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*Newsletter of the North American Network of Charismatic Covenant
Communities (NAN)*



NEW WINE AND NEW WINESKINS



From the Editor

By Mary Ann West, Editor

This issue of New Wine, New Wineskins begins with Peter Poppleton, in his letter from the Moderator, asking us, “How do we form the heart? How do we build cultural memory?”, a prerequisite for our communities to bear fruit. As Pope Paul VI said in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*:

“For the Christian community is never closed in upon itself. The intimate life of this community - the life of listening to the Word and the apostles' teaching, charity lived in a fraternal way, the sharing of bread [40] this intimate life only acquires its full meaning when it becomes a witness, when it evokes admiration and conversion, and when it becomes the preaching and proclamation of the Good News. Thus, it is the whole Church that receives the mission to evangelize, and the work of each individual member is important for the whole. (Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, par.15, 8 December, 1975)

The “Christian Community”, in the context of this quote, is meant as the whole church. However, I cannot help but substitute the name of my own community, “New Creation Community”, where the words “Christian Community”/ “community”/ “Church” appear. It personalizes the admonitions to both live intimately our community life with each other and reach out beyond ourselves.



With the theme “Bearing fruit in expected or unexpected ways”, this issue explores areas in which four of our NAN communities are reaching out beyond themselves. Community of God’s Delight shares their hosting an updated version of Life in the Spirit Seminar with helpful particulars on how they ran it. Alleluia Community provided the speakers who shared wisdom on topics affecting

community life for the 25th Anniversary of the European Network of Communities. Glory to God Community shares on the ecumenical relationships forming because of their location at Stone’s Folly. City of the Lord holds Camp Powell each summer and now invites families from beyond community families to participate in the fun and formation.

David Peterman, Jr. then reports on the Pentecost Today USA October 2023 conference in Kansas City and NAN’s participation in it. Finally, Bill Kohler reviews the timely book “Return of the Gods” by Jonathan Cahn.

Reflecting on these articles, let us deepen our relationships with God and our brothers and sisters as we strengthen our community culture. Let us mature in using our gifts for the body, and then reach out to the world. Because, as we see, the world needs us. It amazes me how the Lord is saying the same thing the world over. All Glory to God.



Editorial Team: Editor: Mary Ann West, mawmaw4july@gmail.com
Assistant Editor: Sharon Poppleton,
Graphics & Layout Editor: Dirk West



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From the Desk of the NAN Moderator

By Peter Poppleton, NAN Moderator



Have you ever heard of a Ratzarian Marxist? A what? Well, in 2012, I read that there were 4 Ratzarian Marxists in Italy, and 2 of them were Roman Catholics! This seems a contradiction in terms, but whatever they are, they made a very astute observation. They declared that the world had arrived at a time of anthropological emergency. We can ask, “What does it mean to the secular world today to be a human

being?” We all know that increasingly on many levels the definition contrasts our Christian beliefs.

I believe that covenant communities are an answer to this time of emergency. Why? Because we strive to live an intentional way of life according to the revealed ways of the Lord in the image and likeness of God. And this goes back to early biblical times. It is all about the environment. The Lord knows this, which is why He took Abraham out of the land of Ur. The Lord could not form him in this land. He needed to take him to a new environment that He, the Lord, would form. In Genesis 12 we read:

“The Lord had said to Abram, ‘Go from your country, your people, and your father’s household to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing...’”

Basically, the Lord was saying, “You can’t be the person I am calling you to be in the land of Ur. It won’t work for the plan I have for your life.” The Lord had to give Abram a new environment, one that was orchestrated by the Lord himself. And as the story goes forward Abram is even given a new name and a new identity. We know the story.

And the same goes for us. The Lord knew we could not fulfill who we were called to be outside of covenant community. He knew that we needed a community to form us. Through this community culture, He would intentionally and invitationally call us to be men and women at His service.

Most of us have had the Basic Christian Community course. What does this course do for us? It begins to form within us both a communicative memory and a cultural memory.

- Communicative Memory: knowledge being passed along that may go back a few generations. Where is communicative memory stored? - In the *mind*!
- Cultural Memory: answers the question, “What must we never under any circumstances forget?” It is the foundation of our identity, the consciousness of being a *people that remembers*. It is an essential concept of being human and Christian. Where is cultural memory stored? - in the *heart*!





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From the Desk of the NAN Moderator (Cont'd)

The Question then becomes, “How do we form the heart?”

It is not only teachings going into the communicative memory. Rather it is intentionally choosing relationships and events that create cultural memories that echo the teachings. We need to be aware that teachings are very important, but we must ‘incarnate’ them lest they be no more than a data dump.

Many community events and activities create cultural memories. For many of our communities one stands out -- celebrating the Lord’s Day. One of our sons even celebrated the Lord’s Day for his wedding reception. And every Saturday evening, if not together, the family mutually texts, “Good Lord’s Day.”

Here is another example. When my wife Sharon and I were working with the young adults associated with our community a few of the girls wanted to be weekend daughters because they felt a sense of home among us. It was an action of the heart, not just of the mind. And these cultural memories led them to deeper conversion.

As we enter the year 2024, let us be aware of how many ways we can continue, and hopefully increase, our cultural memories. The Lord is calling us to form hearts now and for the future. He has placed us in this time, with this specific calling to do our parts in ushering in the Kingdom with a sure anthropological solution, that is, to be a people set apart for His purposes in the world.





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Old, Yet Ever New

**By Bob Montgomery, Christian Community
of God's Delight**

In spite of a COVID winter and an aging population, the Lord called the Christian Community of God's Delight in Dallas, Texas to offer a Life in the Spirit Seminar. This was needed due to answered prayers for new and younger members following our 50th Anniversary Celebration earlier in the year. Many new families were inspired to explore a Covenant life.

Facing the realities of generational differences and the demands of today's younger families, a video series from CAFE (Catholic Faith Exploration) named "The Gift" was utilized for primary teaching. Personal witnesses supported the videos, sponsors were provided for each participant, and share groups were formed to support them as well.

We discerned to meet weekly to help form the personal prayer habits that undergird the spiritual life. Some sessions were held after our Community Gatherings, after which meals were provided to foster fellowship and community. On alternate

weeks, we met at the usual Gathering time. Childcare was essential to support these growing families, and formation for the children was provided through songs, games, and bible stories.

The Lord took all into His merciful hands. Over 35 participants joined in all the classes, and prayers for the release of the Holy Spirit were offered. We experienced the full joy, tears, and many gifts of the Holy Spirit. The joy reflected in post Seminar surveys brought tears to my eyes.

Now, follow up and new training in the Spiritual Life are called for, and we are praying how to do just that with this new generation. Praise the Lord for this new challenge.





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European Network of Communities (ENC) Celebrates 25 Years

By Dan Almeter, Alleluia Community



The previous issue of this newsletter reported that in July of 2023, the International Partnership of Ecumenical Charismatic Communities (IPECC) was officially inaugurated in London, England. This new partnership was between NAN, Sword of Spirit, Servants of Jesus in Sydney, and the ENC. This article concerns a recent trip that three leaders from Alleluia Community took in November to Europe to attend the 25th anniversary conference of the ENC network.

The ENC consists of approximately 100 communities (mostly from Eastern Europe). They include communities from Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland, Slovakia, Ukraine, and United Kingdom. The communities are either Catholic, Ecumenical or Protestant.

It was during this conference that the outgoing president of ENC, Johannes Fichtenbauer of Austria, handed over the presidency to Aleksander Myskow of Poland. Both have been attendees at our previous NAN conferences. The conference this year was held in the

city of Presov, Slovakia (about an hour from the Ukrainian border) and hosted by the Maranatha Community



—a community of about 450 adults and 250 children. They have a beautiful and modern facility that held the over 300 in attendance.

The conference and the praise and worship were all in English. We were led by an especially gifted worship team that led us to the throne room of God. The Lord's Day meal was like one I have never experienced before. The ENC communities are in touch with their Jewish roots---very cognizant that they are rooted in Israel and a Jewish Messiah. As part of the Lord's Day Meal, we sang a number of Jewish songs, and I was personally overwhelmed at the joy of watching everyone get up and participate in the Jewish dancing. It was truly a taste of heaven.



The content of the teaching for the conference came from the Alleluia Community. Dan Almeter gave the first talk, "The Essentials of Living Covenant Life". Tod Densmore gave the second talk, "How to Discern God's Will" (which he gave last year at the NAN conference). Bob Garrett gave a talk on "Receptive Ecumenism". And Dan gave a second talk



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European Network of Communities (ENC) Celebrates 25 Years (Cont'd)

entitled, "The Homosexual Revolution and Our Response to it". All the talks were extremely well received.

A couple of bishops were in attendance including Bishop Andrzej Siemieniewski of Poland. He gave an amazing homily on "being the light" at the closing liturgy. He also brought with him two

American nuns from The Disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ who run the Ark and the Dove in Pittsburgh. Also in attendance with us were Tod Densmore's 2 daughters: Elaine and Audrey. They participated fully in the conference and stayed an extra week to visit two Polish communities.

Bob, Tod and I travelled six hours to and from Presov, Slovakia and Vienna, Austria. We had an extra day staying with Johannes and Christy Fichtenbauer and touring beautiful Vienna.

The ENC is an extremely strong network of communities. We are fortunate indeed to have such wonderful partners!





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Who Knows but That It was for a Time Like This

By Lee Defendorf, Glory to God Community

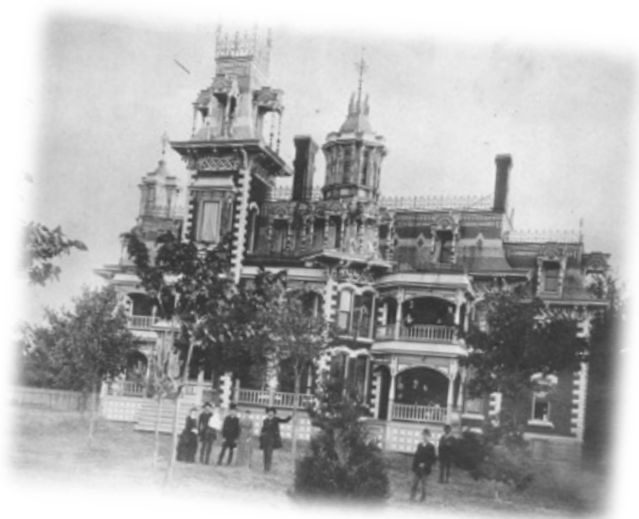
You have heard the old adage, being “in the right place at the right time”. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, it has to do with “being in the best position or place to take advantage of an opportunity”. Glory to God Community is experiencing this in relation to Stone’s Folly, the physical birthplace of modern Pentecostalism.

Glory to God Community finds itself a “caretaker” of the remains of this holy site to nearly 800 million Pentecostals who revere it as the birthplace of their faith experience. This has opened the door to many relationships with various Pentecostal and non-denominational streams. One of those relationships is with the newly formed Restoration Pastors Alliance of Topeka. This Alliance was formed after a “Unity Summit” during this past August with a couple of dozen Christian leaders and Pentecostal pastors in the Topeka, Kansas area. The summit was sponsored by Glory to God Community and Activate Topeka, founded by Nazarene pastor Jay Jellison. Deacon Darrell Wentworth of Virginia Beach, Virginia, the main speaker, shared testimony that God is bringing unity in the Body of Christ in numerous cities.

On November 19, the Restoration Pastors’ Alliance met inside the Stone’s Folly basement until midday. Just as the meeting was ending, Matteo Calisi, founder of United in Christ and also founder of Jesus Community, Bari, Italy, along with Ron Allen, worship leader and United in Christ board member, and also a few Pentecostal friends arrived. They had previously asked to pray at Stone’s Folly on that afternoon. A powerful prayer meeting ensued immediately with all those present.

After dinner that evening was the Glory to God prayer meeting. Many local, familiar Pentecostal faces swelled the numbers of the regular community members, as Ron Allen led an evening of praise, worship, teaching, and prophecy. Matteo had words of encouragement about the community’s ministry with Pentecostals at Stone’s Folly. He shared with them that in his time of prayer at Stone’s Folly, he truly felt the presence of the Holy Spirit, and the importance of this place in God’s plan to bring real unity in the Body of Christ.

May Glory to God Community continue to take advantage of all opportunities because of this precious gift that was literally hidden in the basement!





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Summer Camp: Fun and Faith

By Jenelle Van Brunt, City of the Lord

A big fruit of our covenant life in City of the Lord: a summer camp in the San Bernadino Mountains east of Los Angeles, CAMP POWELL!

About 30 years ago, two of our covenant members, John Morgan from the Phoenix Branch and Dennis Powell from the Northern California Branch (for whom the camp is named), hatched an idea for a summer camp to bring together the "Zonies" (from Arizona) and the three California branches. Everyone wants to flee the desert heat in the summer, so the obvious choice was in the mountains of California.

Just what is Camp Powell? It is five days of vibrant community life for young and old, five days that the kids look forward to all year long. It is probably the richest experience we have together in City of the Lord. In recent years we have opened it up to guests, who now comprise nearly half of the camp, so it has become quite evangelistic.

We rent a large camp from a Methodist group (they love us and say we are their favorite campers!). The site is comprised of multiple cabins, an archery range, a swimming pool, a huge dining room, an outdoor theater area, large indoor facilities for arts and crafts, volleyball courts, an open-air cabin which we use as an Adoration chapel and a large outdoor seating area for our daily Masses. The camp owns hundreds of acres which we use for hiking adventures, outdoor frisbee

golf tournaments, water games, and paintball gun ranges.

The camp staff provides three great meals a day for our group, which numbers around 200-250 souls. Other than their kitchen service, all the camp responsibilities are handled by our community parents, young adults, and teen counselors. Campers from ages 6-14 are grouped in cabins of their age and gender, with teen counselors and young adult (post high school) counselors in charge.

The day begins with morning Mass, celebrated by one of our guest priests. Breakfast follows, and those aged 14 and up have a half hour of Christian Formation before the first activity.

Schedules are designed for four activities each day for the different age groups, which include drama, crafts, wood working, archery, pool games, volleyball, frisbee golf, paintball, and hiking, all headed up by our generous and talented parents. (I have worked for many years in arts and crafts). Crazy Games, a collection of hysterical games centered around seeing how messy the campers can get, follow dinner each night, with plenty of opportunities for "getting pie-ed", which means having one's face covered by whipped cream at the hands of a young camper. Then it is off to Campfire, for an hour of skits, jokes, drama, and song.

The evening concludes with Eucharistic adoration at the Campfire, and night prayer. Younger campers are sent to their cabins, while teen counselors enjoy an hour of fun. Adults take turns tending to the cabins from 9 to 10, so that the young adult counselors can





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Summer Camp: Fun and Faith (Cont'd)

have their social time away from responsibilities. Borrowing the term from our Australian communities, from 8 to 10 the rest of the adults have their own time of "conviviality" with snacks, drinks, and lots of time to develop their own friendships.

Our priest(s) are available all day at any time to hear confessions under a tree or at a picnic table. The Adoration Chapel is rarely empty, as campers and adults alike make use of the privilege of our Lord's Eucharistic Presence.

A highlight of Camp is the Friday morning prayer meeting for those high school aged and up, accompanied by a selected few adults. The Blessed Sacrament is exposed, and two or three chosen young people give testimonies of their lives in Christ. Praise and worship follow. Then, all the young men go outside to the forest, and the young women remain inside. Small groups form with young adult counselors leading them, and intense personal prayer ministry follows. Many powerful inner healings and conversions happen each year during this precious time of ministry before our Eucharistic Lord. It is the last event of Camp before the award ceremony and closing lunch. It is aptly given pride of place, as all the fun and fellowship of Camp is crowned by a deepening of relationships with the Lord.

Why is Camp Powell so wildly successful? Because it truly is a group effort! Adult-planned and run, using the skills of college and high school aged members, means we all have to "pull together" to pull Camp off! Great camaraderie is formed as we work side by side for the good of our children, and as we deepen our relationships over breakfast, lunch and dinner and co-operate when our names come up to receive a face of whipped cream. The Campfire entertainment includes adults as well, as the "Mean Momma Rappers" (what it sounds like) have put on many years of

skits to the embarrassed delight of their children and grandchildren!

Relationships of kids from our four different branches have formed and been cemented over the years of Camp Powell. Kids who never would have had the chance to form deep friendships have done so at Camp Powell. We have even had a few marriages resulting from campers meeting and falling in love at Camp.

This past year, to help larger families with the camp fees, leadership decided to institute a Family Plan. Each branch of City of the Lord subsidizes Camp from our tithes, to keep the prices down. We figure the investment is well worth the return! Camp is one of the best things we have going!

We are so grateful for the vision of Camp's founders over 30 years ago, and look forward to many more years of fun, growth, adventure, and relationships at Camp Powell!





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NAN Members Attend Pentecost Today USA Conference

By David Peterman Jr., People of God's Delight

Many members of NAN communities may be unaware of Pentecost Today USA (<https://www.pentecosttodayusa.org/>) or may know it by its former name National Service Committee (NSC). The NSC was formed in the 1970s to serve the Charismatic Renewal in the United States.

In 2020, following the formation of CHARIS, Catholic Charismatic Renewal International Service (<https://www.charis.international/en/>), the NSC changed its name to Pentecost Today USA and united its mission with CHARIS to: 1) BRING Baptism in the Holy Spirit to the whole Church, 2) BUILD unity in the Body of Christ, and 3) SERVE the poor.



One of the most significant ministries of Pentecost Today USA is their annual conference for leaders. This year it was held in Kansas City, Kansas at the Savior Pastoral Center from October 20 to 22. Along with my wife Laurie and me from People of God's Delight, other NAN attendees

included Peter and Sharon Poppleton from City of the Lord, and Vicky and Allan Holthaus and 13 other members from Glory to God Community.

In responding to the priority to bring the baptism in the Holy Spirit to the whole Church, the conference provided a special opportunity not just to hear encouragement to be active in witness, but to actually do it. About 100 attendees took advantage and rode busses to area meeting points to pray with whomever was open to ministry and prayer.

A testament to building unity in the Body of Christ was



Heading out to Evangelize

evident by a team of ecumenical intercessors who traveled from Dallas to intercede continuously for the conference. Unity was also built through an event to foster relationship development by those serving in similar ministries and through the opportunity afforded Peter Poppleton, the moderator of NAN, to address all attendees and introduce NAN. Peter's wife, Sharon, was asked to share her experience of the Kansas City conference of 1977. Another notable aspect of the conference was the all-night praise and worship that was staffed by volunteers from across all participating organizations.



At the end of the conference, it was announced that Pentecost Today USA would be sponsoring a nine-year novena to prepare for Pentecost 2033, the 2000th anniversary of Pentecost. The intention is to fuel a new and ongoing renewal of the Church and the world. More details are available on the website (above). A special aspect of the novena will be year two (from Pentecost 2025 to Pentecost 2026) where the national renewal will be praying for Covenant Communities including NAN and its members!

All-in-all it was a huge blessing to see so many familiar faces, participate in magnificent praise and worship, and hear such inspirational talks. I encourage everyone to consider attending next year's conference that will be held in St. Paul, Minnesota from October 25 – 27, 2024.





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Great Reads in the Communities

We're Back!

**A review of Return of the Gods
by Jonathan Cahn**

By Bill Koller, City of the Lord

Messianic Jewish Rabbi Jonathan Cahn is not your usual mystery writer. He does not write them as much as he *explains* them.

Before telling the story and revealing the mysteries, he gives the story some context. First, as in many of his works, Cahn believes that God deals with America in much the same way he dealt with ancient Israel. Thus, Israel's false gods are also America's false gods. Second. While he writes about false gods, he makes sure to note that there are *spirits behind the gods*. By implication then, we are dealing with "the spirits of wickedness in the heavenly places." (Ephesians 6:12). Third, Cahn relies on Matthew 12:43-45 concerning the spirit who comes out of a man, leaves, but ultimately comes back and finds the "house" he left, empty, clean, and swept. He re-enters the "house" with seven other spirits more wicked than itself, leaving the man worse off than before. Cahn then notes that Jesus applies this story to the current wicked generation in Israel. For Cahn, this means that Jesus is talking about a *civilization*.

He then proceeds to tell the story. With Jesus and the coming of Christianity, the pagan world, the pagan gods (and the spirits behind the gods) were driven out of Western civilization. This applied to America as well as it was seen, until recently, as a Christian nation. However, America turned away from God, and consequently left the door open for the gods and their spirits to return. The false gods that returned to America were gods familiar to Israel – Baal ("the Possessor"), Ishtar ("the Enchantress") also known as Ashtoreth in the Old Testament, and Molech ("the Destroyer). Cahn labels them "the Dark Trinity." He goes into detail about how each one

was granted re-entry into our culture and how each took over, transformed, and re-paganized our culture. Of the three, Cahn spends most of his writing on Ishtar and her nature and how she (and her spirit) was behind the sexual revolution of the 1960's, the Stonewall riot of 1969 which began the Gay Rights Movement, Gay Pride, the Rainbow Flag, and now, the Transgender Movement. At root, Cahn says, all of this was about *destroying God's purpose* - the purpose of manhood, womanhood, sexuality, marriage, and children. The *goal*, Cahn says, is that under the guise of tolerance, the gods want nothing less than full and total submission, and that everyone "bend the knee" to them, in other words, *worship* them, *sacrifice* to them (especially children), and do their bidding. The gods are nothing, if not intolerant and totalitarian. Thus, Christians will face great persecution just as in the first centuries, while at the same time a great apostasy (which is already happening) will continue. Finally, Cahn urges believers to pray, repent, call on God for a true revival, and rely on the power of God to make it through.

I liked this book and I recommend it. It presents a thoroughly biblical worldview, and it recognizes that, at root, our difficulties and problems in this life and in this culture, are primarily spiritual in nature. There is much to be absorbed and learned from this book.

