

# JUBILEE PARTNERS REPORT

## Fall 2017



*"When I was hungry you gave me food; when thirsty, you gave me drink; when I was a stranger you took me into your home, when naked you clothed me; when I was ill you came to my help, when in prison you visited me." Mat 25:35-36 "In a word, there are three things that last forever: faith, hope, and love; but the greatest of them all is love." 1 Cor 13:13 (NEB)*

### *What a year this has been!*

Almost every day there have been shocking reports of violence, racism, fear, and threats of war ... but if we search carefully we can often discover some *good* news as well about things like compassionate responses, acts of faith, courage, and generosity. These are the kinds of stories that can help people cope with all of the bad news. Love can overcome fear and hatred, just as light can overcome darkness. If the early Christians had not known this profound truth - and *lived by it* - the message of hope they embodied would have been wiped out quickly by the dark forces against them under the Roman Empire.

As Walter Wink wrote in his series of books about that dramatic struggle, the Book of Revelation regarded *perseverance* as "the highest Christian virtue." Wink says they were talking about really firm determination, "the capacity to endure persecution, torture, and death without yielding one's faith." And he emphasized that such faith is best described as **"relentless love - the greatest power in the universe."**



**It's a feast! In spite of all the bad news, we continue to enjoy these circles and celebrations of good friends, good neighbors, good food, and evidence of God's Spirit among us.**

Here at Jubilee, we have been very disappointed to have our work with refugees disrupted so dramatically by decisions in Washington, DC. In January an Executive Order came from the White House that blocked the flow of refugees. The action was based largely on the groundless fear that terrorists might use that as a means of entry, something that strongly contradicts

the actual historical record of refugees in the US. In reality, all refugees go through a lengthy process of careful background checks before being admitted to the US. Indeed, they have often been the *victims* of terrorism themselves.

The United Nations reports that worldwide there are now more than *60 million* people driven from their homes by one calamity or another, probably more than ever before in human history. What a tragic irony it is that our government should choose such a time as this to work against the teachings of Jesus in Matthew 25! Moreover, a record number of these suffering people (more than 22 million by official UN estimates) are classified officially as “refugees,” people who have “well-founded fears of persecution” and who would be in great danger if they were forced to return to their original homes. At least *80% of all refugees are women and children!*

Within a few weeks after the President’s action the refugee population in our Welcome Center had shrunk to just a couple of families that had come through our partner agencies, the International Rescue Committee, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services, and New American Pathways (a local office of Church World Service). Since mid-spring we have hosted only one new family.

Under similar circumstances, some might be tempted just to throw up their hands and give up on working with refugees. As we thought and prayed about the situation we chose instead to look on this as an opportunity to upgrade and even to expand our Jubilee facilities. After all, since we first built most of them in the early 1980s, they have been used by close to 4,000 refugees from at least 30 different nations.

What a *joy* it has been to have friends come to us from many directions to help us with this special effort. One beautiful example has been the extraordinary boost we’ve been given by our Bruderhof friends, especially the community of New Meadow Run in Pennsylvania. In January they sent the Noble family to help us with a wide range of projects. Arthur, Yvonne, and their sons, Lester and Roscoe, are amazingly energetic and talented. Even more important is their constant attitude of love and cheerful eagerness to tackle whatever projects we need done. They are likely to be with us through next spring.



**The Nobles: Lester, Yvonne, Roscoe and Arthur**

The first Bruderhof community was founded almost a century ago in Germany. From the beginning, they emphasized the values Jesus taught about reaching out lovingly to people of different backgrounds, even to their Gestapo persecutors. Many books have been written about their dramatic history, including the way their struggle against the racism and anti-Semitism of the Nazis led to their own suffering and eventual escape from Nazi Germany.

Now there are 23 Bruderhof communities on four continents, with a total of more than 2,700

members. They help refugees in other parts of the world, but so far they have been unable to launch a program like Jubilee’s in the US. So, for now at least, they have chosen instead to help Jubilee’s refugee program through this challenging time. Their compassion for the hungry and thirsty and the others described by Jesus leads them to serve such people wherever they can.

We are also getting very generous responses from other friends as well. One of the most dramatic is the group of workers who are coming twice a week from the First Presbyterian Church in Athens, 20 miles away. These friends are repairing and expanding one of the houses that has sheltered hundreds of our refugee guests over the past three decades. They are doing a beautiful job!





**House #1, aka “the yellow house” is getting it’s own living room and a face lift.**

Our long-time electrician friend, Carol Dreessen (below right), comes repeatedly all the way from Asheville, North Carolina, to make badly needed repairs on the electrical systems of several of the buildings. (Carol is doing this, by the way, despite the cast on one arm which she broke recently. There’s another great example of that “relentless love” Wink was writing about!)

And then there is our patient, hard-working friend, David Leonard (below left), who has come from Indiana and is investing months of hard work in the rehabilitation of another of our refugee houses. This happens to be the one that Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter shared with Millard and Linda Fuller for three days as Jubilee hosted a special Habitat for Humanity conference back in 1986. Those same little rooms have been occupied by refugees from around the world for three decades since then. Time for some rehab work, and Dave is doing a great job on it. (Thanks to a very generous gift, it is being made accessible for people with disabilities.)

We don’t know when the refugee agencies will send more families to Jubilee, nor do we know for sure exactly what form our hospitality ministry will take in the future. In addition to refugees there are many people in distress that we may be able to host. What we do know is that many of God’s beautiful children are living in fear because of the cruel emphasis these days on deporting immigrants, building walls, blocking refugees from entry - and we are determined to find ways to follow Jesus’ call in the opposite direction.



Racism is an obvious part of the darkness these days, and we are very blessed to have a close friend (and member of our Jubilee Board of Directors) who is an inspiring beacon of light in that struggle, Dr. Catherine Meeks. Some of us first met Catherine long ago at Koinonia Farm before Jubilee was even founded. She had grown up the daughter of a poor sharecropper in a family that suffered constantly from the intense racism around them. In fact, her 12-year-old brother died from appendicitis when a local hospital refused to admit him. Young





**“Where do we live?” Thursday morning’s Yellow Class pores over the map of Georgia with Teacher Angie.**

Catherine was determined to help change such attitudes. Against great odds, she earned a PhD in Socio-Cultural Studies and then became a university professor in Macon, Georgia.

After more than thirty years of teaching about such matters, she has moved to Atlanta and begun a vigorous program of “dismantling racism” through workshops, leading pilgrimages to sites of lynchings, writing and speaking. Her new book on the subject, *Living Into God’s Dream*, was published last November and has already sold thousands of copies. After the horrible events in Charlottesville this summer, she told us, “The picture of hate that we saw in Charlottesville is not new in America. We must put it into context, grieve about it, and move on to the liberation work that we have been called to do. The Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta is modeling this with the opening of its Absalom Jones Center for Racial Healing. It is already receiving overwhelming support from all around the country.” We are so grateful to have Catherine Meeks as a sister and coworker in such matters!

Yes, this has been a year of challenges - and of course none of us knows exactly what may happen next! But we do know this: *God loves us, all of us, and will work through our efforts if we persevere in reflecting that love to others.* Nothing else matters as much as that!

Finally, we want to thank you for reading this and for your encouragement and partnership with us during this dark and difficult time. We are deeply grateful to have such a network of friends.

*from the people of Jubilee*

### Who we are

Jubilee Partners is an intentional Christian service community in north Georgia. Our primary ministry is offering hospitality to newly arrived refugees. We are a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization; donations are thus tax-deductible. Your donations and support of our work are most appreciated.

Jubilee Partners  
Box 68, Comer, GA 30629 706-783-5131  
[www.jubileepartners.org](http://www.jubileepartners.org)





**“Just keep looking up, guys!”**  
Solar Eclipse–gazing only comes to our little part of the world on rare occasions. Some of the very new volunteers (right) enjoyed the eclipse in totality, just 20 minutes away in nearby Royston, Ga.



**Left: Our Fine Fall Volunteers—Back Row: Amil, Pete with Anna, Rich, Rachel, Angie with Sam; Front Row: Jardely, Sarah, Diane, Rebecca (and soon to arrive—Joel)** Of these, 5 are returning/extending, 4 are first-timers, each with their own particular story and connection. Eg, Jardely from Bogota, Colombia, lived here with her family 11 years ago when she was 9. Now *she's* the ESOL teacher, not the student. Jubilee's seasonal volunteer program continues to thrive; meanwhile we're excited about some new directions for the community and our refugee program in particular--stay tuned!



**The Drago-Smith family of adventurers: Brad and Jennifer on the left with son Nick and daughters Emily and Rebecca.** After almost 17 years at Jubilee (interrupted by 3 years in Egypt) they have now moved onto a nearby street in Comer. We miss them here but are happy they're close. While Nick and Emily are away at college, Rebecca has returned to Jubilee as a fall volunteer. Brad is teaching ESOL locally and they have already opened their home to a refugee mother and her newborn daughter. *Always in motion, helping people in need!*

***View Jubilee's newsletter in color online at [www.jubileepartners.org](http://www.jubileepartners.org)!***



*Jubilee Partners*  
*P.O. Box 68*  
*Comer, GA 30629*

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**Fall 2017**



**OPEN UP, DON!** Carolyn and Don reenact feeding each other wedding cake—somewhat like it happened 50 years ago this April 15th. The celebration was shared with a farewell potluck for Jennifer and Brad (see inside).