



jacob'sWELL

April 2013



In this issue, we've asked people to write about shalom. Shalom is an Old Testament Hebrew word often translated "peace," but it's much deeper than an absence of war. Our favourite translation of "shalom" is a world where nothing is missing, and nothing is broken.

Shared humanity that brings Shalom *by Wade Lifton*

Wade Lifton is currently completing his supervised ministry internship with Jacob's Well as part of his Master's program with the Vancouver School of Theology (VST). He is our first VST intern! We have greatly valued the opportunity to supervise interns over the years. As they are shaped by their experience and time with us, we are enriched by their insights and reflections.

Human suffering cannot be measured or prioritized, but that doesn't stop my mind from trying. Knowing that we are all unique blends of brokenness and beauty, I constantly fall into the trap of comparing other people's suffering to my own. I had an exceptionally loving and safe childhood. I have a comfortable home and am finishing a Master's degree. With all this privilege, sharing my brokenness with friends in the Downtown Eastside feels like whining. This kind of thinking obscures my ability to see each person in the image of God, including myself.



Above: Wade cooking at our weekly family meal.

In the last two months my mom has been diagnosed with ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease) and I have been diagnosed with colon cancer. Illness and grief strip away false priorities and connect us to the core experience of being human. We all go to the bathroom. We all experience loneliness, beauty, temptation, delight. We all lose our mothers, if we live long enough. No matter what neighbourhood or circumstances we live in, we all share certain aspects of being human.

And then there are differences. Since my cancer diagnosis I've had offers of every kind of support imaginable. Hundreds of people are praying for me. My church in North Vancouver has been collecting money to support me through my last semester of school and my cancer treatment. I could ask for just about anything right now and someone would make it happen.

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Mom lives in a small town where the community held a lunch to honour all the ways she has contributed to their lives. We walked into a room of 150 people giving her a standing ovation. There was good food. There were flowers, stories, and letters from people who couldn't be there. One family had made a paper mâché piggy bank (Mom loves pigs!) and \$2000 in donations were collected. It was an overwhelmingly delightful afternoon.

At Jacob's Well I've become friends with people who struggle with all kinds of illness and disease, but no one is making a paper mâché pig and stuffing it with cash for them. We share the core experience of being human, but societal privilege creates very different circumstances for that experience.

On Friday team at Jacob's Well, we do not focus on trying to dismantle the inequalities of society. We eat pie together. We pray with and for each other. We celebrate birthdays and other special events like sobriety anniversaries with a room full of people giving someone a round of applause. Everyone has the opportunity to share their gifts at our Variety Hour, or help out with dishes. As I participate in this weekly rhythm, my mind is becoming less interested in comparing suffering.

Being part of the Jacob's Well community challenges me both to be conscious of privilege, and to see beyond privilege. To be grateful for all I receive. To be attentive to the beauty and the brokenness in myself and others. To continue longing for, praying for and working for the fulfillment of God's Shalom.

Authenticity from the inside out *by Kaitlyn Watson*

Kaitlyn is a committed member of the Jacob's Well Wednesday Evening Team. She is a public health care professional and is married to Tim. She brings with her a deep passion for Jacob's Well and an enthusiasm to live out her faith fully.

It was only a few years ago that I stood amongst those engaged in worship on Easter Sunday in tears – I wanted to participate, to express my overwhelming love for Jesus, to proclaim his glory – I just couldn't. That year, Easter decided to fall right during my faith struggle, a battle that pitted my safe, somewhat stagnant Christian faith against an unsettling need to explore Jesus' challenge to live out heaven on earth. When I look back on this experience, I realize God was offering me an invitation to step out and rediscover what it meant to fully participate in his kingdom.

Soon after, I relocated to England and could no longer escape this invitation. I searched out churches and individuals that did things just a bit differently; some removed pews so that the building could double as a shelter, others came together in basements, pastor-less, with a passion for loving others and building community. As I observed and participated with people endeavouring to live out Christ's counter-cultural teachings, I felt uncomfortable, and at times, plagued with guilt. Up until then, my life was a well-written CV that suffered miserably when it came to the interview. I vowed my move back to Vancouver would mark a significant change in how I understood and lived out my faith.

I became a community member at Jacob's Well shortly after arriving back home. During the past year and a half, my heart has been radically transformed. At Jacob's Well, I have encountered a unique model for cultivating sincere, lasting community. It's a way of life that draws on the simple-yet-difficult commands of Jesus: to love him and love each other, while seeking to be authentic in action and word. Wednesday night worship challenges me to put all brokenness aside and seek out beauty in a person or situation. We all need Jesus, not just those on the margins, and that is all that matters when we are together. This realization is what bonds us, empowers us and reconciles us to each other and to him – and this, this is a beautiful thing.

Deception, Desertions, Dislocations.... *by Robyn Livingston*

Robyn has been part of the fabric of the Jacob's Well community for many years, and joins us for the last fifteen minutes of almost every day at Jacob's Well. He is a good friend of Pauline's (our founder), and is a wealth of information on what's happening in the city. He is also a published poet, and contributes regularly to the Carnegie Newsletter.

Deceit deceptions, smoke 'n mirrors, pay offs kick backs potential concessions, 9 times out of 10 guaranteed. Slam dunks, City Hall rubber stamps, savvy contractos in-the-loop/in-the-inner-circle. Greed and avarice with no end in sight, with kick-butt negotiations all pre-arranged and in the bag with money in the bank and oodles more on the way. Sitting pretty don't ya think??!

I really get tired of fore-gone conclusions manufactured out of sight by the back room boys, bagmen and assorted shady dealers and 'carpet-baggers' - what else is new on the face of this earth?? Along with the money changers, tax-breakers, cutting corners like crazy...what's left in it for us?? What do we end up with? We're in the fast lane to nowheresville, along with the gutted middle-class (they just don't know it yet). They're trickling inch by inch, drip by drip...drop. They're being rail-roaded also by inflated-price condos, eventually folding up like a cheap tent. It'll leave most breathless and penniless, locked out and pushed onto the street like so many others before them - and they'll finally see just how the other half lives! Kicked to the curb, most likely, out in the cold, wet, alone, afraid, confused, with no sense of direction and very low determination....open doors are suddenly closing and you find your sorry sad self completely out of business and out of pocket. Welcome to the curb, a not-anymore exclusive one that is growing rapidly.

Need any help? How about some sage advice... - all you have to do is ask. Would you like me to show ya the ropes, free of charge, especially now you have so much time on your hands? This is your new life, your maxed-out totally useless credit cards mean no more evenings out, dressed to the nines at trendy bistros: what's seemingly overtaken family meals in tranquil orderly neighbourhoods is pizza or less in the heart of the city, the Downtown Eastside, where ruthless gentrification runs amuck - not quite what you thought about when you and yours invaded the area.

How is it now to be on the other side of the fence & getting the short end poking out at you?

Welcome again to our nightmare world, deserted and dislocated and thrown on the corporate/legislative scrap heap. Slowly your designer clothes start to unravel and you start learning from longtime residents about the ins & outs of the DTES. We're well-seasoned survivors with an immense measure of resolve, tenacity, and we ain't going anywhere soon.

We're still gonna be here long after you've gone, so chances are I'll see ya around in a breadline or at a soup kitchen or at a rundown packed well-intended Christian Mission. My advice is to expect the unexpected and feel free to call upon almost anyone for help. I & You & we are all just waiting...

Recently Joined! We have 3 new community members: Rachel, Patricia, Micah.

If you are interested in becoming a community member, please let us know, we'd love to get to know you better and talk about how you could contribute to our community!

Celebrating With Pauline - Our founder Pauline Fell turned 97 this February!



Towards Shalom on the DTES *by Lance Kraai*

Lance Kraai interned at Jacob's Well in 2010, eventually earning his Masters of Divinity at Regent College. He now lives in Grand Rapids, Michigan with his wife Daina, where he runs an urban farm that employs neighbourhood high school youth and provides them with life and job skills training.

I am deeply indebted to my time at Jacob's Well. It helped me to see that society is deeply fragmented, and that there is a world called "the margins" that is rarely seen or understood, to everyone's loss. Further, I learned that despite the continually overwhelming challenges of trying to connect those in "the centre" with those on "the margins," the effort is worth it.

One thing I did a lot at Jacob's Well was to visit friends in the neighbourhood. The practice at Jacob's Well was to send people out in pairs to visit people. It is hard for me to describe the absurd, sometimes scary, sometimes sad, sometimes ridiculously funny visitation scenarios I experienced in the DTES. God has placed some real creative characters in the DTES! Just this month, as an elder at my church in Grand Rapids, I am launching a group to do visitation for those in our neighbourhood and congregation, in the way that I learned to visit at Jacob's Well.

I often share with people that what I learned in Vancouver is that an organization can't bring shalom to a neighbourhood unless it goes about its business in a shalom-like way. God's work is slow, not hectic; humble, not proud; small, not big; weak, not strong. As an intern, I found out that Jacob's Well employees work no more than 30 hours a week to ensure they are aware of their own limitations, and that they take time to regularly re-centre themselves. To this day, my wife and I strongly resist ministry models that ask their employees to overwork themselves into anxiety and exhaustion because they think this is what the kingdom requires of them.

I believe God's community cannot be God's community unless it is continually hospitable and continually seeking after those who feel they are not part of God's story. As I left Jacob's Well, this led me to pursue a calling in the field of social enterprises. I feel called to bring those who have been economically marginalized into the center in order to achieve economic reciprocity (I also never used the word "reciprocity" before my time at Jacob's Well!).

So please, get involved at Jacob's Well, but if you ever leave, I'll warn you... a community that only includes those in "the centre" will look a little flat after your time at Jacob's Well.

A Shalom acceptance at Jacob's Well

by Jean-Christophe Andrez

Jean-Christophe is a newer community member. We call him "JC." He hails from France and met his wife at university here in Vancouver a number of years ago, when he was studying biochemistry, his current field of work. He has a disarming presence that makes people feel at home at Jacob's Well.



Berto & Ian hanging out

Jacob's Well is a place for the heart. For people who know me, they would say that I am a reserved and soft-spoken person (with a strong French accent: oui oui!). I learned that everyone coming to Jacob's Well brings with them insecurities and barriers to protect themselves. I also

experienced healing from coming here, as I found acceptance from others by sharing common traditions, values and visions. When immersed in a community where people are on equal ground and social boundaries are erased, I found it easier to experience acceptance and build trust between myself and other people.

I also discovered that acceptance can be attained by celebrating the gifts that everyone brings to the community. I remember experiencing feeling really part of Jacob's Well during my encounters with friends, who invited me into their discussions and by the encouragements received through prayers. This acceptance for every individual brings a sense of unity which is mostly evident by the communion of people from different backgrounds or religious denominations and by the sharing of joy, pain and resources.

I remember Beth saying to me that when we come to be part of Jacob's Well, we never really leave it. Like a family, you may leave it for a bit but you know that it is still there to welcome you back with joy no matter what.

Towards a theology of thankfulness *by Colleen Goodrich*

Colleen Goodrich is a long time member of the Jacob's Well family. She worked for many years with disadvantaged kids. She is a proud grandmother and although she's in her 70s, and not always in the best of health, she continues to grace us weekly with her wealth of experience, zeal and love for others. These are things which brighten the Jacob's Well storefront every Wednesday

I was raising my three children on my own, and there were many 'things' we didn't have. But there were many blessings we did have, too. My children's pants had to have patches, so I sewed them in shapes of animals and boats - all their playmates thought they were so lucky to have such nice pants! One day my eldest daughter came running in from playing with her friends and said, "Mommy, are we poor?" Well, I wanted my children to grow up knowing the blessings we *did* have, and not to moan about the things we *didn't* have, like a rug, a TV., or treats in the cupboard every day.





Visiting our housebound friends.

So I answered, “Do you know that God has given us this house at such a low rate we are able to buy it? Do you have enough clothes to wear? Is there food in the fridge?” To this she thought and said a confident “Yes!” Then I said “Well then, we’re not poor.” “Oh, good,” she said, and ran back outside to play with her friends. I think this was one of the most important values I could have taught her.

Over the years of my time at Jacob’s Well, I have witnessed this same attitude in many of my friends from the DTES. Like Tony, whose life hit such a low point that his children were put into foster care. (See Fall 2012 issue.) He has now turned his life around, and though he’s not able to care for them full time, he has been able to have them for weekly visits and build that

relationship between father and children that is so necessary for both sides. He just glows with joy as he shares with us the pleasure he experiences with them. Is he able to have them full time? Not yet. Have they been provided with safe and consistent care? Yes! Is he thankful? Yes! He knows that God cares for him and his family. And to this he adds care for his friends here at Jacob’s Well. He looks out for them and encourages them.

And Tony isn’t the only one. There are many other stories like Tony’s, full of faith and hope. One common theme at Jacob’s Well seems to be thankfulness for the changes in our lives, and a circle of friends who care about one another. There is often thanks for the safe shelter, support and friendships found at Jacob’s Well. They encourage one another and encourage me. I am so blessed to know them.

A very short verse in the Bible says, “Be ye thankful.” You may think it is a suggestion, but to me, it sounds stronger than that. How can we recognise how very blessed we are if we don’t acknowledge what we have? The more we recognise how good God is and how much he cares for us, the more we become thankful, and it’s catching! What are you thankful for today? Want to share that with someone?



Wednesday Art Time!



Mutuality as an announcement of Shalom

by Scott McTaggart

Scott is married with three small children. He recently moved to Vancouver to plant a church. At Jacob's Well, he can often be found having a coffee and a chat with any of the regulars who come by for a visit.

I've been a part of the community at 'The Well' for almost one year now. One thing has become abundantly clear; this place is about friendship! I've seen this so vividly on Friday Team, of which I am a card-carrying member. (Just kidding. We don't have cards, but we do have a song. Ask Marie to sing it for you.) On Friday afternoons this is how friendship plays out... First, we gather to focus on our friendship with God through the daily liturgy, then we go out to build friendships with others in the community. At 3:30pm we open the storefront and sit at the table with friends new and old. I love it! And, like any good friendship, there is sharing involved. We share food, music, stories and more.

Friendship is so powerful. It can be more filling than a meal, much warmer than a bed, and far safer than shelter. Helen Keller, who was both deaf and blind, said this about friendship, "I would rather walk with a friend in the dark, than alone in the light."

Real, authentic friendship is at the heart of God, and the perfect example of this is found in Jesus Christ. He is a friend to ALL people, even sinners like you and me. This is what I love about Jesus. You could be a pedophile or a murderer and he would still want to be your friend. His love is unconditional; meaning there is nothing we can do to lose his friendship. I don't have a criminal record, and from the outside I appear "put-together", but my crimes are equally sinful compared with pedophilia or murder. Mine are crimes of the heart – of hatred, lust and apathy. Yet, Jesus remains my friend and says he will never leave or abandon me.

Ever! (Insert "Amen!" here.)

John 15:13 says, "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friend." God's mission, like The Well's, is a mission of friendship. We build authentic, loving, reciprocal relationships that have the power to change lives, and these friendships are alive because Jesus is.



Variety hour!

About Jacob's Well

Jacob's Well is a faith community located in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver, Canada. This neighbourhood has complex difficulties, some of which are extreme poverty (the poorest postal code in Canada), drug addiction (more than five thousand needle users), widespread disease (highest HIV & AIDS infection rate in the western world), and prevalent mental illness (estimated more than 50% of area residents). It's also a neighbourhood full of beautiful, caring people who have much to give.

We have a relational approach to sharing life with residents of our neighbourhood. We seek meaningful friendships where we both give and receive from one another. This guiding principle we have inherited from Pauline Fell, who founded our community in 2001. She is a remarkable ninety-seven year-old woman who has spent over thirty years building friendships with countless people in this neighbourhood.

We spend our days visiting people, gardening together, gathering around the table, worshipping, praying and serving. If you would like to know more about our community, we encourage you to visit our website or Facebook page, or give us a call and arrange a visit in person.

Life in the Margins Workshop

This is a weekend workshop where we explore God's heart for people on the margins of society.

We will examine stories from the Bible and talk about the theological mandate to seek relationship with marginalized people, who bear God's image. While we will speak out of our experience from life in the downtown eastside, we will discuss how these principles apply to all the places where we live and work.

Next Workshop:

Friday, May 10th, 2013 (7 – 10 pm)

Saturday, May 11th, 2013 (10 am – 4 pm)

Cost: \$20 in advance or \$25 at the door.

All participants must pre-register by emailing workshop@jacobswell.ca.

Please join us!

Our Information

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Giving:

Visit our website for more information about donating. We are a registered non-profit charity.



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