SHALOM!
A JOURNAL FOR THE PRACTICE OF RECONCILIATION
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People on the Margins

AT VARIOUS TIMES in my life, I have felt like I was on the outside looking in, or marginalized in some way. For example, as an American missionary kid in British boarding schools in the former Rhodesias, I sometimes felt a bit odd. Then, when our family returned to the United States, I felt even more odd as a 13-year-old former missionary kid with a slightly British accent in a 10th grade American high school classroom. In neither case was anyone intentionally mean to me, and no one deliberately ostracized or marginalized me, but I nonetheless felt different than everyone else.

Now, as a 70-year-old, much of the marginalization I feel is age-related. On the one hand, my skills are still in demand and respected; no one seems ready to push me out of my role as editor of this publication or as editor for the Brethren in Christ Historical Society because I'm too old. On the other hand, I am keenly aware that my age is becoming more limiting, especially when it comes to the advanced technical skills that are increasingly necessary in today's world and in the editing and publishing aspects of my life. While I believe that age shouldn't be the primary factor in choosing who gets a job or appointment, I also believe that we who are older need to consciously allow room for younger people to step into positions of responsibility—after all, we will not be around forever. In the process of stepping aside, it is easy to end up feeling marginalized and left out.

My experiences of marginalization, however, are minor compared to those of many others. I am white, Christian, financially stable; I've never been homeless or in prison; I am not physically or mentally disabled; I have a good education; I have not experienced long-term unemployment; English is my first language. The experiences of those who have been marginalized because they are not white, they have been in prison, they are not well-educated, etc. are much more significant and pervasive than my relatively trivial experiences.

As this edition of *Shalom!* was in the planning stages, the working theme was "who are the marginalized?" That would have been the title that always appears at the top of this first page, but along the way, I remembered the principle of "people first" language I learned a long time ago when I started writing for children's mental health publications for state government. "People first" language recognizes that individuals are more than their disability or condition. They are people first before they are blind, mentally ill, homeless, or lack education. "People first" language might sometimes feel awkward or wordy, but at its best it recognizes the fundamental humanity and dignity of every person, and tries to lessen the stigma and marginalization that the person may already feel. I hope that the stories in this edition reflect our care for the image of God in everyone and call us to reach out, listen to, understand, and walk with those who are marginalized or feel left out for whatever reasons.

Harriet S. Bicksler, editor

THIS ISSUE OF *SHALOM!*

The Center of the Kingdom at the Margins of the World

by Zach Spidel

Blessed are you who are poor,
for yours is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. Blessed are you who weep now,
for you will laugh . . . . But woe to you who are rich now, for you have received your consolation. Woe to you who are full now,
for you will be hungry. Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep
(Luke 6:20-21, 24-25).

JESUS PRONOUNCED BOTH blessings and woes, and if we are to be his disciples we must listen to both. We must submit to the Spirit's transforming work, so that our ways of thinking, feeling, and living will be conformed to the logic of the kingdom which Jesus expressed in these blessings and woes—a logic which he often summarized in a phrase, "The last shall be first and the first shall be last" (Matt. 19:30 and 20:16, Mark 10:31, Luke 13:30).

The kingdom of heaven, profound satisfaction, and eternal joy belong to the poor and the hungry and the weeping, while the rich and the satisfied and those laughing in the midst of their neighbors' misery will receive only woe. Those who now lord it over the earth with the exercise of worldly power will be eternal afterthoughts, while the Lord's poor will be seated on thrones by his side. It's like Paul told the motley crew of Christians in Corinth, "Don't you know that we will judge angels one day?" (1 Cor. 6:3)

This startling proclamation, for a mind untransformed by the power of the Spirit, is both surprising and unbecoming. The Corinthian congregation—of whom not many were wise by human standards nor powerful nor of noble birth—was told that they would share in God's judging work not only over earthly affairs but over heavenly ones as well. Think how a Roman functionary—a man like Pilate perhaps—would have scoffed at the very idea! Think how the CEOs of Fortune 500 companies or the leading visionaries of Silicon Valley or America's prominent politicians would respond to the notion that they are history's footnotes, while poor people, unknown to them, no advanced degrees and no lengthy resumes in hand, will be recognized in eternity by the King of the Universe as having accomplished so much more than all of them with nothing but quiet faithfulness and humble love.

I think of this fact—that the first shall be last and the last shall be first—and it takes my breath away. I'm grateful that this reversal is coming. I'm grateful that Jesus will lift up the poor, the forgotten, the abused, and the marginalized in the end even as he lifts them up now in ways the world neither perceives nor appreciates. I am humbled to be included by Jesus in his work. I am challenged by Jesus to lay down the advantages and wealth I have been given—to let myself be marginalized—in service of his kingdom.

Yes, I am challenged in this way by this word. We Brethren in Christ in the U. S. must not try to escape the challenge embedded for us in this word of reversal. We have been given much, and so much is required from us. What we've been given is dangerous to us if we don't lay it down. To have much is to be tempted to hold onto it. When the world offers us power or attention or wealth, we are tempted to take them. If the world offers to place us in the center of things for a time, why not accept the offer and put such a position to good use? When we think this way, when we're tempted to pursue or hold onto prestige, power, and wealth, and when we rationalize all of this with pious talk of it being "for the kingdom," we must hear again the simple words of Jesus: "the last shall be first and the first shall be last." Jesus rejected such methods in the desert durng his temptation. His kingdom would be established and would win eternal victory in another way.

He had no form or majesty that we should look at him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by others, a man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity; and as one from whom others hide their faces, he was despised and we held him of no account. Surely, he has borne out infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God and afflicted (Isaiah 53:2-4).

This is the king of God's kingdom—a marginalized man, despised and rejected. And this is how he saves the world he loves—by allowing that world to hate and reject him

Shalom!
A JOURNAL FOR THE PRACTICE OF RECONCILIATION

Shalom! A Journal for the Practice of Reconciliation is a quarterly publication of the Brethren in Christ Church U.S. Its mission is to educate and stimulate Christ-like responses to the needs of society by providing biblical, theological, sociological, denominational and personal perspectives on a variety of contemporary issues.

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and nail him to a cross. He was poor, and he was hungry, and he wept. Because of this, because he chose the cross, at his name every knee shall bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue will confess that he is Lord to the glory of God the Father. He, this despised and rejected one, is blessed forever. Woe to us, if we think there is some other path than his. Woe to us if we gather whatever we can from the world or have the temerity to do so in his name. Woe to us who join house to house and join field to field until no space is left and we live alone in the land (Isaiah 5:8).

God has a different agenda. He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing (Deut. 10:18). We are invited—no, commanded—to do the same. The God who so commands us gathered the children of Israel on two opposing mountains long ago for a ceremony of covenant ratification. From one mountain he had them shout blessings and from the other woes. From Mount Ebal, the mount of woe, he had his people shout: "Cursed is the man who withholds justice from the alien and the fatherless or the widow. Let all the congregation say amen!" (Deut. 27:19).

Such a man is cursed not because God hates him, but because God has other plans for the human race and the man is headed in the wrong direction. Unless he repents, he will be left behind and left out of the kingdom, because God raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes and has them inherit a throne of honor (1 Sam. 2:8).

This God raises the poor, has concern for the widow, watches over the fatherless, and commands care for the foreigner. This God came into our midst as a human being and welcomed tax collectors and notorious sinners, prostitutes, and pagan soldiers. He invited to his table all those whom his contemporaries regarded with enmity and derision. He touched lepers and welcomed little children. He accepted the ministry of devoted women, and commissioned a woman as the first preacher of the resurrection message. He crossed racial and religious lines and tore down dividing walls of hostility. He turned the world upside down.

When he spoke to us of the day of his return—the day when the world will be judged—he told us what will matter on that day. He will welcome into his eternal kingdom those who care for the sick or visit those in prison or clothe the naked or feed the hungry. He will welcome such people because he has identified himself with the sick, the imprisoned, the naked, and the hungry. Caring for any of these is as good as caring for the Son of God, and refusing care for any of these is to turn him away. The first shall be last and the last shall be first.

James, the earthly brother of our Lord, captured the beautiful challenge of this word from Jesus in his letter to the scattered people of God: "Religion that is true and undefiled before God the Father is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unstained by the world" (James 1:27).

The world's wealth and attention and power defile those who retain them. We're called, instead, to practice the only true and undefiled religion. We're called to walk with and imitate Christ, a marginalized Messiah proclaiming good news for the poor, release to the captives, freedom for the oppressed. As Christ taught us, we take the seat at the far end of the table, pick up our crosses, love those who hate us, care for the least of these, and, by doing all this, hasten the day when the first shall be last and the last, at long last, shall be first.

Zach Spidel *is pastor of The Shepherd's Table, Dayton, OH.*

A Threefold Reality

By Ken R. Abell

My brother could use a little mercy now
He's a stranger to freedom, he's shackled to his fear and his doubt
The pain that he lives in is almost more than living will allow
I love my brother, he could use some mercy now . . ."(Mary Gauthier)

AS SOMEONE WHO went through long cycles of unemployment in the early to mid-80s, I have firsthand experience standing on the outside looking in, which is as good a way as any to define being marginalized. It was in no way enjoyable—I felt useless and frustrated, and had more than one knock-down drag-out with God.

However, 30-some years removed from that difficult season, I understand that everything truly happens for a reason; with 20-20 hindsight I ofttimes marvel at the changes in perspective God wrought in me while I was immersed in economic woes. It heightened a desire and ability to make connections with those on the fringes.

Have you ever stood in a grocery store beside a friend who happened to have different skin color or came from a distinctive ethnic group? Have you seen the sideways or down-the-nose glances of barely concealed prejudice from clerks or other customers? Have you taken note of the resigned acceptance of it by your friend?

We live on the edge of Navajo Nation, and work with men who experience being marginalized on a regular basis because of a threefold reality: 1) their identity as Native Americans; 2) a past that includes jail and/or prison time; 3) lack of education.

What follows are eyewitness vignettes illustrating these truths.

Allen, a natural born storyteller and a lover of fun, was Pawnee and Navajo. He had a hole in his pocket, which meant that if there were a few dollars in it, he wanted to go to town. He graduated from the BIC Overcomers in November 2012. Then later, true to the charitable and gregarious nature of his character, he came to serve as an assistant to my wife Anita, the kitchen manager.

In that capacity, he helped make shopping lists and go along for the excursion to stock up on groceries. As they made their rounds each week, Anita became increasingly aware of the sideward looks or outright

gawks received from white folks. He routinely ignored it, but once reacted to a clerk at the cash register who kept eyeballing them.

"What?" Allen quipped, grinning. "She's my mother."

"Allen, I'm not old enough to be your mother."

He smiled at the cashier. "She's my sister."

On the ride home Anita and Allen had a laugh about it, but afterwards, she told me that the clerk's staring made her uncomfortable and indeed, disgusted her. In a private moment, I engaged Allen in a conversation about bigotry and such. It was his turn to gawk—he ogled me as though I had a green complexion and pointy ears.

"It's just the way it is," he said, shrugging dismissively. It's just the way it is. That stoic acknowledgment is how the majority of Native American men I have walked alongside deal with inherent racism. Our friend Allen developed pneumonia, was hospitalized, and entered eternity in October 2014.

Before addiction sank its hooks into him, a Navajo man named Russell graduated from college and had a job in the accounting department of a large company. Casual drinking in his teen years eventually became weekend benders, which in due course led to nightly binges. A DWI here, a drunken disorderly there, and soon the jail had a revolving door for Russell.

He attended the same program as Allen, and on the surface did well. However, in one-on-one chats, it became clear that he could not or would not peel back the layers to get to the root causes of his abuse of alcohol. After graduation he stayed connected to us and remained sober for eight months or so. During this period, he faithfully submitted his resume and applied for jobs; he was desperate and willing to do anything.

With a felony on his record, no prospective employer would even talk to him. He disengaged from our network of accountability and returned to his old ways. The last time I saw him was August 2018. He was in a drunken stupor staggering past the post office. I picked him up. His shame and self-loathing were palpable.

I don't know if there are local or national statistics, but among the felons I know, the unemployment rate is in the 70 to 80 percent range. I've seen more than one man jump through hoops to get the most menial of jobs only to be denied. The accumulation of rejection can frequently be the trigger that puts a bottle in an alcoholic's hand.

Anthony, a Zuni and proud of it, was introduced to marijuana when he was eight years old by a 12-year-old cousin-brother. That initiation established a pattern that became entirely normal to him. He floated through his grammar school years with little to no adult supervision, dropping out before high school. Recruited into crime by relatives, he got sentenced to prison because he followed orders given by an uncle.

He was paroled to the program in August 2011. In his mid-20s, we made an immediate connection on the common ground of humor and laughter. We have journeyed together since then. His emotional makeup is stunted at a pre-teen level, so it's often a challenge for him to comprehend the whys and wherefores of his circumstances.

Anthony wants a steady job, and definitely has a work ethic, but his lack of education is a barrier that keeps him on the outside looking in. He is not alone in that arena; there are plenty other graduates who bounce from one pickup job to another with long lapses between viable employment.

How does BIC Overcomers tackle these realities? The men arrive as strangers, become friends, and depart as family. We begin by extending unconditional love and grace while affirming each client's identity and heritage. The truths of Scripture—Psalm 139 for example—are frequently expounded in various courses of the curriculum.

As for the challenge of education: We partner with Denise Conway, who shepherds willing men through the process of attaining a GED certificate, which for some, has been a stepping stone leading to community college.

One more point to take into consideration as we reflect on the marginalization of Native Americans: Flicking a switch for lights or turning a faucet to get water is taken for granted by those reading this, but large pockets of Navajo Nation, a.k.a the rez, has no electricity and no water—a fact that ought to cause us to appreciate the conveniences we have while reevaluating any and all reasons for grumbling and complaints.

Ken R. Abell *is a counselor and home living coordinator with BIC Overcomers, Bloomfield, NM*

Being Present with People

By Krista Dutt

I HAVE OFTEN heard the life of Job upheld as an example. However, my experience as an immigration court watcher has allowed me to enter into the perspective of Job's friends. These friends heard that Job's life was in a hard place and so they went to sit with him (Job 2:11-13). Scripture says they didn't speak, waiting until Job broke seven days of silence, but the power of their presence during that time is clear. Sometimes the most we can do is show up.

As a court watcher on behalf of the Interfaith Community for Detained Immigrants, I sit in a courtroom in Chicago, Illinois, while immigrants from detention centers around the country are teleconferenced in to have a hearing before the judge.

One detained immigrant was asked a routine question about entering "without inspection" (without legal papers) with the judge expecting him to say "yes." Instead, he said "no." He had entered with inspection through Douglas, Arizona, and the government had charged him wrongly. The judge called for an extension on the case due to this mistake, but the detained immigrant said, "No, I can't handle this place anymore—deport me!"

In another case, a detained immigrant's family had traveled from three hours away to

catch a glimpse of their loved one through a television screen. The awkward and touching monitored conversation they were granted after the hearing was both heart-warming and heart-breaking.

Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zopher showed up to be witnesses to the suffering of their friend, Job. I believe the church should do the same. The church is following Jesus' interactions and the biblical story when rooted amid the marginalized in our society and communities.

In our country, brown and black people have experienced trauma, racism, and economic disinvestment based on their skin color. Poverty, which often is caused by systemic issues, is blamed on individuals who are asked to pull themselves up by their bootstraps. These are some examples of how people can be marginalized today. These are the people the church needs to be with—people who are at the very heart of God and the biblical narrative.

In my work at Mennonite Central Committee, I have the privilege of walking alongside organizations and churches that are working in the margins such as the Interfaith Community for Detained Immigrants. In my work as a pastor at The Dwelling Place, a church plant supported by Brethren in Christ Great Lakes, we are reaching out to the families of those in prison. Dr. Howard Trulear, Howard University Divinity School professor, points out that when a death occurs the church shows up. The church leads families in a funeral ritual in the church, and the church brings food and more food to the home. Deacons, elders, or a pastor continue to walk with the family as they grieve. By contrast, when a loved one is lost to the prison system, churches may push these family members away due to the shame around prison, and thus many families suffer alone. We hope to develop a church model that supports the grief of family members in prison within the very fabric of church.

One of the more interesting ways that a group of privileged people started to understand the key issues and context of marginalized people in Chicago was through the Chicago Pilgrim Walk. This walk covered 35 miles through the five police districts in Chicago that had seen the most gun deaths in the previous year. We walked to visit people who lost sons, daughters, nieces, and nephews to violence. We walked to the places where these murders happened and heard stories of the real people that were killed. We walked to see the communities in which violence is ever-present even in the midst of the daily lives of faithful families. We walked to churches and organizations that work to transform conflict and violence and provide safety to neighborhoods.

When we arrived at Dawes Park, one of the leaders of the pilgrimage started telling us the story of a nine-year-old who was shot and killed there. I stood with tears rolling down my face. The pain of the little boy was fresh in my mind, but so was the pain of his family that now doesn't get to see his dreams realized or a life well lived. The trauma of a neighborhood that loses children weekly was real to me as is the pain that guns are the normal way to solve conflicts in too many places.

As I walked and saw the inequality between some of these neighborhoods and other more white, more wealthy neighborhoods, I remembered that Jesus valued those that society did not. Jesus lifted the marginalized to be exalted. I also saw people working to change the inequalities that exist—families who care, blocks that take seriously a commitment to safety for their children and organizations that have become a neighborhood's safety net.

Walking through these neighborhoods was not a solution to neighborhood violence. Walking, instead, was an important step of remembering that Jesus walked for and with people. Walking was a remembrance of the call to walk with Jesus to create peace through relationships, just laws, and a clear witness of being in community together.

I am grateful that I have seen the power of the church working to create space for marginalized. It may seem difficult to solve the gun violence epidemic, but could you, your small group or church commit to tutoring in an area of your town that is more prone to gun violence? It may seem scary to visit a jail or prison, but could you, your small group or church reach out to a mourning wife of a recently imprisoned man helping with groceries and babysitting as she learns to be a single mother? It might be mind boggling to understand the reasons people are migrating here, but could you, your small group, or your congregation support a family as they adjust to life in your state after a likely trauma-filled journey and welcome them into the safety of your congregation?

As we seek the heart of God, may we find it in the very people that Jesus cared for—people who are marginalized. May we love with our actions just like Jesus.

Krista Dutt *is a church relations associate and Chicago program coordinator for MCC Great Lakes. She is also planting a Brethren in Christ congregation near Chicago. Parts of this article were previously published at thirdway.com/the-power-of-presence/ and mcc.org/stories/walking-jesus-walked.*

Letters to the Editor

The Fall 2018 edition of *Shalom!* on "The Third Way Church" seemed to strike a chord with readers. Here are some excerpts from notes to the editor:

"Thank you for the fall issue; it was worth its weight in gold! I have heard of a person in our congregation whose absence from fellowship is based mainly on a disagreement over national political affiliation and the opinions of some fellow members. What a heart-rending misunderstanding of the Lordship of Christ! For a long time I have been concerned about this issue. No political party can ever live up to its professed beliefs. . . . Voting has become a painful responsibility."

—Thelma Book, Upland, CA

"Thank you for the excellent fall issue. When a line-up of pastors like this declare their faith and give their people such excellent teaching, I am encouraged and grateful to be part of this denomination."

—Grace Holland, Dillsburg, PA

"I am delighted that *Shalom!* was distributed via "Connect" [BIC U. S. email newsletter]. and would be delighted to see it become a permanent part of "Connect." The more who read *Shalom!* the better.

—Harvey Sider, Stouffville, ON

Scenes from the Inside

Drama Therapy in a Maximum Security Prison

By Elizabeth Malone

SERVING A LIFE sentence in a maximum security prison leaves individuals with infinite space to sit with their thoughts and memories. Some of the wisest prophets, preachers, philosophers, and thinkers are behind bars. I am a drama therapist and teaching artist working at California State Prison, Los Angeles County in Lancaster, CA. Alongside Dr. Kamran Afary, I collaborated with a group of more than 30 students pursuing their bachelor's degrees in communication studies through Cal State LA's Prison Graduation Initiative on two theatrical pieces: "Imagine That!" and "A Fresh Start." Influenced by Narradrama, a form of drama therapy that combines narrative therapy and drama therapy, the group explored themes of judgment, mercy, childhood, and education. Both pieces were performed in front of community members, friends, and family in Fall 2018 in the A Yard Visiting Room at California State Prison, Los Angeles County. Below are scene excerpts from both pieces. Names are removed for anonymity.

"Imagine That!" is based on conversations and writings about misperceptions of people imprisoned as well as the effect of witnessing a peer's supportive relationship with his daughter through education. Scene excerpt from the beginning of the piece:

ALL: Imagine this!
B: Just to sit in a room at a high security prison and not feel threatened is a sort of phenomenon. *(all give "uh-huh's")*
J: I was deeply affected in a way I have not been in years.... tears flowing unrestrained... (all slump down in chairs)
ALL: *(all sit up straight)* WHAT SOME PEOPLE THINK OF PRISONERS:
T: A bad influence!
C: We have to judge them!
N: Just throw away garbage!
D: *(walks forward toward the audience)* I was sentenced to life in prison at 16. What little I knew about life was over.
DV: *(walks forward)* For most men and women sentenced to life in prison, there isn't very much to look forward to. For those with life without the possibility of parole, life is even more bleak.
N + OTHERS: *(walks forward)* I'm serving life without parole
K: *(walks forward)* I'm serving life without parole.
R: *(walks forward)* I'm serving life without parole.
TR: An L.W.O.P sentence means that a person has no value and will die in prison.
J: Only way to leave? In a pine box. *(all put hands to chest as in a coffin)*
C: *(steps forward)* Convicting someone of a crime is only about punishment...
J: No second chances.
(C puts hands behind back and J escorts him back to his seat)
C: At the end of my sentence I will know what it feels like to serve more time in prison than I have lived outside of prison.
(all those in agreement raise their hand)
R: When you feel that you do not have an opportunity to better yourself, you feel as if you have fallen into hopelessness...
(all slump in hopelessness)
ALL: I am still a HUMAN BEING.
(all stand)
TR: Regardless of our prison sentence....
ALL: We are now focused on EDUCATION.

"A Fresh Start" is based on the stories of the students' educational journeys from kindergarten to pursuing college in prison. This scene is A's story as a kindergarten student after witnessing the death of his father.

TEACHER: Welcome to kindergarten!
(bell rings; four actors playing kindergarten students take their seats upstage)
TEACHER: Reading test! Today's book is *Cat in the Hat.*
J: The sun did not shine. It was too wet to play. So we sat in the house all that cold, cold, wet day.
T: I sat there with sally. We sat there, we two, and I said, "How I wish we had something to do!"
J: *(stuttering)* Too wwwet to go out and too ccccold to play ball. so we ssssat in the house. We did nnnnothing at all.
(all laugh; J. runs out of the classroom)
TEACHER: QUIET! A, it's your turn.
(A nods his head no; he refuses to read out loud)
(bell rings; all except A and teacher exit)
TEACHER: *(pins a note on A's shirt)* A, this note says you can't read. Make sure your mom sees it so we can have a meeting.
(drum beat; teacher freezes)
A: (*holds a picture of himself as a child)* Dear Little Man, today our kindergarten teacher thought something was wrong with us, because you won't read or talk in class. It's okay though Little Man, we're fine. I'll tell them that Dad died, and you don't understand what that means. I'll explain to them that you found him overdosed and you're still scared. (*A's Mom enters as A continues and Teacher unfreezes. They act out the scene as A speaks.)* When she takes you to school, you be brave because mom is going to ask you to read. She is going to put a book in front of you and tell you:
A's MOM: Read the first page, show him you can read.
A: And when you do, teacher will be so surprised by how well you read, how strong you are, he will leave us alone. I promise. Love, Big A.
(bell rings)

Elizabeth Malone *attends Madison Street Church in Riverside, CA. For more information about upcoming performances at the prison, contact Elizabeth at lizmalonela@gmail.com.*

Responding to People Who Are Homeless

By Jean L. Keller-Thau

HOMELESSNESS IS A word that brings anxiety and concern to each one of us. It is almost impossible for many of us to envision a world where we do not have a home to which to go and live in privacy. Yet there are those who face that reality every day.

I've had the privilege to be associated with Family Promise of the Harrisburg Capital Region (FPHCR) for over 10 years. FPHCR provides a "hand up" to those families with children experiencing homelessness in the Central Pennsylvania area through partnership with churches and other organizations. But do we truly understand and embrace the difference between a "hand up" and a "hand out"? Even as folks who care and embrace God's call to reach out to the "least" among us, do we understand how to do that in a way that provides dignity to those who are walking the extraordinary and challenging journey of homelessness?

We somehow see people who are homeless as "less than." In my time with FPHCR, I have encountered some attitudes that leave the families feeling that those caring for them are somehow superior and reach out only because they "feel sorry" for them. These attitudes strip their ability to feel good about themselves and move forward with productive lives for the future. They feel judgment rather than love, and pity rather than compassion and understanding. These attitudes harden hearts and begin to harden their children who are unsure what their future will be.

Many find themselves in situations that begin to spiral. In that downward turn, they are unable to maintain a home for their family. They are forced to stay with family and friends, go to shelters, or sleep in cars and on the street. Moms and dads are often separated from each other and their children. It becomes more and more difficult to put the pieces back together. Because they have no permanent residence, they find it more difficult to be hired and maintain a job or provide adequate daycare for their kids. Attending school becomes problematic for their children, affecting them for the future.

Consider what it would feel like to not know where you are going to sleep that night. Consider what it would feel like to have your child look to you for the bare essentials of life and not be able to provide them. Then consider the additional burden of knowing that folks are judging you as "less than." How do you possibly move from "hopelessness to hope" much less "homelessness to home"? How do you deal with the expectation that you just need to do more, pick yourself up, and move forward when you live day to day without respect and a lack of confidence?

We have been told that we need to earn respect. We somehow equate respect with success. Success becomes having the ability to make money and provide. How does someone in a position of homelessness begin the process of earning that respect? In order to move forward in productive and healthy ways, respect and confidence are essential. People who are homeless are stripped of this through attitudes that they are of no value. It becomes a vicious cycle.

As I worked with FPHCR, I gained invaluable insight into the enormous challenges these families face. I've watched many of these families, given the opportunity to be part of this ministry, embrace the chance to have a place to come away from many of the challenges faced through homelessness. I've watched them begin to experience love rather than judgment, and compassion and caring rather than pity. I watched volunteers model healthy ways to interact with one another and spend time with their children. Those who begin to understand this incredible opportunity have moved on to do extraordinary things, and their children begin to have hope for the future. But how many are able to experience such an opportunity?

As a society we need to begin to understand how to care for one another. We need to begin to see each individual as an incredible creation of God. We're not here to be enablers of bad behavior, but to facilitate God's love for all people. We have a tendency to set people aside who make us uncomfortable. We do that with people who are homeless. We have honed the ability to not even see those who are in need. We must open our hearts to see those around us and allow God to guide us in how to respond.

God spoke to the Israelites: "Do not oppress a foreigner; you yourselves know how it feels to be foreigners, because you were foreigners in Egypt" (Exod. 23:9). Do we treat people who are homeless as foreigners among us?

"But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:17-18). May these words speak to your heart.

Jean Keller-Thau *previously coordinated the Dillsburg (PA) Brethren in Christ Church's Family Promise program and served on the board of Family Promise of the Harrisburg Capital Region.*

A New Partnership

When *Shalom!* first began in 1980, Brethren in Christ Churches in the U. S. and Canada were organizationally one denomination. Now there are two separate organizations, and the church in Canada has changed its name to Be in Christ Church of Canada. Many ties still remain between our two churches, and so we are pleased to announce a new partnership with *Shalom!* While *Shalom!* is officially a BIC U. S. publication, and BIC U. S. retains editorial and production responsibility, we are partnering to provide copies to all Be in Christ Church of Canada congregations and to include at least one Canadian-based article in each edition. *Shalom!* will also be posted on the Be in Christ Church of Canada website (it is already on the BIC U. S. website). In addition, we continue to welcome subscriptions from individual Canadians.

Dear White Moms: What I Need You to Know

By Jehava Brown

DEAR WHITE MOMS: You are my friends. You are my sisters. We are the same in more ways than we are different, but there are a few things that I need you to know.

I have three black boys. They are the sweetest and most amazing humans I've ever met. They are incredibly intelligent, creative, artistic, caring, thoughtful, compassionate, friendly, and respectful. These are the characteristics of black boys all over America.

My heart aches when I think of anyone not being kind to my children. I so desperately want them to be treated fairly, and to be able to live their normal lives in peace. I want them to be comfortable and confident in their own skin. I want them to reach every single dream they have and to live safe lives where no one tries to bring harm to them because of the color of their skin.

I need your help. I need you to have conversations with your children about racism. Racism isn't always blatantly expressed. It can be very passive and subtle through messages conveyed in our culture. As parents, you can completely change this through intentional conversations.

I grew up in a predominately white area, and attended a small conservative Christian school. The amount of racism and ignorance I dealt with from white privileged children was tremendous. I learned to be very passive in my friendships, and to not make anyone feel uncomfortable. As my peers spoke, I could hear their parents' voices loudly above their own. They hadn't interacted with other black children; I was the one and only real friend they ever had.

I was called horrible names; no one was allowed to date me. This was not because they didn't like me, but because of their parents saying "no." I wasn't even allowed in one of my close friend's house until her parents felt I was "safe." My stories could go on and on.

I grew up not seeing many black actors in TV or movies, unless they were supporting roles or slave movies. The only black people I saw on the news were associated with reports that dehumanized and villainized.

I grew up in a generation that has still remained pretty racially separated. We can't afford to hand that down to our kids.

So please . . . talk to your children about racism. I hate the conversations I have to have with my boys about it. It's difficult to explain to them why some people won't like them, think they are scary, or even try to harm them because of the color of their skin. Please talk to your kids, so together we can make the world better for all of our children. Teach them to stand up to injustice whenever they see it. Teach them compassion, kindness, and love. Teach them not to passively ignore or avoid the trials of others, but to always stand up for what is right. Teach them the truth and don't sugar coat it or encourage your kids to be color blind. "Color-blindness" creates passivity.

Watch what you say and what they hear. Be careful watching shows in your home that vocalize harmful comments about racial differences and economic status. Make sure you aren't supporting them in conversation or in things you allow around your children. Be careful how you speak about minorities, making sure you are valuing them the way you value your white counterparts.

Your children need to hear that you enjoy shows that feature black characters and movie actors. They need to hear that you listen to music with artists that look different than you (more than just hip-hop), and that you read books by black authors.

Your kids need to have positive minority experiences in their own homes and churches. It is important they see that you are intentionally building friendships with minorities and regularly have them in your home. Befriend black moms. If you wouldn't say it to a white friend, don't say it to a black friend.

All of these things will shape and develop your children's worldviews. These intentional acts will change how they view entire groups of people. Your children will see them as their peers and appreciate all of their many similarities while embracing their differences.

We are all the same as mothers. We don't want our kids to be bullied. We want them to live successful lives. We want people to give them grace and love. We want them to make great decisions. We want people to be kind to our kids. We want to protect them. We want their childhoods to be magical, and to set them up for the best lives possible.

Your children are part of the hope I have for the world to change. Your children are the next generation and the children my boys will grow up with. If you can model inclusive attitudes, then you will raise kind-hearted children. They won't automatically label any kids as "threats," "incompetent," or "thugs" just because of the color of their skin.

I hope that when your children see mine, they will see their hearts, amazing personalities, and make fair judgments after they get to know them.

People always ask me how I instill confidence with all this negativity that comes at them. My answer: Jesus. They love Jesus. We love Jesus, and his word is our truth above anything the world says. Their hope is in the Lord. Our hope is in the Lord.

If you see my sons at night with hoodies on, they are probably cold. Don't act fearful. Smile at them when you see them at the store. Say "Hello." When they come to your home, welcome them with love, and don't ask awkward or weird questions. Treat them the same as you would any other children in your home. Judge them on their character, not on their looks. Always assume the best, not the worst. Shower them with kindness and love.

You will truly make the world a much better place.

Jehava Brown *is a motherhood and lifestyle blogger at onlygirl4boyz.com. She and her family live in Harrisburg, PA and attend the Harrisburg Brethren in Christ Church. She loves to encourage women to find the joy in the chaos that life throws their way. She loves to sing, travel, and cook. This article condensed from a post on her blog: www.onlygirl4boyz.com/dear-white-moms-what-i-need-you-to-know/*

Walking in Friendship

By Keith Dow

"Friendship is the true cause of civil peace. It is the animating form of civil society."
Jacques Maritain

Walking in friendship

In my early years supporting people with intellectual disabilities, I went on many walks with Hiroshi, a lively middle-aged man on the autism spectrum. Hiroshi expressed himself without using words, so it was difficult for him to communicate effectively about his chronic stomach pain and other health issues. Self-injurious behavior left his face pockmarked. His small frame swayed as he walked, intelligent eyes following his hypnotically dancing fingers that led the way in front of him. I shared many hours with him this way, and our walks embodied to me the beauty of creation and the cathartic joy of simple movement.

Those who approached us on the path, however, did not know Hiroshi. As people gazed on his atypical appearance, their faces would flash with fear or sympathy. Where someone might approach him as a "charitable project," she or he would never greet him as a potential friend. Sometimes people would move aside in apprehension, or caution their children in hushed voices. Generally, people avoided us altogether. Hiroshi seemed unaware of these objectifying encounters. Perhaps he didn't notice. More likely, he simply refused to let the stares bother him. They bothered me.

The margins of our churches

Experiences of ostracization and isolation are more often the norm than the exception for people like Hiroshi. People with disabilities and their families experience marginalization on a daily basis. Research shows that almost half (46 percent) of adolescents and adults with autism have no friendships with similar age peers. One would hope that these experiences of marginalization would be different in church communities. However, adults with disabilities tend to be involved in churches far less than adults without disabilities." A 2018 *Christianity Today* article reports, "The odds of a child with autism never attending religious services were nearly twice as high as compared to children with no chronic health conditions. The odds of never attending also were significantly higher for children with developmental delays, ADD/ADHD, learning disabilities, and behavior disorders." Children and adults with conditions that limit social interaction—those most often excluded from other social settings—are the most likely to feel unwelcome at religious services. Dr. Erik Carter points to the potential here: "Faith communities can play a role in restoring disconnected lives by intentionally fostering enduring and mutual relationships among all of their members."

Communities of Christ's friendship and peace

In John 15, Christ calls his disciples "friends" rather than servants. Who are we to be called friends of God? This gift is not a result of anything we have done to deserve the friendship. God then calls us to live our lives in mutual friendships with others. Yet sisters and brothers live in our neighbourhoods who encounter barriers getting up the stairs or into the door of our church, or being heard and understood, let alone being welcomed into transforming friendships of mutual care.

As Jacques Maritain rightly observes, the fabric of friendship is the foundation of peace in civil society. More importantly, it animates Christ's peaceable kingdom among us, opening us to God's spirit of love in our midst. According to John, "If we love one another, God remains in us and His love is made complete in us." As people committed to the way of Christ's peace, the practice of friendship with those who are different from us invites God's love and peace to rule in our midst.

In *Friendship at the Margins*, Chris Huertz and Christine Pohl write, "Jesus offers us friendship, and that gift shapes a surprisingly subversive missional paradigm." Extending this gift of friendship to others reshapes our social structures to embrace the gifts of all people. I have witnessed faith communities changed from the inside out through friendship with people with intellectual and physical disabilities. These churches have flourished as people offer their gifts as ushers, caretakers, Sunday School teachers, and pastors. Relationships of reciprocity transform these communities and the individual people within them. "Within friendship we learn about ourselves as we see our love and action through the eyes of another who loves and trusts us."

In my relationship with Hiroshi, I experience God's peace in a new way. Hiroshi challenges me to reimagine praise through his tactile and embodied response to worship and wonder. I face my own potential for frustration and anxiety in times of crisis. God draws me to a new appreciation for his image reflected in Hiroshi—someone who experiences the world in a way different from my own.

Shifting margins, tearing down barriers

My prayer is that the peace of Christ will flow through his people as we experience God's scandalous friendship. Extending this friendship to those around us—particularly those who experience marginalization—invites God's kingdom into our midst. We begin to recognize people and places on the periphery of our religious establishments as the central locus of God's work and mission in the world. The margins of our communities shift. As theologian John Swinton observes:

> It is certainly the case that Jesus sat with the marginalized and it is also true that he offered them friendship, acceptance and a valued place within his coming Kingdom. However, it is not quite the case that Jesus sat with the marginalized. He certainly sat with those whom religious society had excluded and rejected as unclean and unworthy of attention. However, in sitting with such people, Jesus, who was and is God, actually shifted the margins.

We cannot manufacture friendship, but we can open up spaces of welcome by addressing barriers of communication, of phys-

ical access, and of prejudiced attitudes towards disability. Stuart Murray writes that Anabaptist communities "are called to be committed communities of discipleship and mission, places of friendship, mutual accountability and multivoiced worship." God calls us to the practices of peace and friendship with one another. Just as Christ "is our peace" who has "destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility" that separates and divides, so we, too, must tear down the walls and barriers that divide the body of Christ from within. I have no doubt that, in doing so, we will experience God's presence and friendship at the centre of our communities in new and revelatory ways.

Further resources:

- Christian Horizons: christian-horizons.org/churches
- Disability and Faith forum: disabilityandfaith.org
- ADNet: www.adnetonline.org

Keith Dow *is a credentialed pastor with Be in Christ Church of Canada and an elder with the Meeting House in Ottawa, ON, where he lives with his family. He serves on the organization and spiritual life team with Christian Horizons, a faith-based organization working with people with intellectual disabilities in Canada and around the world.*

When English Isn't the First Language

by Julie Weatherford

"When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God" (Leviticus 19:33-34).

I LOVE BEING with my Afghani friends, recent immigrants and refugees from their beloved Afghanistan, who have come with their husbands and families to live in my city. At our weekly ESL (English as a Second Language) gatherings, there are smiles and laughter, three-kiss greetings customary to Afghanistan, joy of friendship, celebration of holidays and individual accomplishments, comfort of shared sorrows, and mutual respect for and sharing from one another's understandings and cultures. The opportunity I have had to work with them over the last three years via a local non-profit organization called Glocally Connected (glocallyconnected.org)—mainly helping them learn English, providing rides, visiting over meals, and accompanying them to health-related appointments—is a great privilege.

In fact, this opportunity is part of a long fulfillment of a desire to know and befriend people from other cultures, people who are different from me, the marginalized, "the Other," the kinds of socially and religiously stigmatized people with whom Jesus hung out. Shortly after I finished college, I investigated moving to Pakistan with a small group of other Christians, as I was interested in serving there with my newly acquired master's degree in public health. That didn't happen and, having some proficiency in French, I looked into serving in Haiti and in former French colonies of Africa. That didn't happen either. However, over the years since then, here in the U. S., right in the city where I was born and raised, my life has been filled with people from different cultures.

In my profession in public health in Southern California, I have had the privilege of working with, serving, and befriending persons with different skin tones and with different cultural backgrounds from around the globe. Now, working beyond my professional career, I have the joy and privilege of working with people from a culture group that's new to my friendship circle: Afghani refugees. Middle Eastern people to whom I formerly thought I needed to travel abroad to befriend and serve have, instead, now come to live in my community. For all but one of the families (that one being here on asylum status), the reason they moved here was because the husbands/fathers aided the U. S. in Afghanistan, working either in the U. S. embassy or for U. S. armed forces.

Marginalized by their lack of English proficiency, my Afghani friends work hard to learn. What a crazy language English is, and how much we native English speakers take for granted! Conjugation of everyday English verb tenses can be confusing, to say the least—laughable, were it not so difficult. (Ever wonder why, in conjugating the verb "to be," first-person present tense is "I am" and past tense is "I was"?)

Some of my friends had no schooling at all in Afghanistan, so even though many of them are excellent seamstresses or jewelry-makers, knowing how to hold a pencil can be a learning experience. Those women who have graduated from the Afghani equivalent of our high school or college and who thus know their own language well have an easier time learning ours. Still, our alphabet is different from theirs, and learning how to write and recognize our letters is harder at age 30 than at age six. Letter and word pronunciations in English are bafflingly inconsistent,* and there are sounds in English that do not exist in Farsi or Pashto (languages spoken by Afghanis), so learning how to say new words is a challenge. (For just one example, pronunciation of the letter "v," which requires the unusual placement of the upper incisors against the lower lip, is foreign to them and hard to learn.) On the other hand, many of my Afghani friends can communicate in two or more languages, an ability that few U. S. citizens have bothered to acquire.

Lack of English proficiency has innumerable negative consequences in the lives of these women. Conversing with a child's teacher at a parent-teacher conference is difficult. Filling out the paperwork at a visit to the doctor is a monumental and, without the help of an English-speaking friend or family member, an impossible task. Studying to pass the exam for a driver's license is a huge undertaking (and passing is cause for much celebration in our ESL group). Filling out a job application is a formidable task, and actually landing a job is a dream few of them can aspire to, save for in

and the distant future. Simply chatting with neighbors in the apartment complex or the checkout clerk in the market is intimidating. Fear, humiliation, isolation, and loneliness are common by-products of the inability to communicate well, and it is hard not to fall into these negative emotions.

The U. S. has long been a magnet for people from other countries. In fact, white U. S. citizens of European descent, who all too often consider themselves to be the longstanding and therefore entitled group, are, relatively speaking, only very recent refugees or immigrants themselves. Starting with their arrival in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, they killed and confiscated the land from native North Americans whose people groups had lived here for many previous centuries (and who, it must be said, had migrated into the continent themselves over the Bering Strait in centuries even longer gone by). All of our families' histories here in the U. S. include the experience of immigration, so in reality, are we not all immigrants or direct descendants of relatively recent immigrants?

There are no doubt recent immigrants in all of our communities, and opportunities to befriend and support them abound. They will not easily approach churches for help, but they will often respond positively to expressions of friendship that can grow into relationships of friendship and mutual care. In addition to the joy of following God's repeated command to welcome and care for the stranger, we may find that the joy and satisfaction that we gain from building friendships with them is more than equal to the effort we put into reaching out and caring for them.

Befriending and helping immigrants and refugees is a small, joy-filled and ongoing response to God's command to love neighbor—to welcome the stranger, the refugee, the other, and to care for the marginalized. It is one way that I follow Jesus.

**For a humorous example of one inconsistency in English pronunciation, see Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz in https://tinyurl.com/yaka4pdf*

Julie Weatherford *attends the Madison Street Church, Riverside, CA.*

Editor's Notes

2019 subscription renewals: You have probably received the 2019 subscription renewal letter and may have already responded. The annual subscription rate is still $20 U. S., with additional contributions welcome and very important to our ongoing survival. Please renew as soon as possible by mailing your check, payable to Brethren in Christ Church U. S., to the editor (address on page 2). You can also renew or contribute online at bicus.org/resources/publications/shalom.

Topics for 2019: Topics under consideration for the remainder of the year include end-of-life and aging issues, parenting in a post-Christian age, using electronic communication (social media, blogging, etc.) effectively, economic justice, living peacefully in an age of outrage, and creation care. The editor always welcomes your ideas and offers to write.

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listened to showed Hochschild their favorite activities, people, and neighborhoods. As they traveled together, Hochschild asked questions, observed events, and met the families and neighbors who formed social networks for her new friends. As she began to participate in the lives of local people, they rewarded Hochschild's efforts with mutual trust and outreach. Hochschild muses, "We, on both sides, wrongly imagine that empathy with the 'other' side brings an end to clear-headed analysis when, in truth, it's on the other side of that [empathy] bridge that the most important analysis can begin" (p. xi). She concludes that "Our polarization, and the increasing reality that we simply don't know each other, makes it too easy to settle for dislike and contempt" (p. xii).

Although *Strangers in Their Own Land* delineates the "feels-as-if" deep story of white, older, Christian, married, blue and white collar Louisianan, I believe it's instructive for how to relate to subgroups in our society who see themselves as marginalized. *Strangers in Their Own Land* exploded my view of who the marginalized might be. They are sometimes Caucasians who look just like me. They may be "worshippers," a term Hochschild uses to describe conservative Christians she encountered. For regional, cultural, or religious reasons, their deeply-held beliefs run counter to secular, mainstream culture,

Just as Hochschild journeyed with a group foreign to her own Berkeley culture, I need to suspend judgment and journey with others whose beliefs diverge from my own. Journeying for Hochschild meant seeking out a group of people whose "deep story" differed wildly from her own. She spent time doing ordinary life with them. She suspended judgment long enough to listen deeply for the themes underlying their "deep story." Hochschild did not approach Louisiana citizens as subjects to be studied. During this process, she sought and found several "guides" who sympathized with her journey for understanding and agreed to broker her contacts with local people who otherwise may have viewed her suspiciously. A friend-of-a-friend offered Hochschild a home base for her 10 trips to Louisiana. Her guide offered access to other friends and contacts who would journey at least partway across the "empathy wall." Hochschild ended her preface with these hopeful words, "The English language doesn't give us many words to describe the feeling of reaching out to someone from another world, and of *having that interest welcomed* (italics hers). Something of its own kind is created. What a gift" (pp. xi-xii).

Mary Walters Ebersole *is a retired English teacher and librarian. She and her husband John attend Speedwell Heights (PA) Brethren in Christ Church. Mary follows her growing interest in cross-cultural interactions by helping to support a refugee family of four from southeast Asia who are sponsored by Speedwell Heights. She has also helped refugees use public library resources to study for the U. S. citizenship test.*

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BOOK REVIEW: Strangers in Their Own Land

By Mary Walters Ebersole

DURING THIS DIVISIVE season in our nation's cultural and political life, I've been on a personal quest to understand, even empathize with those on many sides of important issues. I've asked myself, "Who am I as a player in this discourse? How can I find common ground with people I disagree with or with whom I have trouble identifying?"

Sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild has lived these questions for the past five years by transporting herself from the comfort of her academic life at University of California at Berkeley, into the domain of white, working class Americans in coastal Louisiana. Equipped with the tools of a sociologist, Hochschild reached out with compassion and empathy to citizens who seemed to inhabit a different country from her own. In doing so, she discovered a "deep story" which represents "the hopes, fears, pride, shame and anxiety" in the lives of people she talked with. She recounts her findings in her book, *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right* (The New Press, 2018).

Hochschild discovered this deeply held narrative: You are standing in a long line, trying to progress toward the American Dream. You are in the middle of the line standing with others who are white, older, conservative Christian, and mostly male. Then you spot the line-cutters. People start butting in line ahead of you—women, blacks, immigrants, refugees, even the endangered brown pelican. They accept government perks and assistance. Do-gooders reach out to help them cut in line. You continue to fall behind, squeezed out by the 1980 recession, outsourced jobs, and multi-national corporations. You feel like a minority, too. You just want to be recognized for who you are and what you've done. Pride keeps you from reaching for sympathy or government handouts. People in other cultural groups hurl insults at you, calling you "crazy redneck," "white trash" or "Bible thumper." These epithets freeze you in place. You feel like a "stranger in your own land" (pp. 135-147, "deep story" summarized).

Hochschild contends that people's actions and reactions spring from their "deep story," as if that story were true. The story doesn't consist of objective facts or empirical data. Rather, the story is felt to be true. Here's a small-scale example from my own "deep story." I visualize celebrating Christmas by decorating with multi-colored lights as my childhood family did. After decades of marriage, my husband finally stepped forward to express that he prefers white lights. As in my own story, most people's deep stories remain hidden even from themselves.

Did Hochschild capture the "deep story" of her newfound friends, along with tracing its resulting actions and reactions? Within the pages of her book, Hochschild recounted hours attending social, church, and political events with Louisianans, and recorded endless conversations in homes, at church picnics, and at restaurants. Mid-way through writing her book, Hochschild checked back with her Louisiana friends and acquaintances to see whether the "deep story" she described resonated with them. One interviewee remarked, "I live your analogy. . . ." Another quipped, "You've read my mind" (pp. 145-146).

A captivating part of Hochschild's book is how she went about "climbing the empathy wall," a process that allowed her to feel with her friends in Louisiana and to accurately recount their stories. As a sociologist, Hochschild realized that she needed to enter the lives, modes of worship, and workplaces of people she wished to understand. In the course of their ordinary lives, the people she

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