



Cultivating Justice,  
Nonviolence & Well-being

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A nonprofit organization

### Store Hours

Monday-Thursday  
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January-February-March 2011

# PEACE CONNECTIONS NEWSLETTER

## Why I Am a Circles® Ally

by Sandy Lewis

*"He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." Micah 6:6-8*

The scripture above has been very meaningful to me for a long time. And I believe Circles® of Hope is giving me an opportunity to live this out more closely in at least three ways.

Circles® is helping me focus on the spiritual discipline of gratitude. There are two rituals that we share at every meeting: New & Goods and Appreciations. At the beginning of the meeting we each share

about one thing that has happened recently that has been both new and good. This helps us to focus on the positive things happening in our life. At the close of each meeting we each take a turn giving an appreciation for a person sitting next to us in the circle. This gives us



Candie Coutts, Circle Leader, Roy Pumphrey & Sandy Lewis, Allies

the opportunity to show gratitude for the gifts that another brings to the group.

Circles® helps me live out my calling as a Christian to work towards a more just world. We strive to help our community be more in line with Kingdom Values. The 4th Tuesday of every month we come together for the "Big View" meeting. At these meetings we try to bring members from the community together to identify and try to break down barriers that are keeping persons in poverty. We are currently looking at housing issues and predator lending practices. When I was with Mennonite Central Committee in Brazil we adapted an old Chinese proverb: "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for lifetime." We discovered that sometimes you have to help the person to get the right to fish at the pond. I believe that is what the Big View meeting is all about -- helping people get the right to go to the pond.

Finally, Circles® helps us work towards community building. Every Tuesday evening people from many walks of life gather together to share a meal and to support one another in reaching our goals. This is intentionally created with our Matched Circles

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## Lewis

■ Continued from page 1

in which a circle leader meets with his or her allies to work towards increasing his/her resources and reaching his/her goals. But it is also evident in the larger circle as we get to know each other and support one another.

When I decided to join Circles® as an Ally, I did so because I wanted to support someone who was trying to get out of poverty. And I hope I have been a support in some small way. But Circles® has been a gift to me as well. There have been many occasions that I have arrived at the Circles® meeting tired and worn out from the day, but I almost always leave feeling much more refreshed and energized!

## Resolutions to Consider for 2011

Another Getting Ahead class has now graduated, as of December 21, 2010! We congratulate the 10 persons who participated in this 15-week co-investigation of poverty and developed a family-specific plan to improve their resources. Of the 10 persons, the majority have chosen to become Circle Leaders and be matched with a team of Allies who will offer friendship and support to them as they continue working on their goals and building their resources during the next 18 months. More Allies are still needed. **In 2011, consider becoming an Ally or helping us spread the word about GA classes!**



**Nine of ten Getting Ahead graduates, and co-facilitators Denise & Mark Rhoades (Greg Myers not pictured)**

We are excited about the year ahead as new and old Circle Leaders and their Allies continue to meet on Tuesday evenings for a meal and education. Eating together and the fellowship shared is always an important part of the evening. This past fall we were pleased that the USD 373 McKinley Administration Center employees wanted to provide all the Tuesday evening meals for the month of October. **In 2011, consider preparing or donating a meal!**



**Dr. John Morton, Newton USD 373 superintendent, and his wife Pat, serve dessert as the McKinley Administration Center provides dinner for Circles® of Hope**

Landlord and tenant issues were a hot topic in 2010 and the Big View meetings will continue to look at housing issues in 2011. Educational meetings will focus on financial management in the year ahead. **In 2011, consider attending a Tuesday evening meeting!** The 1st Tues. is the education meeting and the 4th Tues. is the Big View – both are open to the public.

Circles® staff was pleased to have a number of opportunities to help others learn more about poverty and Circles® during the past couple of months. Presentations were given to the Rotary Club, staff at Cooper Education Building, First United Methodist Women's group, USD 373 school board, Ladies Reading Club, Newton Ministerial Alliance, and a Hutchison community group. Faith Mennonite Church hosted a poverty simulation for their congregation. A worship service was given at Halstead First Mennonite Church, with Circle Leaders, Allies, and volunteers offering their reflections. Halstead and Faith also chose Circles® as a recipient of their fall mission offerings, for which we were very grateful! **In 2011, consider a Circles® presentation or poverty simulation for your group!**

**Other "resolutions" for 2011** could include just stopping in and learning what Circles® is all about, making a monthly or quarterly donation, or helping promote Circles® with our new full-color brochures. Being involved with Circles® is a great way to enrich our community and your life!

# More On Being an Ally

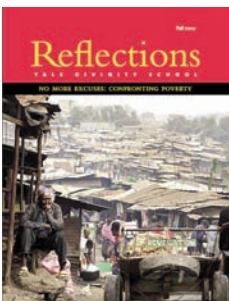
by Gordon Houser

I became a Circles® of Hope Ally (along with three others) to a Circle Leader in September. We meet the second Tuesday of each month at First United Methodist Church. After eating together with all who come, we meet in our matched circle groups and talk about our goals and how we are working on them. We all share about goals, not just our Circle Leader. Our Circle Leader leads the meetings. We are there to be friends and offer support or ways to connect with others who might help with a certain need, but we are not allowed to provide any monetary support ourselves. Sometimes that's the hardest part.

**“I’ve...learned that one of the greatest ways to fight poverty is community.”**

I'm thankful for Circles® of Hope and for my circle group for several reasons. I'm glad to be part of a movement that “works to end poverty one family at a time” (as it says in their brochures). I'm grateful for learning to know new people and new ways of being. One of these new ways is being equal. In our monthly gathering we all eat together. When I first started going to that in June, just to get to know people there, I realized I didn't know who there was in poverty and who wasn't. I met a guy once who asked if I was in the Getting Ahead class. I love that he made that mistake. I've learned that any of us could be in poverty. All it takes is a loss of a job or a severe health problem. I've also learned that one of the greatest ways to fight poverty is community. The Getting Ahead teacher said once that poverty is isolating and therefore disempowering. In our circle, one person may know someone who can help with something. Another person may know someone else or have a connection with a certain organization. The ingenious approach of Circles® of Hope is simply getting people together.

## Free Social Justice Resources



*Reflections - No More Excuses: Confronting Poverty* (Fall 2010 issue). *Reflections* is a magazine of theological and ethical inquiry published biannually by the Yale Divinity School. Contributing writers have been asked to offer their assessments about the current state of the various campaigns to combat poverty and to think about some of the forces that complicate the effort. 80 pages. Visit [www.yale.edu/reflections](http://www.yale.edu/reflections) or call 203-432-5359. (shipping costs by donation) View sample at Peace Connections.

*Seek Social Justice: Transforming Lives in Need* - DVD. Problems like poverty, addiction, and homelessness are serious and complex. Passion alone won't solve them. *Seek Social Justice* is a six-lesson DVD small group study guide that provides a framework for understanding and engaging human need.

Combining real-world examples of effective action with the wisdom of Christian leaders like Chuck Colson, Al Mohler, and Marvin Olasky, it will challenge your ideas about social justice and how to transform lives in need. Visit [www.seeksocialjustice.com](http://www.seeksocialjustice.com) (shipping and handling charges apply)

## Circles® of Hope in the News

We are grateful to Tyler Prochazka for his article covering poverty and Circles®--“Poverty in Newton Increasing”--in the December 17, 2010 *Newtonian*, and to Laurie Oswald Robinson and the *Mennonite Weekly Review* for the article on poverty and Circles®--“Together a Path Out of Poverty: Circles® of Hope Creates Web of Support that Changes Lives”--in the January 3, 2011 edition of the *Mennonite Weekly Review*.



# Poverty Simulation Reflections from Faith Mennonite Newton

adapted from a report by Verda Deckert (Verda, along with Arlys Schwabauer coordinated the event)

"I'll never look at people in poverty the same again," commented a participant following a poverty simulation sponsored by Faith Mennonite Church for their Mission Sunday in November. Arnita Haury, former Peace Connection board member, led the group of 104 participants in a short and thoughtful opening worship, and then Pandea Smith, community member, and Jerica Hinshaw, Circle Leader, led the simulation. Since Faith also wanted to offer a lunch, they decided to continue the simulation idea by randomly seating participants at tables set and menus served to reflect four different income levels according to the percentage of the U.S. Population. Tables & menus ranged from hot dogs and pop on paper plates with no silverware to a 4-course meal on china with table waiters. After lunch the group came back together to share impressions and learn about ways to work with those in poverty to overcome roadblocks to their success. Jerica shared about the Getting Ahead class and Circles® of Hope and how Allies can be involved with Circle Leaders.

Participants were very engaged in the process and responses about the day were thoughtful and positive. The simulation and luncheon sparked lots of meaningful conversation which will likely continue. Here's a sampling of responses following the experience:

## 1. Briefly describe your thoughts about the day.

- *At first I felt overwhelmed by all the details. Then I felt allied to the members of my simulation "family." Pretty soon, I felt a lot of unity with all the people, both who were running the booths and the other "families." I think the fact that we were able to pretend together drew us closer together. Sure, we experienced the hardships of poverty, but we also experienced camaraderie and the challenge of having to overcome difficulties together.*
- *Very much an eye opener – glad for the experience.*
- *Excellent educational, experiential, relevant learning about an issue that helps us be more responsive to the needs in our community.*
- *"I don't like this game, it's too much like real life."*

## 2. What insights did you have?

- *I could see the value of Allies as people in poverty fight the system.*
- *Being a person/family in need is very difficult because of the system you have to go through.*
- *How complicated it can be to navigate "the system."*
- *It was impossible to get ahead and do everything that you ought to do...things worked better if you sometimes left the 1 year-old with the 10 year-old.*
- *Persons in jail were a relief because they had food and shelter and were out of the family and taken care of with their needs met.*
- *We are primarily a middle class congregation.*

## 3. What surprised you?

- *I was surprised by how valuable time is when you're in poverty. That resource is just as important as money, and is often limited due to jobs, childcare, business hours, etc.*
- *There are so many different agencies available, yet they not easily accessible.*
- *I was surprised there is no more abuse than reported due to demands of this life.*

## 4. How can this experience change our actions as we live and work in our local community?

- *The exercise certainly makes me more understanding of students in the public school system.*
- *It is important to make community resources accessible.*
- *What decisions could have been made differently to prevent persons from getting into the situation of poverty in the first place.*
- *We have much to think about as we consider how God might be speaking to each of our hearts in response to this urgent need in our community.*

**Interested in hosting your own poverty simulation?**

**Contact Peace Connections to schedule one for your congregation or group in 2011!**

# BOOK & GIFT SHOP

## New Books

***The Giving Book: Open the Door to a Lifetime of Giving***  
by Ellen Sabin.

An activity book, a journal, and a scrapbook that inspires and records a child's journey into a lifelong tradition of giving. Filled with activities that help children think about their hopes and dreams for the world – how to use their time, kindness, talents, and money to make a difference for others. Ages 6-11. **\$19.95**



Keep warm this winter with **hand-crocheted slippers, caps, neck scarves, and mitts** in a variety of yarns and colors. **\$3-5.**

**Valentine's Day Special – buy one Comfort Heart, get one ½ off!**

Heart shaped pillows filled with flax seed which you can warm in the microwave to bring relief for sore muscles, warm you up, etc. or chill in the refrigerator to relieve tired eyes or a headache.



***Forever Family*** by Laurie Oswald Robinson is an emotionally powerful and insightful view of our adoption process. This true story describes how one family found hope by discovering that emotional bonding can be as binding as biology in forging a “forever family.” **\$12.95**

***Transformation is only valid if it is carried out with the people, not for them.***  
**- Paulo Freire**

## We are grateful to the following people for their gift of time during October, November & December, 2010:

- ◆ Those who have provided food for the Circles® Tuesday evening gatherings – with special thanks to USD 373 McKinley Administration Center for providing all of the October meals
- ◆ Halstead Mennonite Church for contributing half of their mission supper offering to Circles® of Hope and for inviting Circles® to offer a worship service this fall
- ◆ Faith Mennonite Church for their interest in learning more about poverty and hosting a poverty simulation for their congregation (with special thanks to Verda Deckert & Arlys Schwabauer for planning and to Jerica Hinshaw, Pandea Smith, and Arnita Haury for help with facilitation). We are grateful as well for the generous mission offering received for Circles® of Hope from Faith
- ◆ First United Methodist Church in Newton for the ongoing use of their facility for Circles® Newton Women's Reading Circle group for having their November meeting at Peace Connections, including a presentation by Arnita Haury on the history and current programs of Peace Connections
- ◆ Mary Ediger for help with downtown Halloween walk
- ◆ Marlene Smucker, Leann Toews, Stan Bohn, Cay Siebert, Corinne Kehrberg, Ruby Moore, George Dyck, Vernon Lohrentz, Jeanette Stucky, Berni Kaufman, John Otto, and Paul Fransen for help on Saturdays, during special holiday hours, and other times when staff was out of the office
- ◆ Jerry & Leann Toews for providing and preparing a delicious meal for our Donor Appreciation Dinner, Jerry for sharing his musical talents, and Arnita Haury for coordinating plans for this event
- ◆ Everyone who shopped in the PC Store this year!



# WINTER CALENDAR

## JANUARY

**Circles™ of Hope community meetings** are being held on **Tuesdays**, 6:30 -8 pm at the First United Methodist Church. The first Tuesday of each month features an educational topic, and the fourth Tuesday is the Big View meeting, which explores and works on barriers that keep people right here in Harvey County from having enough resources. (The second Tuesday is reserved for Ally and Circle Leader meetings and the third Tuesday is reserved for the Guiding Coalition meeting.)

**Peace Connections Board meeting** will be **Jan. 6**, 7 pm. Meetings are open to the public.

Inspire change in our community and yourself in 2011: Offer friendship and support to Circle™ Leaders, individuals/families transitioning out of poverty. A **Circles™ of Hope information session** will be held on Sat., **Jan. 8**, 8:30 am – 4 pm, at the First United Methodist Church, 801 N. Main, Newton. Learn more about ways to be involved with Circles™ of Hope, including Bridges Out of Poverty and Ally training. No cost/lunch provided. To register call Peace Connections at 284-0000 or email us at [info@peaceconnections.org](mailto:info@peaceconnections.org)

## FEBRUARY

**Circles community meetings** will be held on **Tuesdays**, 6:30-8 pm at the First United Methodist Church. See info. under January.

**Peace Connections Board meeting** will be **February 3**, 7 pm. Meetings are open to the public.

**Make your Valentine cards** at Peace Connections! Valentine stamps and materials will be out & available **Mon., Feb. 7 – Mon., Feb. 14.** (closed Fri.).

## MARCH

**Circles community meetings** will be held on **Tuesdays**, 6:30-8 pm at the First United Methodist Church. See info. under January.

**Peace Connections Annual Celebration** will be Sunday, March 6, 3:00 - 4:30 p.m. in the Bethel College Mennonite Church Fellowship Hall. Join us for music and dessert. More information to come!

A SEASON FOR  
NONVIOLENCE



carry the vision

**The Season for Nonviolence begins January 30 and runs through April 4.** This is a national 64-day grassroots campaign “dedicated to demonstrating that nonviolence is a powerful way to heal, transform, and empower our lives and our communities.” Inspired by memorial anniversaries of Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., this international event honors their vision for an empowered, nonviolent world. We invite you to think about how you could use this in your home, school, workplace, etc. Stop by Peace Connections for materials (practice guides, posters, t-shirts) that you can use and watch the Kansan for daily suggestions of how to practice nonviolence or visit [www.64-days.org](http://www.64-days.org) for daily practices.

## BOARD NOTES

Peace Connections is pleased to have Margaret Goering to serve as Board President in 2011 and continue to serve as our Circles® Liaison. Other officers include Marilyn Helburg as Treasurer, John McGee as Board Development Chair, and Marjean Harris as Fund Development Chair.

Peace Connections welcomes Cathy Anderson to the Board of Directors. Cathy has ties to the organization from several years ago when she served as the administrative associate. She officially joined the board in November and comments on her decision to become a board member, “I am grateful for the dedicated efforts of so many people to foster the vision and projects of Peace Connections, and I’d like to do my part to continue the work.”

Berni Kaufman completed her 3-year term on the board in November. She expressed appreciation for the collaboration she saw; Peace Connections brought many groups – school, prison, service organizations, city council, etc. – with similar wants and needs to the same table. We thank Berni for sharing her time.



**Cathy Anderson**

# Peace Connections is very grateful for the financial support and gifts of time given by so many during 2011

Susan Balzer	Bonnie Goering	Miles Reimer & Kathy Landis	Naomi & Orville Rutschman	Dolores Yoder
Justina Neufeld & Floyd Bartel	Dave & Marge Goering	Sandy & Tim Lewis	Amy & Matt Schmidt	Jim & Doris Yoder
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Anita Boese	Helen Goering	A. Wayne Wiens & Gail Lutsch	Allen & Mary Schrag	Book Reviews
Anita & Stan Bohn	Jay & Linda Goering	James Lynch	Bob & Jenny Schrag	Central Kansas Community Foundation
Jerre & Lucy Bontrager	Larry & Margaret Goering	Bill & Ruth Mason	Laura Ann Schrag	Citizen's State Bank
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Bob Challans & Brenda Harkins	David Habegger	J. Harold & Rosemary Moyer	Lois & Walter Silvernale	Grace Community Church
Milton Claassen	Chuck & Jan Hadley	Berneil & Ted Mueller	John & Molly Simmering	Grace Hill Mennonite Church
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Daagya Dick & Juan Coy	Edgar & Marge Harms	Dana & Kathleen Neff	Marlene & Stan Smucker	Kids FUNd
Mary Cross	Paula Harms	Donna & Harry Neufeld	Muriel T. Stackley	Ladies Reading Circle, Newton
Boyd & Jonell Davies	Marjean Harris	Frieda & Walter Neufeld	Jack & Linda Stauffer	Midland National Bank
Lois and Marion Deckert	Beverly & Shafiq Hasan	Fred & Ruth Obold	Bruce & Pat Stucky	New Creation Fellowship
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Elvira Voth & Lester Ewy	Gary & Jean Isaac	Rachel Poling	Beth VanNatta	Women's Community Fund
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Marsha Forcum	Vern Preheim & Norma Johnson	Kathy Randall	Arnold Voth	Let us know if we missed you.
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**Vision: Thriving communities sustained by social justice and compassion.**

*Embrace Change*

- surrender your fear
- take flight toward your dream
- speak of your gratitude
- dance in the moonlight
- believe in healing
- surprise yourself, do something  
you didn't think you could do
- love with abandon
- begin today

**Mission:**

**Peace Connections partners with others to:**

- ▶ build resources within families and communities
- ▶ teach and practice nonviolence
- ▶ nurture personal and spiritual well-being

This newsletter is published four times per year by Peace Connections, an ecumenical non-profit.

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The Board of Directors meets monthly at 612 N. Main, Newton, KS. Meetings are open to the public.