a grace sent by the Lord to be embraced by us and brought into history. What does this mean as a historical event? What is the Lord telling us about Himself and about our role in history?

We know that one of the workings of the Holy Spirit in this time of history is the formation of Charismatic Covenant Communities. The CCC’s are truly a work of the Holy Spirit. Yes, there were difficulties in learning how to walk in this grace, but over time, a recognition of the authenticity of the movement and culture of the Holy Spirit within our “covenanted” lives has evolved. This recognition still calls us to take historical responsibility for the grace we have been given.

It is the Lord’s intention that this happens during this time of historical upheaval (Cardinal Ratzinger) so that we may show the world this act of the Holy Spirit. We engage this grace as a responsibility for the sake of the lost and broken, for the sake of the meaning of family, and for the sake of authentic biblical community life. Let us live both the divine and historical meaning in the CCC’s communities! Yes, come Holy Spirit so that we can bring Jesus Christ to the world!



Within this movement and culture there was the



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### Great Emails in the Communities



**To:** Brothers and Sisters Reading The NAN Newsletter

**Cc:**

**Subject:** Receptive Ecumenism: A Fresh Way Forward


**From:** Bob Garrett – Alleluia Community    **Signature:** None

Bob Garrett, moderator of Alleluia Community had sent an article, titled “**Receptive Ecumenism as an Ecumenical Methodology**”, Paul Vukim, Australian Catholic University, [https://www.academia.edu/41229793/Paper Receptive Ecumenism as an Ecumenical Methodology](https://www.academia.edu/41229793/Paper_Receptive_Ecumenism_as_an_Ecumenical_Methodology), to members of the NAN Ecumenical Working Group. A short definition of **Receptive Ecumenism** is found on page 3 of Paul Vukim’s paper and is a quote from another dissertation: “Receptive Ecumenism calls on each tradition to critically focus on itself to determine what it can faithfully receive from other Christian traditions to grow together into a deepened relationship. This call shifts the ecumenical focus from offering one’s gifts to another to receiving the gifts one needs from another in humility and with integrity.” (Michael Hagan, "Receptive Ecumenism: The Body of the Ecumenical Movement," ed. Kevin L. Hughes and Jesse D. Couenhoven (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2015, 13.)

After reading Vukim’s paper, Anne Hamrick, moderator of New Creation Community, followed up with some practical questions. Following is their exchange:

**Anne’s Questions:** Hi, Bob and all. The article was very theoretical, but intriguing. I would love to hear about any successes using Receptive Ecumenism. How has it worked? Are there success stories? How does one go about using/initiating it? Is it a person-to-person thing? Or is it a denomination/church to denomination/church thing?

**Bob’s Response:** Hi Anne, thanks for your very good questions. Because it is the theological answer to being receptive of others’ gifts, we in Alleluia have found that our community lifestyle IS receptive ecumenism. We are all seeking to learn from one another, especially with areas of difference. Receiving from others, especially in areas of difference, takes grace, trust and lots of love. Since we have genuine respect for one another and don't try to proselytize one another, our receiving from one another is actually fun. It is an attitude of openness to listening to and trying our best to understand one another. We have found that we are all growing and learning in ways and areas that we did not expect. I have been "accused" of being more Catholic than many Catholics, and maybe I am. I have been deeply shaped (like with today's reading about the potter's wheel) by my Pentecostal, contemplative and sacramental/liturgical brothers and sisters. As a result, I think that I am a much "improved" (or deeper?) Christian. The way you employ R E (receptive ecumenism) is by showing genuine interest in the beliefs and practices of others and by receiving what you can without compromising your own faith tradition. There is quite a lot out there that we can all learn from one another, especially if it is from someone that you love. Blessings, Bob





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### *Living an Ecumenical Life*

By Rachael Swenson Balducci -  
Alleluia Community

We have a family habit of saying prayers as we head out in the car for the first time each day. We say a few intentions and then offer a Hail Mary asking our blessed mother for her intercession, a St. Michael the Archangel prayer for spiritual warfare, and a prayer to our guardian angel asking for that special angelic protection God has given each of us individually. These are all really Catholic prayers!

Recently I was heading out with a group of my daughter's friends and as we pulled out of the driveway and I started our prayers, I realized that of the eight girls in the car, only one of them was not Catholic. So instead of doing our usual approach to prayers, I offered up our intentions to Jesus and that was it.



To me, this is an example of living ecumenically. It's being sensitive to those around me who don't share in my tradition. Being ecumenically sensitive doesn't mean I water down my faith. It means that in certain situations, depending on who I'm around, I need to shift my approach to find common ground.

Living in an ecumenical Christian community means that when our community gathers as a whole, our common ground is Jesus — there is no better common ground than that! It means that our monthly First Friday Mass, where all are

welcome, won't include our whole community. It also means that within our own home, we are focused on our Catholic faith, saying the rosary, asking Mary for her intercession, saying novenas and going to Adoration.

And to make this life ecumenical, it means that if I share about something from my faith tradition either in our weekly community newsletter or at a community meeting, I'm aware that not everyone automatically understands what I mean or has the same approach to their faith life.

It also means that I need to be sensitive to not only finding common ground with my Protestant brothers and sisters, but that I never take the attitude that my job is to convert anyone or preach The Truth. I can't live a fully supportive, fully free life with my covenant brothers and sisters, if I'm walking around trying to point out how I know best. There is just no need. Also, I don't know best.

I love my Catholic faith, and I love that we have so much in common with those who are Christians of other faith traditions. I see it easily because I've grown up with this ecumenical mentality.

When you are in the habit of finding common ground, it's amazing how much common ground there is to enjoy.





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### *“I Can’t go Home Until I’ve Seen Stone’s Folly”*

By Lee Defendorf, Glory to God Community

I’ve been asked to share recent activities of the Glory to God Community (GTG) in Topeka Kansas, regarding our involvement with Christian unity. But first, I would like to give you a brief background from which most of these involvements have sprung. Being here at the spot of the beginning of the Pentecostal movement, with the remnant basement of the Stone’s Folly mansion, Pentecostals regularly contact either the Most Pure Heart of Mary Catholic Church office, or me directly asking to see and pray in this historic site. What has grown into the modern Pentecostal movement began here in 1901 when the Holy Spirit fell on Charles Parham and his students at Bethel Bible College. Keep in mind that this outpouring with signs and wonders came on same day Pope Leo in Rome dedicated the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the Holy Spirit. One could say that God the Father’s heart for unity was at work even then. This led to the Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles in 1906. Eventually it led to the Pentecostal experience in the Catholic Church in 1967 at Duquesne University in Pennsylvania.



It would be difficult to narrow down our involvement in unity to just one or two activities. Some are very visible, while others are behind the scenes. For example, we are involved with Activate Topeka. This outreach was

organized by a few Pentecostal pastors to attract and involve youth of all faiths to a relationship with Jesus. In this group, I represent Glory to God and Stone’s Folly, the birthplace of Pentecostalism. It is hoped that the place where it all began can be a help to the youth as they begin a deeper life with Christ and the Holy Spirit. Since I am a Catholic, they see me as a unifying sign in the Body of Christ. At our meetings, I am often asked to lead a prayer for unity.

Recent events include the Assembly of God of Springfield, Missouri, bringing a bus full of people to visit Stone’s Folly. Our community fed them all a hot lunch and then joined them in a prayer meeting in the Stone’s Folly basement. This gathering set the stage for much of what has happened since.



Last year CHARIS included Topeka and Stone’s Folly in their live stream worldwide Pentecost vigil broadcast. In the hour before their broadcast, we live streamed our own pre-vigil with Catholics and Pentecostals. There was live music from Pentecostal worship leaders and prayer for unity from three local



## “I Can’t go Home Until I’ve Seen Stone’s Folly” (Cont’d)

ministers, as well as from a Catholic deacon.

This year, GTG hosted a Pentecost Prayer, Praise, and Picnic at Stone’s Folly. Local Christian recording artists played on the lawn next to the house that was built on the Stone’s Folly basement. About 50 Catholics and Pentecostals enjoyed the beautiful afternoon together with visits for quiet prayer in the exact place where the Holy Spirit was poured out on the first day of 1901.

A notable step toward unity took place last fall when Glory to God member Joe Meis and I responded to an invitation from Darren Rodgers, the director of the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center in Springfield MO. We also visited the world headquarters of the Assembly of God in the same building and were given a personal tour. We met with Jeff Nelson, one of their missionaries to Africa. This led to the whole Glory to God/Assembly of God relationship and the bus tour that brought 42 young people from Evangel University and the Springfield area to Stone’s Folly. GTG member Coleen Valez related a prophecy she had received that was fulfilled with this visit.

Local Pentecostal pastor Jay Jellison became familiar with Glory to God Community and Stone’s Folly by participating in our 120<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Holy Spirit

outpouring of January 1, 1901 and our 7pm to 7 am live stream broadcast from the basement during New Year’s 2021. His cooperation continued as he helped Glory to God with its Life in the Spirit Seminar last fall by providing us with music ministries for the sessions. It was exciting to have these young, talented and ‘on fire’ Christian brothers and sisters leading the Praise and Worship. I continue working with Jay and other Pentecostal ministers in “Activate Topeka”.



People continue to visit Stone’s Folly – all led by the Holy Spirit. Some are looking for the original spring that led to a mighty river of Pentecostal grace. Others come simply out of curiosity. And then there are others, like the Assembly of God pastor from India who was visiting his granddaughter in Dallas. He said, “I can’t go home until I have seen Stone’s

Folly.” The family drove, guided by the Holy Spirit, not really knowing where they were going or what they would find. But Deb Predmore from Glory to God saw them in the neighborhood and listened to the Holy Spirit’s prompting. She asked them, “What are you looking for?” And then she led the way. They all prayed together inside the Stone’s Folly remnant basement. That man’s tears of joy said it all. Come Holy Spirit!!!!





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## Putting the “K” into Community - Koinonia

By Bishop Frank N. Allen, Hope®

**Editor’s Note:** *Bishop Frank Allen and the Brothers and Sisters associated with Hope have been ecumenical partners with New Creation Community for several years. As we have worked side by side, we have grown in relationship with each other. In this article Bishop Allen describes his and Hope’s journeying in ecumenical relationships.*

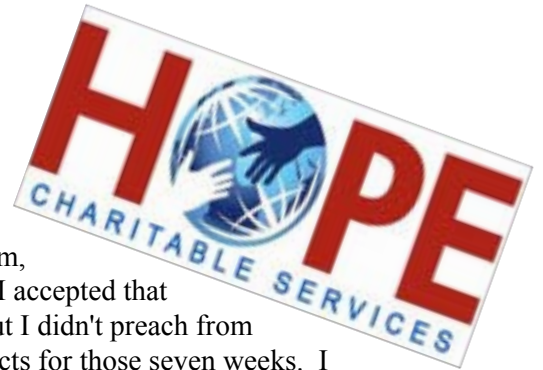
Hi, my name is Frank Allen. When I was 28 years old, my wife Wendy and our two-year-old son were happily settled in a solid middle-class life. I was serving as a successful young revitalization pastor at a suburban church. We heard God’s call upon our lives to begin an ecumenical, parachurch, inner city mission for the poor. In 1992 we stepped out in faith to begin HOPE® (a/k/a Hope Charitable Services). Here, 30

years later, we have continued to serve as missionaries to the poor. Our objective remains the same: *To share the tangible gospel. To bring hope, help, and healing to those suffering under the constant grind of poverty and its associated evils: hunger, homelessness, addiction, abuse, trafficking, inferior education, chronic unemployment and*

*underemployment, and rampant killing throughout the inner-city global port and shipyard mecca of Portsmouth, Virginia. We strive to meet the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of the poor and marginalized, to demonstrate the love of Jesus and His Church.*

A Christian brother and Anglican priest once challenged me to preach from the book of Acts from

Easter to Pentecost Sunday. A few years later, I told him, "By the way, I accepted that challenge. But I didn't preach from the book of Acts for those seven weeks. I preached from Acts for three years." He asked, "What did you learn?" After a few moments, I replied, "I learned that when doing miracles, the Holy Spirit always uses people! And for us and our ministry to the poor, most of the time, He uses people from our broader ecumenical community."



Our little community once saw ourselves as the little ragged mission building on our blighted corner as our Church. But we no longer feel that we are a threadbare band of misfits begging for scraps, leftovers, and hand-me-downs to survive. On the contrary, as we have built relationships over the years with brothers and sisters of other traditions, we realize that that we are a unique thread in the Body of Christ. We are especially, expressly, and explicitly created for a precise purpose in this ancient tapestry. He had a place for us before we even existed, from the beginning of all creation - a place where we bring beauty, value, and purpose to His Universal Church. It is the love, reception, and respect we experience from brothers and sisters in our broader ecumenical community that allows us to understand this. We are woven into this grand tapestry, the Church, the Ecclesia, the Koinonia of Our Lord Himself.

As members of our broader, ecumenical Christian community, we don't just sit in the soup







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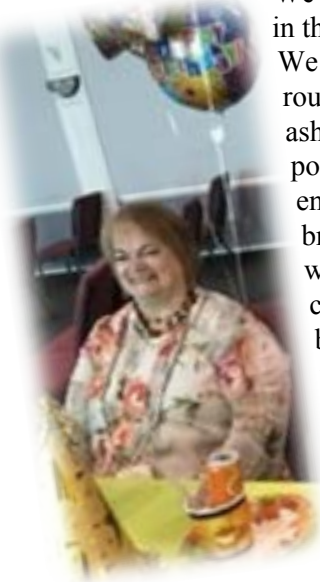


## Putting the “K” into Community - Koinonia (Cont’t)

kitchen waiting for Christian do-gooders from different traditions to bring us donations because they pity or feel sorry for us. Instead, our brothers and sisters come and share a meal with us. We understand we are loved, cared for, and have a place where we now belong, where we fit. We are not just an object of ministry. We minister together. We are joined together by Christ Himself. We are loved and valued. We are no longer simply a needy group of people. We are needed. We are not just prayed for. We are asked to minister to our generous brothers and sisters. They ask us to pray for them. We are not just served. We are asked to serve. We worship together. They know our names and remember our children. Yes, we share our problems, and people help us. Medical doctors, nurses, engineers, and wealthy professionals sit with us and share more than their resources. They share their joys, sorrows, and problems. They share their lives.

Through our relationships with our ecumenical family, we are no longer a ragtag band of inner-city x-cons, poor folks, former prostitutes, drunkards, and drug addicts, struggling with poverty, addiction, and mental health issues.

We are uniquely valuable with a place in this ancient and beautiful tapestry. We now realize that what we saw as rough and worn and of which we were ashamed, is a testimony of God's power of transformation. It encourages our brothers from the broader ecumenical community of what money cannot buy. We add a character and diversity which is beautiful, and when woven into the tapestry, it is strengthened. We no longer feel ashamed of our hardships in front of our brethren within our broader ecumenical community. We realize the grind



of poverty is what has given us our shine, our sheen as a thread in the tapestry.

Our poverty and its scars are our distinctiveness and diverseness. The uniqueness our thread brings to the ancient tapestry brings it closer to completion. By ourselves, we may look worn, weary, and tatty. Our purpose and beauty are seen when woven into our appointed place within the ancient arras called the Body of Christ.

No, we are no longer the poor little scruffy mission chapel on the corner. We are the durable, diverse strand that fits perfectly as Christ foreknew. We are a part of something bigger than ourselves or our problems - the grand and glorious Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ. We love and are loved. Our ecumenical community has put the "K" into our community, Koinonia!



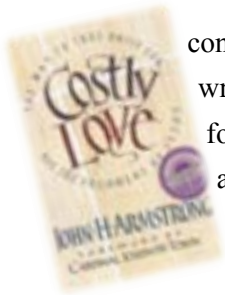
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## Great Reads in the Communities

Reflections By Bill Koller, Ciry of the Lord

### Costly Love by John H. Armstrong



With the zeal, confidence, and conviction of a new convert, John Armstrong writes that costly love is the road all the followers of Jesus must walk in order to achieve true unity as Christians. Hardly a new convert, he has been a prolific author, mentor, and minister for decades with a passionate heart for unity.

It is a book that I will be re-reading and meditating on many times. I found the chapters on *Loving our Enemies* and *The New Commandment* especially noteworthy and challenging. And if I had to select the pivotal point of the book for me personally, it would be “Make love your aim” (1 Corinthians 14:1).

However, I felt as if I were reading the first volume of a multi-volume work. For while there is no doubt that love is absolutely essential for relational unity, it is not *sufficient* for full, mature, unity to come about.

Even in discussing the necessity of love, certain aspects of love were missing. Little was said about the relationship between love and faith and how faith *works* through love. Again, there seemed nothing to say about love in terms of the *fruit* (not fruits) of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). and how love interacts with and holds together all the fruit. There is a great passage in 2 Peter 1:5-8 on virtue and how we build from faith to love. Love is like a crown, but it *needs* all

the other virtues that undergird and support it. (See also Col. 3-12-14). The point is that love as it tends toward *perfection* was absent from the discussion. In fact, it wasn't until the last part of the book that faith, hope, and love are discussed together. However, the primary point was to show that love is the greatest of the three, not the relationship or interaction of the three.

Nevertheless, I was somewhat saddened at the sparse mention of the relationship between love and truth, the question of authority, and how all these elements work together to foster unity.

Armstrong, while agreeing that truth (doctrine) is important, seems to want to run away from any discussion of it. Ecumenical groups can be like that too. While Christians agree that what unites them is greater than what divides them, there still are the “disputed questions” which leave ecumenical groups and communities with kind of an “uneasy truce” that needs to be maintained in love in order to keep ecumenical “unity.”

However, consider that Jesus is not only the love of God incarnate, but he is also absolute, full truth. For Jesus, there are *no disputed questions*. The disputations only arise among those who are *his disciples*. That's us.

I have always been struck by John 6 and “The Bread of Life Discourse”. Verse 66 records that after Jesus' teaching,



## Great Reads in the Communities (Cont'd)

many of his disciples left Him and no longer followed him. What did Jesus do? *He let them walk.* There is no record of Jesus following after them and encouraging them to come back “for love’s sake”, “for the sake of communion”, “for the sake of community”, or “for fellowship’s sake.” Those who remained believed his word and *trusted him and that what he said was true.* We must do the same. Sometimes our love for our Church, or denomination, or confession, can put us in the position where seemingly *the servant becomes greater than the Master.* In the end *Jesus* must be the one we look to and that in Him there are no disputed questions. And since this is true, the answers we seek to those “disputed questions” will be found in Him.

In addition, Jesus himself sent us “the Spirit of Truth who will lead us to *all* truth (John 16:13). We must the Spirit lead us in this way and not be afraid to seek and find the truth.

Indeed, “Love rejoices in the truth” (1 Cor. 13:6). Love and truth are linked. As Pope Benedict XVI states: “These two things do not contradict each other but belong together because the *one* God is both truth *and* love.”

Love and truth are both necessary for unity. We need to embrace and engage both, no matter how difficult, no matter where it leads, if our commitment



to ecumenism is to be real, full, and true.

Finally, let me add a thought about unity. It is surprising to me that Armstrong and other writers fail to discuss the Book of Acts and the unity experienced by the early Church. The Apostles and disciples in the early Church lived *in one accord*, with one mind and one heart, with the same purpose and passion, together, and in unanimity (See Acts 1:14, 2:46, 4:24, 5:12, 8:6, 15:25). This unity was a gift given by the Spirit and accepted and lived out in the lives of the early disciples.

May we continue to live together in the Holy Spirit with one accord. May we be one in mind and heart. May we share the same purpose and passion. May we continue to grow together as one, united in the fullness of both truth and love.

Indeed, love is costly, as are truth and unity. However, the cost to souls and to the Church itself, because of our disunity has been staggering, and clearly contrary to the perfect will of God. The prophetic word from the Kansas City “Three Rivers” Conference in 1977 is still instructive: “Mourn and weep, for the body of my Son is broken.” How much weeping, how much mourning are we (still) willing to do and what costs are we willing to pay in order that we and “they all may be one...” (John 17:21)?





## 50th Anniversary Celebration at the Mother of God Community

By Rick McKinney, Mother of God

On June 25, 2022, a 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Mass, catered dinner, and dance with a live band was celebrated on the campus of the Mother of God Community in Gaithersburg, Maryland. It was in 1972 that the name of “Mother of God”: was chosen by Community members to reflect the members’ desire to be like Mary, the Mother of God, who received Christ and became a vessel for sharing his life with others. It was a lovely evening in the Community’s courtyard and gym for some two hundred individuals who had gathered there for the celebration which included present and former members as well as friends and guests from sister communities.



Actually, weekly praise and worship meetings began some 54 years ago on June 7, 1968. About 90 individuals gathered for the first Catholic Charismatic prayer meeting in the Washington, D.C. area at Our Lady of Mercy parish in Potomac Maryland. Many of those who attended had had an experience of being baptized in the Holy Spirit and had begun to speak in tongues, including the Community’s foundresses, Edith Difato and Judith Tydings.

A snapshot of some of the highlights of our fifty years together are:



1970 – *Life in the Spirit* formal seminars begun.

1972 – Households of single men and women started. Many families with children start joining.

1972 – After much prayer *Mother of God Community* was chosen as our formal name.

1976 – Community members start migrating to Montgomery Village outside Gaithersburg, MD

1980 – *Word Among Us* daily devotional begins monthly publication by the Community.

1987 – Mother of God School (K thru 8) founded.

1999 – *Good News Café* young adult outreach program begins at Mother of God.

2005 – Mother of God Community Summer Camp begins led by three young Davy brothers.

2008 – Community helps establish *The Fresh Anointing* praise meetings in Washington, D.C.

2020 – Founding member - *North American Network of Charismatic Covenant Communities*.

2020 – First YouTube livestream of Sunday night praise and worship meetings begins.



## 50th Anniversary Celebration at the Mother of God Community (Cont'd)



The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration was organized by long-time members, Shelia Yoritoma and Lisa Sharafinski and the Mass was celebrated by Monsignor Robert Panke, the pastor of St. John Neumann Catholic Church, which is just across the street from the Mother of God School buildings and residential facilities. Father Thomas

Weinandy, a Franciscan theologian who had lived in the Community for some 18 years, gave the homily. At the end of the Mass an address was given by Mark Gargulinski, the new coordinator of the Community, who began his service in June, following Tom Singer who had been coordinator for the previous eight years. Mark shared that this year was also the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Mother of God Community becoming an approved and recognized private association of the faithful within the Archdiocese of Washington. In conjunction with the celebration, a country dance was also held the weekend before and



attended by scores of the young and the young at heart, with many from the Mother of God Youth Group and the Mother of God Homeschool Ministry.

May we continue to say “yes” to Our Lord as our namesake did, and birth Christ into our world.





## Ukraine: Letter from Our Persecuted Brothers and Sisters

By Ukrainian Brother to Alex Myskow,  
ENC Poland

**Editor's Note:** Peter Poppleton received the following letter from Alex Myskow, a leader with the European Network of Communities (ENC) and a member of a Polish community. Alex received it from a brother in Ukraine. In it we hear the voices of community teens as well as refugee teens from Ukraine. The Ukrainian brother is thanking all who helped with these evangelistic/healing summer camps for youth as well as other needs. Individual members of our own NANCCC also sent money to support the communities.



words, but also in reality.

Your actions speak louder than any words about your love for us. This summer, thanks to your kindness and financial support, we were able to organize two summer “Alive Camps” in which about 300 youth took part, including more than 150 participants who had been traumatized by the war. The pain that these young people experienced at the age of 12, 15 or 16, many of us have not experienced in our entire lives. They encountered many atrocities committed by the Russian army in their cities. These summer camps were an incredible opportunity for them to immerse themselves in the atmosphere of God's love, friendly support, and psychological help. Thanks to your help we will be able to continue the camps in autumn as well.



**My Dear Friends, Dear Brothers and Sisters from ENC,**

I thank you from the bottom of my heart for the enormous material and spiritual support that you provided us during the last six months in Ukraine. You can't even imagine how important it is for us, Ukrainians, to experience that we are not alone, that we have friends who are always ready to help. You surrounded the refugees from Ukraine with warmth and love, you zealously prayed for us and helped us financially, you supported us on different levels so that we could withstand the terrible evil that we encountered. And this means only one thing, that ENC is a family not only in



I thank all of you who stand with us, Ukrainians, in this very difficult time. **Videos** from “Alive Camps”: <https://youtu.be/z1wKxCUCQzE>. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jyZuU1qbave>. I also include below some **testimonials from children** who took part in this summer “Alive Camps”.



## Ukraine: Letter from Our Persecuted Brothers and Sisters (Cont'd)

### Testimonials:

"I enjoyed everything. This is the best camp I've ever been to. The most interesting things for me were the discos and lectures from animators and from a priest. I've started to believe more in God and the power of prayer. Advice from the psychologist



was very helpful. I've learned to understand people more. – Katerina, age 14

I've enjoyed discos, prayers, small groups, worship songs, the Secret Friend game, game, the priest, the speakers, and so much more. I've understood that God loves me and that I can always come to Him and that Jesus died for our sins.

I've also found new friends. – Anastasia, age 16

I've reconsidered my perception of God and understood that I need him in my life. – Karina, age 15

I've become closer to God. I feel much better than before. I feel relieved. I've understood that for God we are all special and He loves each of us equally. – Olga, age 15

I've enjoyed everything. I've started to believe more in God and I became closer to Him. And I've opened my heart to Him. – Sashko, age 15

I've enjoyed all the games and evening programs. The animators were really nice. I've understood that I need to believe in God, and that I should go to church and pray more, because I believe that God exists. – Dmytro, age 14

I've become closer to God. I've really enjoyed all teachings about God, and the talks in small groups. The food was delicious. I've made new friends. I've found out a lot about God's love and His kindness, and learned how to meet new people and how to overcome aggression. – Dmytro, age 16

I've liked all the animators and lecturers a lot and it's really cool that they were close to our age. I've I begun to take God seriously. – Sophia, 13y.

A psychologist in the camp is a very good idea as he helps one understand oneself. It was easy to find new friends during the camp. And it was really cool that the age difference with the animators wasn't that big. I've found out more about myself and God and my attitude towards Him has changed. – Violeta, age 13.

