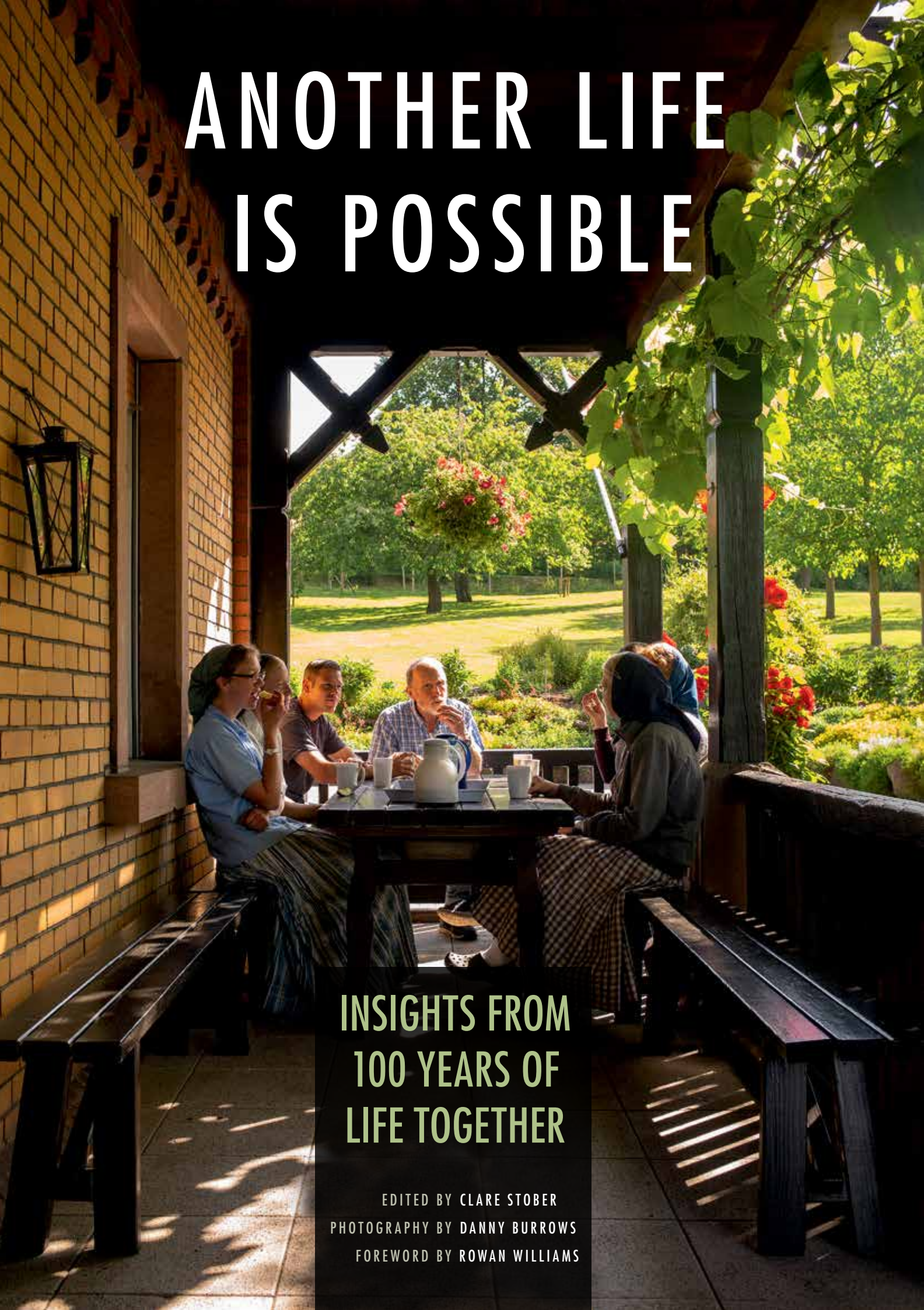

ANOTHER LIFE IS POSSIBLE

INSIGHTS FROM 100 YEARS OF LIFE TOGETHER

EDITED BY CLARE STOBER

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DANNY BURROWS

FOREWORD BY ROWAN WILLIAMS

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The Bellvale community watches a marionette show created and performed by the fifth and sixth graders.

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FOREWORD

BY ROWAN WILLIAMS

The church of God is repeatedly reminded of what it actually is by the way God calls believers to take community seriously, generation after generation. The church, in the widest sense, constantly slips back into being either a hierarchical body where some decide and others obey, or else a loose association of individuals sharing a common inspiration but little else. The Bruderhof movement has, over the last century, firmly and consistently declared that neither of these will do. The Good News is nothing if not embodied in a style of living together – learning, praying, working, deciding together – that simply manifests what God makes possible. As our civilization shakes and fragments, and begins to recognize belatedly what violence it has done to the whole created order as well as to the deepest levels of human dignity, this embodied witness is more and more significant.

The Bruderhof communities are not the creation of wild and eccentric religious speculation. These are people who accept the great central mysteries of the Christian faith – the eternal threefold life and love of God, the coming of God's Word in the flesh – and seek only to live in faithfulness to the gifts of the Spirit and the guidance of Scripture, read prayerfully and intelligently in fellowship. For all who call themselves Christian, this simple witness to the implications of the classical central affirmations of faith should give pause. If God is truly as we say; if Christ's spirit is truly manifest – as Paul says – in the style in which we live together without resentment, rivalry, and fear; if the Christian is truly set free from the violent power structures of this world; why are the priorities and practices of the Bruderhof not more evident in other Christian communities? The Bruderhof gently holds up a mirror to the Christian world and asks, "Why not this?"

My own contacts with the community have been a joy and enrichment over many years. The Darvell community has welcomed me as a guest, and I have had the special pleasure of sharing a little in the educational life of the group, speaking with children in the school and discussing some of the publishing work. One of the most striking things about the Bruderhof is what you might call their spiritual and intellectual hospitality – as warm as the literal hospitality the visitor experiences. This is a community willing to learn from and to celebrate the early Christians and Saint Francis, Catholics such as Dorothy Day and Thomas Merton, Jean Vanier and the L'Arche communities, Russian

Christians such as Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy, and many more. In that sense, this is a genuinely catholic reality, a community seeking to nourish itself with the wisdom and experience of the whole Christian family extended in time and space. There is no sectarian aggression here – clear and uncompromising principle, yes, but not the urge to demean or despise others.

This is a beautiful book on several levels, beautiful in the images it gives of simple and harmonious relation with an environment, but beautiful also in its chronicling of lives that have been held and healed in this shared enterprise of the Spirit. It is a gift, and a welcome one – but above all a gift that speaks of the first and greater gift of the presence of the Bruderhof in this world. My friends on the Bruderhof are witnesses to the peaceable kingdom – not merely people who believe peace is an ideal worth pursuing, but men, women, and children who trust the God of peace sufficiently to give their lives to incarnating the peace of God. I hope this book will help all its readers learn something of how such trust becomes possible and real.

Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury from 2002 to 2012, is a master of Magdalen College in Cambridge and chancellor of the University of Wales.

PHOTOGRAPHER'S NOTE

I first met the Bruderhof while documenting the refugee crisis in a sprawling camp in Calais, where the distinctive dress and light American accents of a group of volunteering teenagers caught my attention.

I spoke with them briefly, and on my return to England I wrote to ask if I could make a photographic documentary about the Bruderhof. A reply soon came from Bernard Hibbs, who invited me to lunch at Beech Grove to discuss my ideas. We corresponded sporadically until about a year later, when Bernard rang again to ask if I would photograph a book to celebrate the community's centenary. I jumped at the chance.

Over the following year I visited Bruderhof communities around the globe, from England to the USA and Germany to Australia. In each community I was warmly welcomed and (perhaps to the frustration of those supervising the project) spent many hours chatting about the world, politics, and life over a glass of wine or homemade beer—thank you, Jeff, for the latter! And more than once I was moved to tears by the stories we shared.

It was the Bruderhof's commitment to pacifism and community of goods that initially sparked my interest, and it was a pleasure to experience these values in practice. As a photographer, I am meant to observe my subjects objectively, but I have to admit that I grew to admire the community. That is not to say that I didn't encounter ideas that were contradictory to my own, but I respect their commitment to family and loved ones, the absence of wealth and possessions, the enjoyment of nature, and an immersive experience of faith. The more I experienced the more I began to appreciate what the Bruderhof refer to as "another life," a working alternative to "my world."

My final assignment was Sannerz, Germany, where the community began its journey. Watching the sun set over the countryside was the perfect end to the project. To all who welcomed me as I worked on it: thank you for letting me experience your life.

Danny Burrows
dannyburrowsphotography.com

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Gary finishes a quality check on "Outlast" components in a Community Playthings factory. Outlast is a system of interlocking blocks and planks for outdoor imaginative and active play.

WORKING FOR A PURPOSE

COURTESY OF EHRLICH FAMILY

STAN EHRLICH

1920–2004

Born to a Jewish businessman and a concert pianist, Stan was attending business school in Brussels in 1940 when the Nazis invaded Belgium. He fled for his life, illegally crossing numerous borders until he left Europe from Spain, eventually settling in Buenos Aires, where he met and married Hela, a Jewish refugee from Dresden. In Buenos Aires, they lived "the classic bourgeois life."

Despite financial security and the cosmopolitan trappings of their social life—the Ehrlichs each spoke four languages and were conversant in philosophy, literature, and modern art—the young couple was dissatisfied. They considered themselves survivors, and as Stan put it years later, they were searching for "something transcendent, something that could relate our life to eternal truths and values, and give our work substance and meaning."

They discovered the Bruderhof and joined in 1954. Stan's sense of gratitude and awe, even personal indebtedness, before what he perceived to be a miracle—the communal life they had found—never dimmed. Over the next decades, Stan worked for the community's businesses in sales and shipping and in its factories. An odd fit for someone with his interests and intellectual gifts? Stan would beg to differ. As he wrote to a granddaughter: "Happiness and inner peace do not depend on your work. They depend on the purpose you have discovered for your life." Writing in his seventies to an old friend, he said:

I still work a few hours every day in our factory. A joy! The way the windows are set, so that the place is flooded with light; the height of the ceiling; the atmosphere of peace on the floor—all of a sudden it occurred to me that this was a cathedral. Light, joy, peace, service: isn't that what cathedrals are about?

We are grateful that we can live to demonstrate unity with peoples of all nations, and help to build up, not destroy, the brotherhood of man. And, whether we wash or cook is small in comparison with that vision. It's a case of "I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness" [Psalm 84:10]. I find happiness in washing for the kingdom of God, where I'd only find misery in making, say, ammunition for its destruction.

Nina Wright, teacher and Bruderhof member. Written in 1942.
1911–2008

COURTESY OF BRONWEN BARRON

BRONWEN BARRON

1995–

Bronwen is a nurse and works in the medical clinic in Bellvale. At age nineteen, before attending nursing school, she worked for a year in the community kitchen, overseeing the team putting food on the table for 250 people every day, a responsibility that meant she was often in the kitchen after hours.

A friend and I started making granola and yogurt for the other young people who would come to the kitchen after work to make coffee and heat up leftovers. The kitchen became a kind of informal hangout: in off hours there would be a lot of young people in there, sitting on counters with their bowls of granola and talking. People really appreciated it: it was a good way to make space for friendship and conversation. On days when I don't really connect with anybody – work-related chatter doesn't count – I'm left feeling kind of blank. But even one good conversation about real life can make my day worthwhile.

That's just one example. It's easy to get into the mindset that once I've done my allotted work I can sign out for the day, but that's not what discipleship means. In fact, sometimes focusing on my job gets in the way of actually living in community with people – taking time to talk, to go the extra mile giving practical help to an older person, or just finding ways to bring a smile to someone's face. But because I live in community I have the freedom to prioritize people over the work that needs to be done.

COURTESY OF VOLL FAMILY

JERRY VOLL

1941–

A pastor who discovered that true vocation is how you live, not what you do for a living

Already as a child in Louisville, Kentucky, Jerry knew he would become a minister: "Our family went to church regularly. Two of my older brothers were ministers. And my father had the notion that a minister was the highest category of Christian." Three years into his career, however, Jerry became convinced that the best way to serve God was to leave the pastorate.

Part of it was frustration with the lack of personal commitment he found in his congregation, whose members seemed satisfied with superficial relationships and a calming Sunday sermon. Part of it was also his own seven-year preparation for the ministry (four at college, and three more at a United Church of Christ seminary):

One book that really spoke to me during my studies was Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *The Cost of Discipleship.* It made me realize that I needed to be active in society, not only in my church. This was the era of the civil rights movement and Vietnam, and the issues of the day were all new to me. I had never realized how racist my supposedly good Christian family was; nor did I know anything about conscientious objection to war. (There were army men in our family, and serving in the military was not a subject for debate.) Now I began to see that as a follower of Jesus, I could not take part in killing.

As a pastor, Jerry's views soon landed him in trouble. One man known as a "pillar of the church" attempted to bribe him to lose the beard that marked his dissenting. Another complained about how hard it would be to get rid of him: "The only way you can remove a minister is if he's openly preaching heresy or running around with someone else's wife."

Ironically, that wasn't always true. When a married fellow pastor fell in love with another woman and obtained a divorce so that he could

<< Jerry's grandson Jordan working with Jaehyoung, making furniture in the community workshop

"We hungered for something deeper – for real fellowship. But I knew in my heart that to find it, we would need to forget what we had and find something new."

remarry, Jerry confronted him with Jesus' clear words about marital faithfulness in the Sermon on the Mount. The man retorted, "You can't take the Bible so literally." In short, what Jerry had regarded as a calling was viewed by his congregants in a very different light: as a profession.

By now I had been serving our parish for about three and a half years, and there was a strange uneasiness growing inside of me. Financially, Nancy – my wife, an English teacher – and I were making it. We had a house and a brand-new Pontiac. We were good tithers, as were many others.

But there seemed to be very little desire to follow Jesus one hundred percent, and I began wondering why people attended church in the first place. To me, it was becoming clear that it was just another institution, and that my involvement could only continue within the framework of that institution. We hungered for something deeper – for real fellowship. But I knew in my heart that to find it, we would need to forget what we had and find something new.

Then, at a weekend retreat, someone told us about this community in Connecticut called the Bruderhof.

The Volls made their first visit over Easter in 1970, and discovered, in Jerry's words, "the church as an organism made up of people who have given their hearts and lives to Jesus and to one another. They were not going to church, they were the church, all day, every day." Back home, they took stock of what they had experienced, and made several decisions:

One was that I had to get out from underneath professional ministry. Another was that we had to get our own life in shape. There were things that weren't right in our marriage: we were used to things being excused or swept under the carpet, and now saw that they required repentance. Finally, we realized that Christians are called to community (not necessarily the Bruderhof) and that we ourselves had to answer this call.

In June 1970, Jerry resigned, and moved, with Nancy and their one-year-old daughter, into an intentional community: a big farmhouse with two other families and two college students. That effort fell apart due to a lack of trust and common vision and, about a year later, they moved again, this time to the Bruderhof. Jerry and Nancy became members in 1973. Since then, Jerry has worked for the community in numerous capacities: making classroom furniture and designing equipment for people with disabilities, helping in the publishing house, and serving as a pastor and youth counselor.

All this has transformed the way he thinks about vocation:

There is such an emphasis on choosing and building the right career, on finding myself and my vocation. But the real question is this: "What does Jesus call each one of us to?" or, put another way, "How does God want me to live?" These questions are valid no matter what your line of work.

On my first visit to the Bruderhof, I told a member that my goal was to be an effective pastor. "We are not called to be effective," he answered forcefully. "We are called to be faithful." ♦

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Jerry reviewing medical options during a house call from Jake, his primary care physician and a fellow member of the Bruderhof

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Mother's Day performance at Harlem House community

LOOKING FOR FREEDOM

COURTESY OF JOHNSON FAMILY

Born in Nova Scotia to a single mother, Malcolm was adopted by Steve and Edie Johnson, a white couple who joined the Bruderhof when he was five. As a teen, he left home in Connecticut and moved in with friends of the community in the Deep South. He spent the next several years there, going to school and figuring out who he was and where he belonged. "I'd always thought of myself as black, of course, but now people were telling me, 'You talk white.' Those were important years, connecting with my roots as a black person, and formulating my own thoughts on what I wanted to do with my life."

MALCOLM JOHNSON

1975–

After high school, Malcolm returned to the Bruderhof and is now a pastor. Today, he and his wife, Michelle, and their four children live in a community house in Kingston, New York. Now he finds himself helping his children navigate questions of identity:

Who you are matters. If you're not free to be yourself, you're not a complete individual. You have to be true to who God made you, and everybody was made different. People who check their heritage at the door and try to be like everyone else around them are doing themselves and the others a disservice. That's why I tell my kids, "Be proud of who you are – that your father is black, and your mother white."

If you use your freedom selfishly, you will destroy community. Martin Luther King Jr. didn't just talk about all men being equal, but about them becoming brothers. I think community is one of the best ways to work toward that.

<< Coached by his teacher, a young falconer learns to master himself – and his hawk.

COURTESY OF ALBERTZ FAMILY

ERNA ALBERTZ

1979–

She was determined to make a difference and transform the world.

Headstrong and rebellious, Erna left the Bruderhof community where she was born and raised, planning to take a gap year after high school before returning. Soon, however, she was promising herself she'd never wear a skirt again. Dissidence was a family trait: her mother's family had resisted Hitler; and her father, an outspoken civil rights activist from New York, had spent a summer helping to register African-American voters in Mississippi.

Attending high school in Connecticut in the mid-1990s, she befriended a Bosnian girl who had come to the United States on a scholarship. Through their conversations, Erna developed an interest in the Balkan War and the suffering of that region's people in its aftermath. After graduating, Erna taught English to recent immigrants. One of her students was a Bosnian Muslim young man.

In time, his mother took to calling me her *snaha* – daughter-in-law. His family was set on the American dream, and while I felt close to him, I knew a house, car, vacations, and the like would not spell fulfillment for me. They were only nominally Muslim but I also worried about not sharing the same faith. In the end, though, it was my newfound feminism that prompted me to drop the relationship: "freedom" seemed more important than love.

Still passionate about the Balkans, she took a volunteer position in a Bosnian camp for roughly 320 displaced people as a liaison for an international NGO.

It was a challenging assignment. I was twenty-one, the only non-Muslim, and the eyes and ears for the NGO administration as to what was happening on the ground. But it was just what I wanted: a chance to make a difference and make the world a better place.

The longer I stayed there, though, the more I realized my inadequacy in the face of the complexities I was dealing with. I expected to see their shared suffering and common faith bonding these families, but instead found gossip and division. I found myself thinking wistfully

<< The Mount Academy's brass ensemble practices in the chapel. The school is housed in the former Mount Saint Alphonsus seminary, built by the Redemptorist Brothers in 1907 on the banks of the Hudson River. The Romanesque chapel is used for special occasions.

ANNE FINAUGHTY

1961–

Before joining the Danthonia Bruderhof in Australia in 2009, Anne, who has complex physical disabilities, spent up to nineteen hours a day sleeping, and her waking hours in front of the television. Despite her welfare check she was always short of money, and hated her work in a shop for people with disabilities: "It was like a prison. Horrible. Dead boring." Over time, she longed to put an end to it all. "I was literally waiting to die."

Today, Anne is often up at five in the morning, and runs a card- and sign-making business that she calls "Joy Is Love." She has produced hundreds of colorful greeting cards, door signs, and wheelchair tags. Some she sells, but most she gives away. Her goal? "To share the happiness I've found by cheering up and encouraging others."

Through allowing her creative side to blossom, Anne has found the freedom to be herself, and affirmation in sharing her gifts with others: "Painting has helped me by relaxing me and getting me out of myself. I still have my ups and downs, but the miracle is that through my artwork, I can always find joy. It might be hidden somewhere down inside me, but it always comes out eventually."

Asked if she's still waiting to die, she scoffs. "I gave that up, thank you very much. I do not want to die!"

of the harmony between the 320 people I had grown up amongst.

Not one to give up easily, Erna proposed a new program to her NGO, and before long she was offered a management position.

This was my dream coming true: financial security and independence while helping those in need. Was it a coincidence that I'd just made a secret decision to return to the Bruderhof? I now faced a choice between a perfectly acceptable form of service – and a truly radical one.

Again ducking commitment, Erna moved to Germany. There, she applied for midwifery school. One day, while interning in a clinic, she witnessed the abortion of a 23-week-old baby with Down syndrome:

One floor below us, in the neonatal intensive care unit, no efforts

were spared to save the lives of 24-week-olds. But because this child had a incurable genetic "disease," it was still defined as a disposable fetus. Who decided these things, and how?

Haunted by the realization that "the ultimate coefficient of a woman's freedom might be the murder of her unborn baby," Erna found herself reflecting on her parents and younger sister, Iris, who has Down syndrome.

What struck me was the miracle of how Iris and others like her were integrated into every facet of Bruderhof life. My parents never had to ask themselves whether they could "afford" to accept her, or whether she fit with their lifestyle. In community, the gifts Iris had to offer could be received. She was not only cared for; she was also able to reciprocate. My values of autonomy and success stood in stark contrast to that.

I began to reconsider freedom. I had been reading Kierkegaard, who wrote that you never actually have freedom until you use it to make a decision. If you just float along, you are not utilizing it. The Bruderhof members' commitment and solidarity was what created the space where freedom could flourish for all.

Paolo Coelho's book *The Alchemist* was the final peg in the coffin of my ideals. In it, a shepherd from Andalusia, Spain, has a recurring dream about a treasure buried beneath a pyramid in Egypt. He gives up everything to go on a long and harrowing search for this treasure, but on arriving there realizes, through a clue, that it lies under the roots of the very sycamore tree in Andalusia where he first had his dream. The message couldn't have been clearer to me: "The treasure lies buried at home." And "Real freedom is to find your calling and give up everything for it."

Erna returned to the Bruderhof and became a member in 2004, several days after her twenty-fifth birthday.

Becoming a member of the Bruderhof means committing to Christ first, through baptism. People warned me this could mean the beginning of an inner struggle. But for me it was the other way around. I guess I'd done my struggling first. The day I was baptized (outdoors), a chilly wind was blowing fiercely, as if to chase away my old life and bring me something new. Afterwards I stood up, dripping wet, but filled with joy and peace. In binding myself to Jesus – and to others – I was finally free. ♦

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Dr. Zimmerman teaches a biology class at The Mount Academy.

COURTESY OF MICHELLE HINKEY

MICHELLE HINKEY

1994–

Michelle Hinkey, currently studying physical therapy at Duke University School of Medicine, has thought a lot about the circumstances and decisions that have brought her to where she is now:

I have been fortunate in many ways—I was born into a loving family and grew up knowing I had the support of my parents, my grandparents, and my community. I loved school and enjoyed a great high school education in Tannersville, New York, and undergraduate studies at CUNY City College. But I value my out-of-the-classroom experiences even more: I was surrounded by amazing people who taught me important lessons and skills which I would not have learned otherwise. I count the gap year I spent caring for my grandmother and working in the Rifton Equipment factory and community kitchen, as well as the time I spent as a companion for a young woman with cerebral palsy, among the many experiences that have shaped me and taught me the importance of service.

While I recognize that I am here at Duke partly because of my own hard work and determination, I know that without all those who have supported me along the way I would never have made it. So I'm inspired to give back to my community and to the world at large.

Gratitude is a good burden: it grounds me and points me in the direction of giving. My grandfather, who joined the Bruderhof in the 1950s, used to talk about *la dette* (French for "the debt"). This was the indebtedness he felt for having found faith and a way to live it out in brotherhood. I have the same debt: it will never be paid in full, but I can work towards paying it through loving service to others. I am determined to do my best as a student, and I am committed to caring for my brothers and sisters in the community.

And when I have spent my selfe to the last farthing, my lungs to the last breath, my wit to the last Metaphore, my tongue to the last syllable, I have not paid a farthing of my debt to God.

John Donne, poet and priest
1572–1631

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The last practice, and the choir director is asking for more power

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Next spread:
Three generations of Clements spend a Saturday evening in Grandpa Tony's and Grandma Jenny's campsite.

>
A summer afternoon at the stream

CHILDREN AND EDUCATION

The most important thing is that children have time to play. They don't need to be rushed around all kinds of places. On a walk, listen and see what they see, stop at the little beetle, stay by a puddle, admire a flower, each walk will be different. It's important that teachers don't have too much of an agenda, that the children have time for their own discoveries.

Heidi Barth, kindergarten teacher and Bruderhof member
1932–2007

^
A story and popcorn made over the fire in the Wood Island

IAN WINTER

1947–

A teacher and principal in Bruderhof schools for more than forty years, Ian is still active as a mentor to young teachers. But the best part of his job, he says, is "Threes afternoon."

For fifteen years, the highlight of my week has been spending an afternoon with the three-year-olds at our daycare center. Why? At this age the child, now beyond infancy, is full of curiosity, adventure, inquisitiveness for life – eager to put all this to use and find expression for it. If play is truly the noblest expression of what's in a child, it should be encouraged!

My wife and I have developed a little area, "the Wood Island," about half a mile from the classroom. We hike out there with Blaze, our miniature horse, pulling the sulky. They take turns to ride and love to help hold the reins. Once there, the kids love to play in the sandbox and on the climbing frame, slide, rope swing, and rope ladder, or draw water from a tiny well to make the water wheels turn. Sometimes we make popcorn over an open fire. There are rabbits to hold, and a tiny pool with goldfish. We always make time for a story, sometimes acted out.

In the fall, we do tracking. They can identify fox, deer, squirrel, and rabbit. Another thing we do is balancing: there's this huge tree someone felled, which they learn to balance along and then jump off, by themselves, learning to be brave – overcoming fear. Or we drive down to the Hudson River and throw pebbles into the water and watch the barges going by – something big to expand their little horizons.

Best of all, we have a seesaw. Federal guidelines now outlaw seesaws in public playgrounds, but I think that's wrong. What is a seesaw, except the beginning of physics? Plus, you learn to be considerate of the other person!

Through all the years I've been with children, I've always thought the most important thing is to have joy with them. Each day is a new day, a new chance. As a teacher, I have had to be humble, and to have reverence for each child.

Maidi Boller, kindergarten teacher and Bruderhof member
1933–2016

COURTESY OF BAZELEY FAMILY

DUANE BAZELEY

1980–2011

Duane had his first grand-mal seizure at three months. Diagnosed with a rare form of epilepsy, he never learned to talk or walk unaided. Until he was nineteen, Duane's parents were his primary caregivers. Then Richard Scott (see page 237), a new pastor, arrived at the New York Bruderhof where the family lived. Richard didn't just see a disabled young man, he saw, as he put it, "a missionary without a field." And he had a startling proposal: pull Duane out of his special-needs school in a nearby town, and start a new "school" at the Bruderhof. Duane would be the teacher, and his caregivers, a roster of young men assigned for several hours a day, or for night duty, would be his students. As Duane's sister, Maureen, remembers:

It was counterintuitive, but the best idea ever, a crash course for his caregivers that included pushing his tricycle for hours, fighting to get more oatmeal into his mouth than onto his shirt, dealing with sleepless nights, and learning to change diapers.

It also meant learning that nothing you previously excelled at counted, for Duane. Best tackle on the field? Meaningless. He needed help simply turning over in bed. Straight-A student? Who cares? He'd never even graduated from kindergarten. Articulate, sociable, clever? Useless. Conversations were basically a one-way street.

No one graduated from Duane's school unchanged. Duane lived for thirty-one years, thirty more than his neurologists had predicted. After his death, his parents received dozens of notes from his former caregivers. One wrote, "During my early twenties my life was fraught with struggle and confusion, till I got the chance to care for Duane. He taught me that I really didn't know it all, that I had to start caring for others first, and that perfection and strength as God sees them were utterly different from my previous strivings for those qualities. I don't know where I'd be without having known him."

THAT'S THE END OF THE PREVIEW!

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