

FREEDOM FARM NEWS



(L) THE LAND LAY FALLOW WITH COVER CROPS: RYE AND CRIMSON CLOVER. (TOP) HANNA (OUR VERY FIRST INTERN) AND JAMES, GETTING ENGAGED AT FREEDOM FARM

Letting Go *by Edgar Hayes*

The leaves have fallen to the ground. All but a few lie and wait as the ground goes from a bustling soft green to a solemn hard white. Those that do remain on the trees dangle while dancing to the changing winds and fading temperatures. Strongly holding on to a season that will soon fade into a distant past, they haven't quite gotten the idea to just let go. This season, I too found it hard to let go, unto God, and not plant a single crop. Even though we grew food for seven years and I welcomed the idea of a Sabbath year, a small part of me still held onto the notion that I should plant a little something, anything.

In the Old Testament, the Israelites had to wander in the wilderness for forty years in order to let go of the mental captivity of Egypt. God wanted them to let go of their ties to it's culture, other gods, and sin. He wanted them to turn to Him as He began reestablishing a relationship with His people. The crossing of the Jordan River symbolized *continued on page 2*



VOLUNTEERS IN FRUIT GARDEN



REMODELING RASPBERRY PATCH



STRAWBERRY HOME IMPROVEMENT

Letting Go

a baptismal purification from whom they were and what they were letting go of to something that was new, fresh, and God-centered. He would lead and they would follow. God told Moses to speak to the people saying, "When you enter the land that I am giving you, the land shall observe a sabbath for the Lord. Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather in their yield; but in the seventh year there shall be a sabbath of complete rest for the land, a sabbath for the Lord." Lev 25:2-4

Our society's agricultural system is generally based on a reap as much as you can for as long as you can while sowing whatever you can in the limited amount of space that you have. When the land is stripped 'bone dry' of the nutrients it needs to sustain life, we replenish it with chemical fertilizers that leach into many systems including our bodies. What we are looking to do at Freedom Farm is something old yet new. We are stewards of this land that God has blessed us to share with others. It's purpose is not to exhaust it to the fullest and reap it's fruit for ourselves. Rather, we are to love, cherish, nurture, share in it's glory, slow down, as well as give it rest. What God calls us to do is in stark contrast to what our agricultural system does. Like the leaves of a tree, we have to let go of the old season's ways this system does things. There is no reverence for the land or environment when you continually pump chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides into it. There is no reverence for the animals when you continually pump steroids into them or feed them grain based diets which is in contrast to what they were created to eat (grass). There is no reverence for humans who harvest produce sprayed with such caustic chemicals. There is no reverence for God, because the bottom line is mammon over everything else. If we allow ourselves to let go unto what's new, we can take the time to let the land rest, allow our bodies rest, and let our spirits rest. As we have continually and enthusiastically looked forward to the coming Messiah each new Advent season, I also look forward to the new possibilities and challenges God has in store for us in this upcoming growing season. Another seven years are on the horizon. Another seven years await to do God's will. Another seven years await to once again let go from the tree of life and fall into something new that God has in store for us.



Manhattan Mennonite Fellowship volunteers tending to raspberry patch



Small Axe community weeding upper garden



Garden palette ready for a new creation



Radical Living community working in fruit garden

"Sabbath Year" - Struggling to Rest

by Ann Rader

When folks asked what we did this year, I sometimes had an urge to say we sat around and watched soap operas. But since we don't have TV anymore, that'd be a stretch. The quick part of the answer is what we did not do. We didn't plant seeds. (Except - cover crop seeds, like crimson clover and -check out this name- hairy vetch, to nourish the soil.) This provided a much needed rest for us in labor, and hopefully also for the land.

There's not enough room to list everything we did, but here are a few things.... We continued with hospitality work - hosting individuals, families, and church groups mainly from the city, but also some locals - especially around the time of Hurricane Sandy. All the perennials still beckoned for our care: asparagus, raspberries, strawberries, blueberries, flowers, herbs.... Volunteer youth and church groups like Manhattan Mennonite Fellowship came and helped with such projects. Our compost program grew to involve regular pick-ups of pulp from a local juicer and van loads full of cooking scraps from Graze on Faith, a church-based winter C.S.A. (Community Supported Agriculture) project. We visited some inspiring farms such as Koinonia Farm in Georgia, an experiment in Christian Community like us, but they had to face brutal violence during the civil rights era because of uniting African American and white people through cooperative farm work. Resulting in criticism on my part, Edgar took on extra responsibilities such as becoming the youth director of our church. Now, I'm learning to see the possibilities this provides for creating lasting relationships with local youth.

Hands down - the best thing I got to do this year - was spend time with Mom. I will be forever grateful for this time. If we had fields full of perishable annuals and a house full of young interns who need 24/7 supervision, this would not have been possible. Edgar, family, and local friends took over for me with our sons Josiah and Micah countless times this year so that I could go to Harrisburg, PA when it seemed as if Mom needed me most. As scary as it was acting as a medical nurse during the end stages of ovarian cancer for someone I love so much, it enabled us to be together for the last months of her life at home.

I can't write how much I miss Mom. She was my best friend - so real (Clara means "clear"), a Huge motivator at Freedom Farm, my mother who loved me in a life-long careful way no one else can. I dreaded writing this newsletter because Mom isn't here to read it. I'm pushing 40 and still feel an article can't go to print without mom's edits and enthusiastic approval.

Many of you know about this kind of every day missing someone - because death, like birth, is something everyone goes through. Dad is treading through deep water without his lifelong partner. Thank you for going through it with us. Thanks for remembering Clara with us in your loving prayers, cards, and gifts to Freedom Farm.

Sabbath is a time to rest and be with God. *We* may not be quite there - struggling to slow down, but Mom is at Rest. In the struggle along the way, she found peace to a recording of Elijah, a tenor's tender notes from Jeremiah, "*If with all your heart you truly seek me, you shall ever surely find me,*" and a deep Soprano's song, "*O Rest in the Lord.*" Mom's on the ultimate Sabbath. I saw it when her labored breathing transformed into a girlish smile.



(l) Celeste from Graze on Faith
preparing produce for the winter

(r) Clara having a laugh with Micah



Three Days on the Way

by William Rader

The way in which God draws us to freedom was the focus of three retreat days led by John Fleming in the barn. Meeting in August, September, and October, we followed the Exodus journey of God's people Israel, meditating on it as the basic pattern for God's redeeming way in our own lives. Some terms we explored for describing the direction of this way are: from bondage to freedom, from false self to true self, from isolation to community, from old person to new person, from forgetfulness to remembrance.

John helped us to realize more fully (at least than I had before) that while liberation from slavery in Egypt as told in Exodus is the crucial beginning, the following books of Leviticus and Numbers and Deuteronomy are not only essential to the whole story, but also fruitful for understanding our own journeys. John gave us new perspectives on the whole sweep of the first five books of the Bible. Called the "Torah", usually translated "Law", these five books might better be understood as "teaching". We surely learned a great deal from this teaching under the guidance of John, a wonderfully skilled teacher. He used his education and experience in theology, biblical studies, and spiritual guidance to provide strong nourishment for our journey.

Each of the three one-day retreats focused on a different phase of the story. The first day was the phase of Separation –from Egypt and all that meant in terms of forgetfulness of God and being enslaved in various ways. Next came the Transition Phase, which centers at Mt. Sinai, where the people are taught the new way God wants them to live, as outlined in the Ten Commandments, and deal with the hard work of adjusting to this different world in which much of what they had taken for granted is taken away. Finally, the Integration Phase – finding the way through the wilderness, and preparing to enter the Promised Land, with all the struggle that involves.

It seems to me that each of us, as we look back on our life's journey interprets events again and again in light of our present situation and understanding. In this retreat, we did our interpretation in light of the journey of the people of Israel from bondage in Egypt to the Promised Land. In so doing, John helped us to draw the lines to Jesus Christ, who is the fulfillment of the journey of Israel. We reflected on Jesus' baptism and ours in connection with the crossing of the Red Sea, and on the Lord's Supper in connection with the Passover. We realized anew how the New Testament tells the story of Jesus in the light of the Old Testament story.

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John's thoughtful, carefully prepared retreat schedule, set forth in a booklet, gave us opportunity to listen to his insightful way of opening up new vistas and connections in scripture, and of scripture to our lives. It also afforded time for meditation, writing, and discussion. There is no way in a few paragraphs to adequately describe the richness of this retreat series. But in gratitude, this series of retreats has expanded and deepened my faith that amidst all my grieving, regret, bondage, wrong turns, fear, and rebelliousness, God hears my cry, comes in Christ to where I am, walks with me, as God did with Israel in the wilderness, and leads me to where I need to be in seeking God's kingdom.



Archival Photos



Freedom Farm Community & Freedom Hill Farm: Land flowing with cows and bees

Freedom Farm Notes from Clara (Mom) and Ann

A few months ago, I came across a sturdy Freedom Farm folder Mom compiled which includes two blue examination books Mom recycled from her teaching at Harrisburg Area Community College to draft "wills" for our family about Freedom Farm. In these blue books, Mom calls us to clarify our dreams for the future use of the farm.

"Praying, asking for the guidance of God's Spirit, and remembering where we have come from for Freedom Farm's vision and goals..." She notes, "what follow are... not yet prioritized or separated," but I (Ann) would like to share them with you the way Mom wrote them July 23, 2010, while she was at the farm.

1. Freedom Farm is to be used and kept as a working organic farm as one way of showing reverence for God's good creation. All [59] acres are to be together to help encourage land preservation for community good. Putting it into something like a land trust is already on the list and in progress...
2. Freedom Farm is to be shared with family, friends, and especially with those like urban youth who do not have the chance to be close to the soil and the care and marvels of God's creation. It has been and continues to be a place of incredible celebration and joy and relaxation - as well as incredibly hard work that is also satisfying and productive. The relationships with Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice⁽¹⁾ and [Camp]Deerpark⁽²⁾, as well as congregations in the city and locally, are part of our history and part of God's grace.
3. A very special part of this sharing is our relationship with Freedom Hill Farm⁽³⁾. God's blessing on this ground has been confirmed for us through the prayers, help and partnership with Rick and Julie Vreeland. Working together has been one of God's richest blessings and we marvel as God leads them toward ever new forms of ministry...
4. Freedom Farm is and has been and is to be an experiment in Christian Community. With the shared use by [Camp] Deerpark and Freedom Hill Farm and now the home of Alexie and John⁽⁴⁾, God has led us to see some looser forms of community, in addition to the shared living experienced by family and interns on Freedom Farm itself.

Notes by Ann:

(1.) Before Edgar and I moved to the farm, we worked at and lived near Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice (YMPJ), a community-based youth center in the South Bronx. 10 young people from YMPJ blessed Freedom Farm as the first retreat group in 2004 (before we had even moved to the farm full time).

(2.) Camp Deerpark is a local Mennonite Camp owned by and serving multiple congregations (along with foster children) in New York City.

(3.) Our neighbor, Rick Vreeland drove up in his truck soon after we moved to the farm and asked what we were planning to do with the land. Nervous he wouldn't like our plans, I stalled and invited him inside to meet the whole family. When we explained that we wanted to share the land through farming and ministry, Rick exclaimed, "Don't buy any equipment!" Moments later he returned with his wife Julie and daughter Jen and a brilliant bouquet of flowers, explaining that they'd been praying over the land for years. A few days later, Rick cleared a walking trail from Freedom Farm to their property. The following Spring he plowed a corn and pumpkin field here and built a chicken house on wheels to share with Youth who visited Freedom Farm. A couple years later, (about a decade after giving up a huge dairy operation b/c they had inadequate time for family) Rick and Julie started Freedom Hill Farm, a smaller more sustainable dairy farm which welcomes the community, and especially youth, to experience jersey cows, daily prayer, and fresh milk. Freedom Hill Farm has become a small hub of local farmers and artisans who bring honey, maple syrup, jam, soap, and more.

(4.) Alexie Torres-Fleming and John Fleming moved to our area with their family from the South Bronx to be a local part of Freedom Farm Community. Alexie founded Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice (YMPJ) in the early '90s, and I started working there in 2000. Summer 2010 we affectionately blessed their new home, "Freedom House," when a group of 20 sweaty freedom farming young people from YMPJ came for refreshment in Alexie and John's above-ground pool.

Children's Corner

Weeping for Our Children *by Ann Rader*

*"A voice was heard in Ramah,
wailing and loud lamentation,
Rachel weeping for her children;
she refused to be consoled,
because they are no more." (Mt. 2.18)*

Right after I composed my newsletter articles, Dad arrived at the farm with tears in his eyes. "Haven't you heard?" "Twenty children.... Kindergarden to fourth grade... have been killed.... and six teachers."

If it's this hard for us to lose Mom, vibrant as she was, she had lived 72 good years, how will our neighbors in Newtown, CT - mothers, fathers, families -- survive the grief of violently losing their beloved children?

I tried to imagine, as I tucked in my 6 year-old Micah that night.

Because we love children, and God especially loves children, we will pray and work for peace. For the children and community of Sandy Hook Elementary School and all our children terrorized by shootings

For our 16,000 children who die each day because of hunger-related illness (www.bread.org)

For our children caught in the crossfire of war around the world

Let us break the cycles of violence, replace isolation with community, beat our swords into plowshares, share bread, and honor the Prince of Peace.



Artwork by Josiah Rader-Hayes



Artwork by Micah Rader-Hayes



(l to r): Elias, Josiah, Jack, Cana, Micah, and Nehemiah at Camp Deerpark

VOLUNTEER PHOTOS



THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS AND SUPPORTERS OF FREEDOM FARM COMMUNITY! YOU ARE AN INTEGRAL PART IN HELPING US PREPARE THE LAND TO SHARE FOOD WITH THE HUNGRY AND THOSE WHO HAVE LITTLE ACCESS TO FRESH ORGANIC PRODUCE.

SPECIAL THANKS TO: CAMP DEERPARK, MANHATTAN MENNONITE FELLOWSHIP, RADICAL LIVING, SMALL AXE COMMUNITY, GORDON COLLEGE STUDENTS, AND ALL WHO SUPPORTED US THROUGH GIFTS IN MEMORY OF CLARA MCKEE RADER.

WELCOME 2013!!! LET THE PLANTING BEGIN!!!