



Harvest Time

Engaging with money as a doorway to transformation

GRACELAND

Dear Friends,

This newsletter is an attempt to put into words a nine-year journey with land in Mississippi. I offer the enclosed reflections and hope that they weave a story of vision, challenge and transformation. They are not intended to capture all the details or share all perspectives. But I hope they help you to see something of what Harvest Time has been up to in Mississippi.

I realize this newsletter is long. In the process of collecting stories, I have become aware there could easily be a book written about this experience. Obviously this is not that book; rather, it is an attempt to begin to share a powerful story.

In my imagination, I hear my children and other friends telling me that if you want people to read something it needs to be short. I know that to be true for many. I also know that some people cherish the opportunity to sit down with a cup of tea and ponder a complicated subject that has the potential to open a new way of seeing. This newsletter is for you.

For those who prefer shorter reads, I will also send this story in bite-sized chunks via email. Either way, I hope you will find a way to journey with me to a small, grace filled piece of land in Mississippi.

Much love,
Rose



Part One: The Gift of Land in Mississippi

Introduction

By Rose Feerick

It began at a table under a portable tent near a town called Corinth. Not Corinth, Greece but Corinth, Mississippi and the temptations we were up against were walls—the internal, unconscious kind—that lead us to fear people different than ourselves.

I was there on behalf of Harvest Time to give a gift of land. I thought it was a simple task, like writing a check or transferring stock. I had no idea that it would take us nine years to make the gift. I never would have said yes had I known. Maybe that's why God chose us – because we didn't know how complicated this process would be. But I think we did know how to recognize where the Spirit was leading and say yes.

Now that I think of it, it did not really begin at that table, but on a phone call. A group of Harvest Time friends had gathered via conference call to support two members of our community who wanted to give away a piece of land. As we were listening together, I heard my colleague suggest, “Why don't you give it to us and we'll give it away for you?”

For five years that circle of friends had been gathering to talk about money and Christian faith. We knew that the Gospel invites us to use money in ways that serve the well being of all. We came together to help each other figure out the specifics of what that looked like for our lives.

One topic that intrigued some of us was the notion of commonwealth. What if money was taken out of private decision-making and discussed in community? And what if land were not a commodity to be developed for personal gain, but a gift meant to serve all beings? In the context of questions such as these, my colleague's suggestion that we work together to gift a family farm seemed like it could be a powerful experiment. Everyone said yes.

Soon after, there was a lighthearted ritual on a beach and then a legal transfer. By the end of 2006, Harvest Time owned (temporarily) approximately 55 acres of land in Mississippi, and I was part of a process with members of a Harvest Time community to give it away.



In December of that year, Nancy Thurston and I were tasked with writing a letter that could be sent to our networks. We chose not to write a RFP (request for proposals) that is typical in philanthropy because we were looking for something that was sourced in discernment and community. We were aware that power dynamics in philanthropy often favor donors. Donors or foundations, for instance, often set the rules of the game, determining the criteria that recipients need to fulfill in order to receive the gift. We wondered what it would look like for donors and recipients to share those responsibilities and thus share power. Instead of sending an RFP we asked, "Do you have a vision for healing on this land?"

Members of the Harvest Time community sent that letter to all of our networks and invited everyone who received it to share it. A few months later, four organizations and one individual sent us what they could see. The

organizations were Be Present, Inc., Common Fire, Community Wholeness Venture, and The Young People's Project. The individual was Mary Brooks Tyler, a woman from Mississippi. I read their visions in an armchair on a bright spring day. I remember the sense of awe that descended as I realized how similar the visions were. What people saw was a retreat center dedicated to healing of relationships between human beings and the earth.

Soon thereafter, the Harvest Time community gathered to consider the responses. Sensing that the Holy Spirit might be up to something, we invited everyone who had sent visions to join us on the land. "Come. Together, we will look around, meet each other, and listen together for next steps."

Already we were in a different paradigm of gift. Ours trusted the wisdom of a circle that included giver and gifted to discern next steps instead of assuming decision making rested with the giver alone. Ours believed that the Holy Spirit would speak to us if we listened to each other and to the land.

I had no idea how radical that was. As a Christian committed to finding ways that financial resources can serve the Gospel, it seemed obvious to me. Aren't we supposed to listen for the Spirit's leading? Aren't we supposed to create communities that welcome all people? Aren't we supposed to bring our different gifts to serve what God wants us to do? Isn't that what the Kingdom of God is all about?



I thought it was simple. We would go to the land, walk around, meet each other, share what we discerned and it would be clear who was supposed to receive this land.



It is more than eight years later. The journey, of course, was not simple. Our first coming together on the land was a powerful, sacred time. Much more complicated was figuring out how to create a process that would honor that experience and embody our hopes for a collaborative process. Because our circle included people from different racial backgrounds, religious traditions, classes, ages, genders, and parts of the country, we had to figure out how to recognize and work through unconscious assumptions and fear when they were present in our midst so we could build a circle of trust.

This trust circle was no small aspiration given the history of violence and racism that is associated with land in that part of the country. It meant facing and walking through places of deep pain that are active in our culture. Many organizations would have repressed, or turned a blind eye to

the elephants in the room in order to complete the project quickly. At Harvest Time, we believed that it was essential to see, talk about and try to shift places of mistrust so that the gift could move in a spirit of love and serve the vision of healing and reconciliation dreamed by the original donors. We took the time to talk openly about the hard stuff and trusted that the Holy Spirit could remove the walls between us. This was our way of offering a spiritual foundation of love for the retreat center vision.

Many people gave their time and wisdom to this process. Not all of them are still involved. Two of the organizations, Common Fire and The Young People's Project, stepped away from the circle after a few years. Some members of the Harvest Time community left the process in the midst of a very painful chapter. I wish I could say that this journey was without such losses.

A core group of people remained. It is their perseverance, faithfulness and willingness to have conversation after conversation to shift assumptions and fears that prevent us from seeing each other's shining hearts that brought us to a point where we believe the gift can be given and received in the radiance of the Spirit.

We are, at last, in the home stretch of this journey. This summer, Harvest Time will gift the farm to Community Wholeness Venture (CWV), a North Carolina based non-profit that "exists to increase and enhance the overall health, well-being, and effectiveness of existing and emerging leaders, their organizations, and the constituents they serve by providing healing, spiritual development, and leadership development and technical assistance."¹ CWV's dream is to build a retreat center that "effectively addresses spirit, soul, and body of individuals and groups alike and would sustain the transformation of our relationships with God, self, others, and things (including the whole earth)."² Harvest Time's involvement with this project will end when the land transfers this summer.

1 Alease Bess

2 Ibid.

As we move toward final transfer, I want to share the story of this journey with you. What follows is a creative weaving of reflections written by people who have been and continue to be deeply engaged in the gift experiment. Nancy and Howard Thurston have worked with me as part of Harvest Time's team. Mary Brooks Tyler, the individual who responded to our request for visions, discerned early that she was not to receive the farm but stayed to support our process. Alease Bess, the founder and director of CWV, works alongside Karen Dargen as representatives of that ministry.

I hope these reflections inspire you to imagine ways that gifts made in the context of diverse partnership can participate in the grace of healing of deep wounds in our country. I also hope some readers will be moved to help us complete this process by making a financial gift. There are costs associated with legal transfer and, if funding allows, we would like to make a gift to CWV to help care for the land and provide a strong foundation for manifesting the retreat center. I trust that those who know they are to participate in this last phase of Harvest Time's gifting process will do so.

Whether or not you are called to make a financial offering, your witnessing of this journey through your reading is its own gift. Thank you for reading.

The Sand Shifted Under My Feet **By Nancy Thurston**

My involvement with Harvest Time began in 2002 when I joined their first small circle, the Beloved Community. One aspect of our work together was to openly share the details of our investments and bank account balances, our giving and portfolios. Most of us were proud of at least some of our investing and spending choices and embarrassed by others, but we discovered the freeing power of taking these details out of the closet and looking at them with spiritual friends.

Following Harvest Time's encouragement, the Beloved Community experimented by working with all that emerged as we brought our money decisions out of the privacy of our own

homes and into community. In one of those experiments, we each determined how much we wanted to donate. Then we all decided together where to give the money. We each had equal say in the decision even though the amounts we contributed varied greatly. As expected, this brought up conflicting emotions. Talking about the emotions stirred by these experiments, however, proved to be a powerful way to bring our finances in line with our faith.

Four years after I joined Harvest Time's Beloved Community, two of our members came to our 2006 fall gathering ready to give away their family farm in Mississippi, a farm filled with both wonderful family memories and cultural pain. They hoped that the Beloved Community would work collaboratively to give the land away to an organization in such a way that would bring healing and reconciliation. We had practiced communal gifting before. To some of us, it appeared that this might be our next giving experiment.

After breakfast on our last morning together, we all headed down to the edge of the Pacific Ocean for our closing worship together. These rituals were often a mix of sacred play and prayer, and this morning was no exception. With the waves quietly lapping at the shore, we were presented with a hand drawn *Deed of Trust*. We were silent for a moment, marking the moment the farm was spiritually given to the Beloved Community. Legal transfer to Harvest Time happened a few months later.



As we received the deed, I felt the sands shift under my feet and the Spirit flow into the midst of our circle. I knew that we had just begun a

process of giving and receiving that could initiate healing far greater than I'd ever imagined before.

Maybe, just maybe, I dreamed, this band of seekers could give away land located in a particularly violent and racially divided part of our country, historically and currently, in such a manner that the process itself would encourage sustainable partnerships across the big divides of race, class and gender.



I glimpsed that this process could initiate a flow of healing that would touch my friend's ancestors who had lived on and loved that land, our divided nation and our world. If we followed the guidance of the Spirit each step of the way, this gift could become a profound doorway to spiritual transformation at the personal, communal and systemic levels. When asked who among us wanted to participate in this process, I said yes with every cell of my body.

I'm glad I didn't know that receiving ownership of this land was only the first step of a very demanding nine-year process. That day, though, standing on the edge of the Pacific Ocean in a circle of friends, all that mattered was the gift that had been freely given and received.

Reflections on Yakni

By Howard Thurston

I visited the farm in mid-November 2006, as the last of the leaves were falling from the many hardwood trees in the forests that stretched over the hilly land of northern Mississippi. It was very chilly, with clouds gathering throughout the day, although the rain never fell.

My traveling companions and I had driven

from Memphis and, as we turned north toward Tennessee from U.S. Highway 72, I was struck by the immediate changes of sight, sound, and feel. It was as if we had been transported somehow into a bygone era, and time suddenly slowed. The sound of the highway faded behind us as we wound our way over a curved road, past a wide variety of houses and other rural buildings. Some were neat, tidy, and well cared for, while others were derelict.

As we drove along, my friend suddenly announced that we were now crossing land that was a part of the farm. The trees were thick and overgrown, but beautiful, an intermingling of dense evergreens and deciduous trees. Soon we came upon the old farmhouse. The house was not in good shape, but its simple beauty captivated me.



Since the house is on the high point of the land, the view to the east is exquisite, and the land rolls on and on in all directions. A cacophony of bird greetings met us as we explored the yard. Small groups of redbirds darted from one hiding place to another as we strained to see them up close, to no avail. A few giant oaks towered above us.

In the midst of such beauty, I also heard, in some mysterious way, the land offering up another story. It was a story of the human experience, and it held it all- violence and tenderness, petty

meanness and doing great good, living in a broken and gloriously beautiful world. The paradox was all around me; it was all here, and it all needed to be heard.

And what of its earliest occupants, those who had lived in this place for millennia, driven off to make room for the newcomers from across the ocean - my ancestors? What we now call *land* the Chickasaw and Choctaw people called *yakni*. Was I hearing native footsteps as I trod upon this sacred *yakni*? Did I scoop up atoms that had been the blood and sweat of their ancestors as I knelt to examine the soil? The echoes were silent and deafening.

I wondered, what would it be like to leave this land alone, to allow the Mother to heal Herself here, without interference? Then, what if people of good will, reverence, and clear intent could assist Her in that work, to re-establish a life-giving relationship between modern day Two-leggeds and Redbird, Crow, Hawk, Deer, the Standing People, the soil and water, the body and blood of the Mother? Could the sweet memories be celebrated, and the echoes of grief and loss be redeemed? Would anyone be willing to stand in the silence of this place and bear the awful and awesome burden of hearing? It must be done in places like this, if there is to be hope anywhere.

Request for Visions December 2006

The following is an excerpt from the letter that Nancy and I wrote on behalf of our Harvest Time community to send to our networks. Rose

We are writing on behalf of a small group of Christian friends who gather twice annually to creatively explore ways to create and live into a more just, loving and sustainable world. Recently, two of our members gave to the community 55 acres of land located near Walnut, Mississippi. Those of us who are writing to you are friends of theirs who have been entrusted with the responsibility of finding an organization or community that would like to receive this farm

and, in so doing, join us in the sacred work of healing and reconciliation.

The couple that gave us this land is deeply aware of the complex mix of pain and love that has transpired on this family farm. They are also mystics who desire to release this farm so that a process of healing of ancestral wounds associated with the land can begin.

Would you be interested in receiving a gift of this sort? Do you have a vision for how this land might become an instrument of healing?

The following are excerpts from two of the visions we received in response to our request.

Babydoll, this is the Party By Mary Brooks Tyler

My name is Mary Brooks Tyler. As I write to you, I find myself sitting still and staring at a tiny little sliver of a map of Alcorn County in 1895. The county and state lines have indeed since shifted a bit here and there, no doubt, but I find myself looking in wonder at a little community located ‘almost near bout, over by,’ as we would say, right where the farm is located today. The name of the community is Gift. I sit quietly looking at the map of Gift and I listen. That’s what I do. Listen. That’s all I know to do. Be still and listen. Be still and know. Is this farm ‘my farm’ that I have envisioned for as long as I can remember? I will learn by being open.



Sometimes the listening is not so still and quiet. Sometimes, Spirit has to tumble me about first until I get to the still and quiet part.

Last fall, I received my first of a small series of emails concerning your gift of land in Mississippi. I received the emails, I’m sure, because my friends here on the West Coast know of my

dream of having a farm. My first and initial and immediate and original reaction was high and mighty resistance. I speak not lightly. But now, I laugh, I always laugh at the places within myself that seem to want to hug the dark and keep tight and sightless to the overt, blaring trumpets of Spirit. The very trumpets, mind you, I have prayed for. Surely, I say to Spirit, you don't mean these trumpets? Resistance is a loud and decidedly direct indicator of light and gift for me. I find the jewel is always in the resistance. I know this to be true. Yet, weeks passed as I pushed the emails aside.

Until they woke me up.

I have spent years invoking 'my farm,' my land, the Mellow Yellow, named for the Love of God that will create its very essence—peace and light (and the music that will stream out through the kitchen windows). The Mellow Yellow is a place of wonder and art and writing and healing and divine love, oh, and chickens. Maybe a cow and a horse. And wonderful gardens. I have drawn the Mellow Yellow farm on paper for years. I have written about it endlessly. I have talked as if it existed already. And, as I believe all things, all potentials, do exist in the Now time of God, the Mellow Yellow does indeed exist, merely waiting for manifestation... I have said, out loud, mind you, "I will know where my farm is when Spirit tells me. And where Spirit tells me to go, I will go and I will feed the chickens, till the soil, and hold the land as it wants to be held, giving life and love to All the farm draws to Her and from Her." I've said this out loud, mind you. So, when the opportunity was emailed to me several times last Fall for a farm in Mississippi, I laughed quite heartily, out loud, mind you, and said a big, "Yeah, right! In Mississippi!"

Resistance was born like a fat throbbing corn on my left middle toe, getting larger every day, until

I could not walk unless I emailed Nancy Thurston to say, "Okay, surely you don't want me, but I have some names to give you." Then I spoke with Nancy over the phone and she said after talking to me that she was leaving 'me' on the list. "Dear me, dear me," I said to myself, "God is surely busy." That's when the paradox began to turn and twist like a red hot rocket flying through space. Be open to this gift in whatever form the gift comes through this opportunity, I said to myself, "This is not random, no, it is not." I did, also, notice two things about my conversation with Nancy. I did not give Nancy any names, and two, I noticed that I talked to Nancy at length about how much I loved Mississippi, her people, and the spirit of the land ...

I love Mississippi. I love the people. I love the land. Mississippi is beautiful, but its culture is not welcoming to one of conscience, to say the very least. And the fact is, a large part of my resistance was that I was not always safe in Mississippi. My first full breath into the larger world, my new feeling of freedom and acceptance of my true

self the past three years was also my resistance. And, as I opened the past weeks to hearing Spirit, I have heard 'Fear not.'

I know to love the Mystery of God, to open to creation, one must say Yes to the All, not needing to know the Why. The Why is the unfolding of the journey itself. I followed the

voice of God in my leaving Mississippi and I will follow the voice of God to my farm wherever that farm already exists...

You see, I do love Mississippi. She is my Heart. I love her people. I love the owls. I love the tree frogs. I love the coyote. (Even the one that killed my cat, hmm.) I love the mix of deep cultures in the dark fertile soil. I love the dark fertile soil and red dirt banks. I love the music that was born of both her play and her pain. I love the spirit that moves and breathes in the bodies and souls of



people who have known little of the outside world's wonder and treasure. I love Miss Willie Mae Franklin, an African-American elder, who taught me to love blue glass in my front yard. She was the influence of most all my art. I love my very first students I taught years ago in my little hometown, and who, when I return for a visit, all still holler at me by my ex-husband's name, who's had two wives since me. I don't care, they love me. I love to walk Mississippi's dirt as far as I can walk and turn to see nothing but trees and grass and cows looking at me like they can truly figure out who I am and what I want. I truly, truly love to be in the presence of the deep spirit of people who have known the darkest pain and who can turn that pain into song and love of self and family. When God told me to leave three years ago, and as I have prayed for my farm, I have told God I did not know how I would live without the presence of such people in my life.

I've been witness, and sometimes victim, to many things in Mississippi. For one, the Mississippi court system's thick ways of perpetuating violence. I've stood beside my best friend, who is the most beautifully powerful African-American woman you'd ever want to know, as she taught me to be an advocate for the rights of women and children in harm's way. This time she came to my side. It was my own. In the midst of a five year battle to protect my granddaughter from a violently abusive father, she stood through every moment, each trial, shoring up five generations of the women in my family. One day, I said to her, "When this is all over, we'll have a party." She looked me right in the face, with a smile, and replied, "Babydoll, this is the party."

There Once was a Farm in Mississippi... By Be Present and Common Fire

*From a place of nurture and beauty...
effective leadership is seeded,
social justice sprouts,
and a vision of collective power grows up from
the earth*

*A shared vision for the creation of a retreat site
that would foster tolerance, promote peace
and work toward a world of justice for all*



The journey of this land, and of our shared vision for it, did not begin nor will it end with this exploration we are about to undergo to determine our future connection ... which is why this is such a powerful moment. There is a feeling, on our part and perhaps on yours as well, that this is no coincidence or accident ... but rather one of those times when several paths converge into a road that transports many of us to a long-awaited destination. On this journey to considering this land in Mississippi, it feels like we are walking together on just such a road ...

Our vision is to transform the farm into a sustainable, environmentally-friendly retreat center. It would be a powerful reflection of the diversity, commitment, and vibrancy of the people and programs it would house. And there would be an intentional synergy between the space, and the people and work being done there.

We see the center as a place:

- where people can transcend any limitations they feel about the world and their own potential to affect change...
- where individuals have the time and space to get grounded in their own inherent power and potential...
- where groups can be supported – by both the land and the leadership of everyone present – to explore their challenges and strengths, and to

move beyond the barriers that keep them from reaching their common vision together ...

- where the land and space that holds this deep exploration is maintained as a nourishing, sustaining, and healing force for all who come...
- where both individuals and groups who gather at the center can fully connect with a vision of what they and the world can be – when free from even the remnants of limited thinking and halted visions.

At its core, the center we would like to build and nurture would be a place where people practice bringing their true spirit forth into the world ... and the land would sustain the very heart and soul of that work.

The next four pieces are reflections about the gathering on the land that took place in October 2007.

Traveling Altars **By Rose Feerick**

“Who’s going to get the tent?” someone asked on the conference call we had called to plan our gathering on the farm.

“Tent? We need a tent?” I said.

“Sure. What if it rains?”

“Port-o-potties and now tents,” I thought. “Is this really what I am supposed to be doing with my life?”

“I’ll get it,” someone offered.

“Thank God,” I thought.

A few days later, he emailed. “It’s going to be about \$500.”

“Can’t we bring umbrellas?” I replied.

“I’ll keep looking.”



More days.

“I’ve got one. In Memphis. It’ll fit in our car. It’s easy to set up.”

We had a tent.

When we arrived at the land, we looked around for a place to set up our tent.

“I think the field back there will be good,” someone said pointing to clearing near the forest.

“We definitely don’t want it near the port-o-potty,” someone else joked.

“Ok,” I said. “Anyone who knows they are to pitch the tent stay here. Everyone else feel free to walk around.” They all looked at me.

“It’s easier than it sounds,” the person who picked up the tent said.

We drove across the field to the clearing by the woods. There we lifted, pulled, stretched, and turned, turned, turned ‘til all corners turned round right – on solid ground, I mean – and we had a tent, a small spot of shade on a sunny day. The tables came next. Then flowers, chocolate kisses, snacks, art and chairs. Some went off to wander while others sat and talked.

After lunch, it was under the tent that we did our work, where we received the gift of being together in spite of centuries of fear. As we went around the diverse circle, each of us told stories of our people. As I listened, I felt like I was at a family reunion. Then it was as if the ground fell out from under me as memories started to rush in. There I was at a family reunion in Southampton, NY, and there I was at the wedding banquet in Bosnia six months after the war and there I was at the altar of my church in San Jose, as if this table was connected by a thread of grace to other tables of grace in my life.

There were no walls on the tent, just a roof, moveable with the Sun, pitch-able in a flash, creating shelter, rest and healing.

“And the Word Was Made Flesh and pitched His tent among us.” (John 1:14)

Sean³

By Rose Feerick

“Let’s start with an icebreaker,” the young man from Young People’s Project (YPP) said. “Every one say their name and do a dance. My name is Sean,” and he wiggled side to side.

“It’s going to be OK,” I knew then. “God has sent us who we need.” We spent that morning in the breakfast room doing our dances — shyly, playfully — learning each other’s moves as a way to the heart.

Sean came in at the last minute. A woman from YPP emailed me that Monday asking if he could come.

I liked him immediately. His energy. His enthusiasm. The way he asked for what he wanted and spoke openly about his loss. I loved his eagerness to see the land and his willingness to receive my gifts.

After our day on the farm, he talked about how surprised he was that he, a city guy, was not afraid out there in nature and how wonderful it was to be on retreat.

I’ve learned to welcome surprises, the people the Spirit sneaks in at the last minute right before the doors close, sending us what we don’t have the good sense to ask for – like joy and dancing. And Sean.

A New and Different Paradigm of Giving By Karen Dargan

The old way would be to compete to receive the gift of the farm. The new way is to collaborate and listen for the Holy Spirit’s guidance about who would own the farm. We faced a lot of issues from the beginning, and we faced them head on.

- Should there be more than one group co-owning the farm?
- Are we going to be able to overcome the self-interest that plagues us?
- How do we get to some real trust amongst us?
- How do we deal with the power issues that keep coming up?
- How do we make sure everyone is valued and respected in the process?

When I first arrived in Mississippi, I thought that the **new thing** would only be veiled as cooperation. I thought everyone was going to appear to play nice and some folks may work together in the background to have more leverage. But I really was not convinced that there would be a real collaboration. I wanted to see this work with real respect and true cooperation. These were high hopes.

Several groups met together in the beginning to experience the land. We got a chance to know



³ In the process of editing this newsletter, I tried to find this young man to ask for his permission to use his name in this piece. As I was not able to locate him, I have changed his name.

something about each other and we had lunch together on the land. This is when the spirit seemed to change. We were breaking bread together. There is a difference in eating together and breaking bread together. One feels like a sacrament of sharing and the other is a just a meal.

After the lunch on the farm, I decided that a true collaboration was something that God would have to do. I felt a change in my spirit after the lunch and I yielded to it. I decided to try to participate in a more open way. I felt then that God had given Community Wholeness Venture (CWV) the farm, but I had no idea who our partners might be.

As it turns out, CWV is to be the sole receiver of the gift. This has to be God because we started out like Gideon. I felt that we were the least of the tribes.

Today, as I look back over our journey so far, I can say that everyone has changed. All the change is not the same. I can say that the change has released and delivered us to a new place within us. For me, that's what the new thing is about. That changes the blood of hate and murder crying out from the land into the blood of something new coming into being. And that is what the process has been like, the labor of a mother bringing a new being into the world. There was pain and there was joy. But here we are at this new place with CWV receiving the land in the summer of 2015. And the best is yet to come.

Alchemy in Mississippi

By Mary Brooks Tyler

This gift is nearly unfathomable to me in its generosity of spirit and intent. It is clear and paramount in my mind that there was one over-lighting intent with the original giving of the Land. That is to bring Light. To bring healing to the Land, to the Earth, to peoples, in all times, in all manner.

We in the Mississippi Land Circle are a powerful



force. We came to anchor the Light that is coming in. We each and organizationally are doing this in all the ways we are. And, we have been doing the work since the Land brought us together. Our sitting upon the Land, speaking our stories, breaking bread together, walking together - we have brought healing.

There is no pain that cannot be transmuted into the gold of God's Grace. No pain. No history. I hear the Mississippi land calling us to 'be' what we are called to be in the awesome task of allowing the Story of this land to run through us in the place of divine Love and to transmute this history of pain into New Life. We can do this.

In 2009, the circle reconvened in Atlanta to work on developing a common vision for the development of the land. We hired David Harper from Land In Common to support this first phase of development. Below is an excerpt from the introduction of David's report.

Mississippi Farm: Land Vision Report

By David Harper

A gift of land is the ultimate acknowledgement that land truly is a community to which we belong. The partnership of groups coming together around the farm in north Mississippi all share a knowing that we can heal the people and we can heal the land, and that these practices are forever intertwined.

The Land Visioning Strategy offers an opportunity for these groups – Be Present/Common Fire, Beloved Community, Community Wholeness

Venture, Harvest Time, and the Young People's Project -- to sharpen their individual and collective vision about what is right for *this* land at *this* time in *this* community, and about how to interpret the land in a way that informs and enhances the experience and mission of those who serve as its stewards.

The result could truly be a new model for *land reform* as a foundation for social, economic, and environmental justice. The approach to land stewardship on the Mississippi Farm can demonstrate leadership and deep healing at a time when the community of land and people in the South, across the US, and all over the Earth face increasingly complex, interrelated challenges such as food security, water rights, and environmental destruction associated with globalization.

The Atlanta gathering in 2009 also brought to the surface some of the fear and assumptions that were present among us that we had to face and shift in order to work collaboratively. Part two of this newsletter focuses on the work of transformation that was necessary to gift the land in a way that would embody the healing and reconciliation that is part of the vision for the land.



Part Two: The Gift of Transformation

Driving through the Rift Valley with Elephants By Rose Feerick

Every now and then a phrase captures my imagination and won't let it go. That's what happened when I received an email from my friend Steve who spent last week in Rwanda. The email was short, but his voice was full of joy. He reported they'd been "Driving through the Rift Valley with Elephants."

Driving through the Rift Valley with Elephants.

Now I know that Steve's in Rwanda, but my first thought was, "Is that the Mississippi valley you mean?" You see I've been driving that valley in the American south for five years now and though I've not seen any safaris there yet, I can tell you there are a whole lot of elephants. Right there in the middle of the room.

Now in Harvest Time we have a commitment to welcoming elephants. Elephants and money. That's what we do. And one person, one elephant at a time, things shift. And giggles happen.

Just today I was on a call about Mississippi. This was after I was writing about building partnerships of trust. And wouldn't you know it that Lillie⁴ asked me a question and all of a sudden there was this elephant right on my lap. Something about power. Something about being afraid people will forget who I am and see me only as the rich, white girl seizing control. Felt like an ache in my heart.

I tried to pretend it wasn't there as fast as I could. I tried to move on with the call. "What's next on the agenda?" I said, hoping no one had noticed.

The problem is I've partnered with friends who are wildlife experts and there they were in that moment inviting me to study the elephant.

"Rose," Lillie said, in that voice that I knew meant she saw it. "What happened just then?"

"It was fear!" the elephant inside my head screamed silently. "Fear I am going to be accused of being controlling or something worse."



Rather than answer Lillie's question, I decided

4 Refers to Lillie Allen from Be Present, Inc.

to take the long way around. Slowly I explored extraneous details until I was willing to come face to face with the elephant.

Driving through the rift valley with elephants. That's what we do in Mississippi. Stand right in the midst of the rifts that have torn this country apart for centuries with all those elephants.

I think that's how Jesus is trying to change things. Not by disappearing the wildlife, but by welcoming them in. I knew that today on that call. Which is why I let my friends and myself see where I am stuck. Because releasing the elephants in the rift valley is the key to being free.

Body and Blood

By Howard Thurston



In researching my family genealogy, I discovered a great-great grandmother who moved from Tishomingo County, Mississippi, to Christian County, Illinois when she was 13 years old. She moved there with her mother just after the Civil War. I don't

have reliable information about her father, but I am sure that there were many fatherless and husbandless families fending for themselves in chaotic and terrifying times. The 400 mile journey north to central Illinois must have been harrowing.

At that time (about 1867), Tishomingo County encompassed what is now Alcorn County along with modern day Tishomingo County. Together, these two counties comprise the extreme northeast corner of the state. Harvest Time's land in Mississippi lies in Alcorn County, only a few miles from the Tennessee line to the north.

It didn't surprise me that I have family roots in that area. From the very beginning of my

involvement with Harvest Time's process with land in Mississippi, I have felt a special draw to that particular place. I feel a sense of homecoming when I visit, even though I have no connection to the land that the rational mind can embrace. I have no idea of the exact location of my own personal Mississippi "family farm," but it couldn't have been too far away.

It, too, would have been located not far from the Civil War battlefield known as Shiloh, in Tennessee. The two-day battle of Shiloh, which occurred in April of 1862, was the costliest battle in American history up to that time. 13,047 Union and 10,699 Confederate soldiers were killed, wounded, missing, or captured (3,482 were killed, almost equally between the two sides).

And there's more. Corinth, a nearby town and the Alcorn County seat, lies less than 17 miles south of Shiloh. The siege of Corinth, which followed the battle of Shiloh in May of 1862, added another 1,000 casualties on each side.

Whenever I visit that area, I can't help but think about the sheer volume of human blood that would have soaked those battlegrounds. My family blood, my DNA, surely must have fallen at one time or another somewhere on the land nearby.

And earlier still, there was the blood of the Native peoples in that area, primarily of the Chickasaw Nation, many of whom were forced to relocate from their ancestral lands (many dying along the way) to the "Indian Territory" lying, ironically, west of the great river named Mississippi.





Yet, the same place today is charming and inhabited by many good people who love it just as much as I love my home. The southern drawl, the hospitality, the country roads, the brown Hatchie River, the town square in Corinth are all easy to fall in love with.

The land is alive and well, and I believe that it is asking for a human presence again—someone who will work and care for and live in Communion with that place. Someone willing to observe and celebrate the unbelievable beauty and fecundity of the land, without denying the pain that happened there. Someone who can see the Grace that has and continues to soak that land as surely as blood has.

Blood and Grace. I am learning to come to terms with the paradox of living in a simultaneously broken and beautiful world as I have come to know and love this sacred land in Mississippi.

Transformation of the Blood

By Apostle Alease Bess

When CWV stepped forward eight years ago to be in that number of organizations interested in receiving **the Promised Land**, we had no idea the bloody mess we were stepping into. Others in the group say they had no idea how long it would take. I didn't either but even if I had known, I don't think that would have deterred me. The truth is when it comes to things I'm directed to do by the Spirit of God, I'm a long distance runner, not a sprinter. I've gotten used to God sending me where others are not willing to go to do a job others are not willing to do.

What stood out for me over these years of our work is the blood. I was certainly aware of the

blood shed by Native Americans as their land was being stolen and they were being driven away from their own heritage. And, I was generally aware of the hard-fought bloody battles of the civil war in the southern region. I was not consciously aware of the blood connected to this specific piece of land. From the beginning, it was not at all clear that tears and intense emotions would painfully flow like blood attending every step of this process.

Today, I can say unequivocally that I'm glad I didn't know in the beginning about the issues of blood and that the Holy Spirit is the reason we got into this. The Holy Spirit is the only way we could remain in this process for this whole period of time. Not only is the Holy Spirit the reason and the way we're still here but we believe that the Holy Spirit will also victoriously lead us all the way to the finish line. Despite the fact that we've already been at this for a really long time, regarding our vision for the land, we're just getting started.

This work has been difficult. It has been hard and mean and ugly and hurtful, unattractive, and even disrespectful. Why? Because this work is about a more spiritual kind of relationship and team building and a new paradigm of giving and receiving. This work has also been exciting. It has been healing and transformative. It has been generous. It has been fascinating and delightful.



The spirit that we have come to by being a part of this process is different for each of us. For me, it has been humbling and God never ceased to do beyond what I was thinking or even praying. And so goes the spirit of our work, led by the Holy Spirit that embraces those acres of the **Promised Land** in Mississippi.

The huge challenge has been to operate beyond the usual stereotypes and isms that defeat effective collaboration that are active in our culture. You absolutely can see and hear and feel all the isms. An ism thought turns into ism actions or at the very least, taints actions. A heart full of hate causes ism actions, even ism rules and protocols and ism laws. Ism emotions can be seen in the countenance on someone's face, by a person's body language, tone of voice, and even the words a person chooses to speak. If you've ever been on the receiving end of such communications and actions, you know the truth of this. All isms (race, gender, power, and class) have an ugly face, a diabolical mind, a heart full of loathing and revulsion, and a desire to be in control. The actions of isms follow the thoughts, feelings, and words of isms. Poison is spread by the spirits isms engender.

The spirits that we change and propagate in and amongst ourselves as we work toward our vision for the land become the new spirits of the land. The blood of hate and murder and death becomes the blood of new life, new birth, and procreation. We can't change anything else until we can change ourselves. The spirits that we transmit and transform as we work on the vision for **the Promised Land** impact the whole earth (land) and not just that one piece of property in northern Mississippi. The blood that is heard crying out from that land is different than it was eight years ago. Eight years ago, the blood spoke of the injustices of the past. Today, the blood speaks of the awesome opportunities of the present and future.



Training my Basset Hound Soul By Nancy Thurston

If something is spoiled in my refrigerator, I smell it the moment I open up the door. I'll stop everything to rummage through every vegetable and storage jar, searching for what stinks. Sometimes it is an exotic dish whose scent I don't recognize, but often I discover a soggy cucumber or last week's leftovers.

I have a sensitive spirit-nose also. When something in a conversation feels off, I want to stop everything and search out the issue with the focus of our old family Basset Hound. While that direct approach works fine for dogs and cleaning out the refrigerator, it was less helpful when working collaboratively in a process like giving away a farm in Mississippi.

Sometimes I catch scent of my own internal fears. Sometimes it is the scent of a building storm, unseen yet already vibrating with the energy of lightning about to strike. Sometimes it is an assumption or accusation right in the middle of the room. Within the Mississippi Land Circle I discovered that how I respond matters. Lifting up evidence of the smelly mess right in the middle of the circle inevitably includes the stench of my own assumptions and offers little room for others to participate in their own timing and manner and thus disrupts our collaboration.

Participating in this process has honed my skills in two distinctly different ways of working with my spiritual sense of smell: prayer and shifting my reactions during difficult conversations.

Part of my prayer practice involves anointing land. In 2006, Alease Bess, director of Community Wholeness Venture, joined me on a pilgrimage to my family's ancestral land in North Carolina. I wanted to take concrete steps to face the rancid slave-owning aspects of my ancestors and to

offer what felt like meager gifts—prayer and anointing oils of rosemary, cajeput and black pepper—to energetically support transformation and healing. Standing on the land where my ancestors had once stood, I poured the oils into the dirt as Alease and I extended our hands in blessing. She sang of blood. I spoke of water.

I continued this practice by preparing essential oil blends for anointing the Mississippi dirt during every visit, offering this as prayerful support to the alchemical work of Spirit in releasing old rot and opening the doorway for transformation within the Mississippi Land Circle. As always, these blends were chosen intuitively—prayerfully asking for oils or vibrational essences that would offer the particular support needed, then slowly moving my hand over the bottles to see which ones seemed to “vibrate” in alignment with my question.

While this prayerful support came easily, I had to diligently practice shifting my response to actions or words in our circle that smelled “off” or dangerous to me. When I reacted, it was impossible for me to distinguish old inner patterns of distress from what was actually happening in our circle. While howling in response, I couldn’t remember what I knew was true about myself nor could I listen consciously to others.

Four years into the process, I caught a whiff of a problem in Harvest Time’s own backyard. Within our organization, there was a difference of opinion about the responsibilities and rights of the giver (us). Harvest Time got caught in a tangle of our own conflicting, informal “contracts” and almost participated in a unilateral ending of the partnership mid way through the process. While I could see these problems early on, I was not able to be in the conversations in ways that allowed me to stay outside of my emotional distress and to clearly share what I was seeing. Though legal and spiritual counsel clarified our deepest desire to stay, the impact of temporarily taking back of the gift was a hard blow.

As the process continued to unfold, I worked to shift my tendency to overreact during challenging conversations. While howling in response, I

couldn’t remember what I knew was true about myself nor could I listen consciously to others.



The empowerment model I’d learned through my training and work with Be Present, Inc. was the practice that supported my shift. Slowly, I came to learn what Lillie Allen and Margherita Vacchiano and others from Be Present, Inc. knew from the beginning of our process—embodying the level of transformation we sought right in the middle of the cultural stench of historical and present injustice around race, class, gender and power was going to require time. Lots more time than I wanted it to take. Yet each instance when I took that time I needed to check out my assumptions, speak what I smelled or saw, and to listen consciously to others our partnership strengthened.

In contrast with some of my conversations early in the process, recently Alease, Karen (both of CWV) and I took the time to have a conversation to address a misunderstanding. Each of us in turn spoke our sight on the issue. Each of us listened. Assumptions and misperceptions fell away. The cost of an hour one Sunday afternoon was a small price to pay for solid partnership as we move to transfer this farm. While our process together didn’t move with the focus of a Basset Hound following a scent, we have formed strong, transformative partnerships that are outside of the stench of our culture’s injustice.



We Were Not There to Build A Retreat Center

By Rose Feerick

It took me a long time to realize that Harvest Time was not in Mississippi to build a retreat center.

I was so captivated by the visions I read, so inspired by the people I met who responded to the initial letter, that I wanted to be a part of it. I did not understand at first that manifesting the retreat center vision was not Harvest Time's work.

Nancy Thurston used the image of what an engineer does to get a piece of land ready to build. There is the clearing of the earth, the removal of debris and the digging of a hole for a foundation. Only when the site is ready can building begin.

Harvest Time's role, I came to understand, had something to do with clearing the space so that whatever was built would stand on a solid foundation. Except it wasn't the physical land we had to make sure was clear but the spirit of the gift.



In my mind, I kept seeing the altar in the monastery chapel with the community gathered around it in a circle. I was thinking about what happens at the mass and about how something from the material world can be so infused with the grace of the Holy Spirit that it becomes something else.

Our work was like that. Harvest Time's task was to call the circle to gather around our altar – a piece of land in Mississippi – so that transformation could happen. As in the mass, the sacred drama revolved around a history of pain, violence, power and suffering. And, we believed, right in the center of that the Holy Spirit was active, transforming the worst that human beings are capable of into grace. Our work was to invite the people who could be in a process like that in order for the land to be given in a spirit of grace.

I did not understand at first how much time it would take to do the deep inner and interpersonal work in order for that to happen. I thought that because I could see what was possible, we could just do it. Unfortunately, the rifts in our culture run very deep. And many of the ways that we miss each other are unconscious. We were clear that we did not want the spirit of the gift to be distorted by the presence of distress in our exchange and so we took the time to do that deeper level clearing.

One of the hardest parts in this process for me was watching that fear and distress rear its head in our circle. I remember, for instance, the night I shared a room with Mary Brooks, a woman I consider a mystic. In the middle of the first night, I was awakened to the sound of her talking to a friend on the phone. She was telling him that she was afraid that Harvest Time was some kind of cult and feared what we intended to do with the people we had gathered. As I listened to her fears while pretending to be asleep, I became more and more afraid.

Then I remembered the drawing that I had placed on my nightstand. Right before I left home, my 6-year-old son made a drawing for me to take with me. In the image, a thick dark line surrounded a figure. When I asked my son about it, he told me the figure was me and the dark line was love protecting me from dark spirits. It was that love that I held on to as I watched Mary and others in this process project their fears and assumptions on to others. That was heartbreaking.

Even so, I did my best to stay with my intention in this process. This is not to say that I did not

make mistakes. I did. For instance, I wish I would have known to slow the Harvest Time community down when we were considering taking on this project so that everyone would understand how much work would be involved and consent to do it. I also wish I had been clear at that time about the importance of a practice such as the Be Present Empowerment Model® for working in cross class, race, power projects such as this. I did not know to do so then and my lack of knowledge meant that community endured pain that it could have avoided.

I also wish I did not initially consent to that community's recommendation that we unilaterally stop our collaborative process with the other organizations. At the time, complex factors led me to believe that I did not have a choice. It was only through legal counsel and the clear sight of Harvest Time's Board of Directors that I realized that we could not follow the community's recommendation. Harvest Time landed in our commitment to collaborative process but damage had been done.

These challenges and the pain I felt led me to doubt my ability to be in a collaborative process as a wealthy white person. For a while, I tried to be quiet and let others lead. Eventually I saw how disrespectful and destructive this silencing of my own voice was. The circle needed what I had to bring, not because it was better or more important than what any else brought, but because it was a piece of the puzzle. We needed everyone to do that.



In 2013, I was on a call with Lillie Allen and Margherita Vacchiano, our partners at Be Present. As I rehearsed some of the assumptions I had heard said about me, Lillie

and Margherita repeatedly asked me if they were true. Somewhere in that conversation, I realized that they were not true and that my intentions in this process were profoundly honorable.

From that point forward, I did my best to bring my perspective to the circle when I felt I had something to offer.

That was the transformation I needed to receive. I needed to learn how to bring the fullness of my spiritual vision and skills into a diverse, collaborative process as a white, wealthy person. I needed to learn what it looked like to have projections put on me; how to hold onto myself when that was happening; and how to stay in the conversation so that something could shift.

Many times I have asked, "Why me?" Why was I asked to do this deep work in Mississippi? I have no family connection there. I had no background in working with land. I was not an expert in collaborative process. "Why me, God?"

I know that it was my love for the original donors that brought me into it. I was profoundly moved by their vision of healing and reconciliation for their family land and wanted to be in service of that. And then, once I understood the work that their vision required, I stayed because I had to. Harvest Time owned the land and I had to walk it until the gift was given.



I also believe that this was a kind of spiritual assignment for me, a post Masters of Divinity program in building healing partnerships.



Before Mississippi, I knew intellectually that a Gospel-oriented journey with money would lead across cultural boundaries in service of healing and social justice. But I knew little about how to actually work in partnership across difference. It was so much easier to work with people like me. But the Kingdom of God requires that we build the community where all people can bring their spiritual vision and stand in the circle around the altar of grace.

Last month, I watched as my teenage son, a white young man, stood on a stage alongside a few African American peers in front of a mostly white student body and found his voice in a program naming the injustice of systemic racism. I felt the earth shaking underneath me as I realized that he has already figured out that the path of healing partnership is not about reversing power dynamics and silencing some people (in his case, white men and boys) but about creating the community in which everyone's brilliance can shine and serve justice and love.

That's what I was learning in Mississippi.

Why I was in Mississippi with Harvest Time **By Mary Brooks Tyler**

At our gathering in Atlanta in 2009, I was in full-blown 'awakening.' Awakening sounds so, well, beautiful. And it is, as all is God's beauty of creation, but what also is true, awakening is a very destructive process. And I was fully destructing before everyone's eyes. My eyes were open.

When my awakening, burst forth during our gathering, I was a wide-open channel. Yes, there was a clear and strong connection to my Higher Self that I had never experienced before. But there was something else. A darkness, an energy, rushed in to interfere with what I was doing.

On that day when I spoke that 'the wealthy were controlling', there was no energy in our Circle that I was 'picking up on.' In those moments, I was being interfered with by the darkness that had come in. I could not see anything but the overwhelming nature of darkness.

This energy that came in to interfere with the bringing forth of Light was an enslaving energy. I was shown an ancient time when this energy interfered with God's plan and brought total enslavement to groups of people. It was the energy of dominion over. I was told that it was time to heal this.



In my full pulverization, my full opening to Grace's fierce alchemy, I was held. I was held in the strongest intent of Love. I was held in God's own fierce alchemy of the Circle. Individuals seasoned in and by their own surrender. Those who know the grace of surrender. I was held even when my wide open seeing filled me with the terror of revelation. I was held in Love.



That and all that is still moving within the intent of the first calling of the Mississippi Land Circle is why I was asked to return to Mississippi to be in the process with Harvest Time. That is why we were all called to be in this process with Harvest Time. To be in the process with all who were called by Love. What can be healed within will also be healed without. The desert is not barren. It blooms with the reflection of this truth: when one is awakened, the whole awakens. Our circle is ever held in the beauty of Its original intent which is to bring and to be Love awakened. We were and are still about our work.

The introduction to the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) initially between Harvest Time, CWV and Be Present and, later, between Harvest Time and CWV, speaks to the spiritual foundation of our work together.

Memorandum of Understanding Between Harvest Time Ministries, Inc. and Community Wholeness Venture

Introduction

Harvest Time Ministries, Inc. (the Giver) and Community Wholeness Venture (the Gifted) have been called together by the Holy Spirit to participate in the transfer of ownership of Land in Alcorn County, Mississippi (Section 20, Township 1 South, Range 5 East, Alcorn County, MS). This Memorandum describes the principles, process, vision, and outcomes of the giving and receiving of this Gift of Land.

The process used to transfer the Land embodies a paradigm grounded in partnership where we seek the Holy Spirit's guidance as the Giver and Gifted work collaboratively to support the emergence of the full dream for this Promised Land. Notwithstanding the provisions for legal transfer of the Land, the Land is a Gift now, by its very being. The Gift is primary, and its Stewardship a present priority.

In response to the Call to Steward the Gift, a Whole has emerged that is comprised of and yet transcends the sum of the parties to legal transfer. While responsibilities of Giver and Gifted organizations are set forth herein, all parties, as signified by use of "We" in this document, serve the Gift and are served by the Gift. Through our active Stewardship of the Gift together, each party becomes giver and Gifted many times over, and our relationship to the Land and to each other transcends the roles of who gives and who receives legal title.

Signed March 2015

The Gift of Be Present By Rose Feerick

Back at the hotel after our first gathering on the farm, I met with my friends from Harvest Time to debrief the day. In that hotel room, I finally understood that we had stepped into a very complicated process, one that would involve building relationship across places of difference that are charged in this culture. I was overwhelmed. And yet I knew we had a shot because Be Present was in the circle.

In 2007, I was new in my learning of the Be Present Empowerment Model®. My friends Ocean and Michele Robbins had introduced me to the organization in 2005. Later, Harvest Time Board Member Nancy Thurston recommended that I participate in Be Present's National Training Institute on Race, Gender, Power & Class. I was still very early in that training when we met at the farm.

I remember what it felt like to be in my first Be Present conversations and how scared I felt when someone talked openly about the racist assumptions present in their minds. I would freeze internally when those topics hit the floor, thinking, "Oh no. This is where everything is going to fall apart. How are we ever possibly going to find our way through this pain and wounding that is such a part of our country's history?" Incredibly, amazingly, in ways that I did not yet understand, we did. People talked openly about racist, classist, sexist thoughts and images and others shared what it felt like to hear those things. And

somehow – after working through the feelings that come with those conversations – people emerged bright, shining, friends. I did not yet understand how it worked – this model – I just saw that it did.



Though I was still a novice when the circle met at the farm, I had seen enough to know that Be Present had a tool that could support our process. That tool became a key part of our work to build partnerships in the Mississippi Circle.

Though Be Present remains spiritually connected to the land and to the circle, in 2014 they stepped out of the process, offering everything that they had brought to the circle, including financial resources, as a gift to support the emergence of the full dream for the land.

When I was crafting this newsletter, I invited our friends from Be Present to write a reflection. Because they are operating with a very full schedule and a limited staff, they were unable to do so. But I, in good conscience, could not complete this newsletter without speaking to the incredible gift that Be Present offered this process from beginning to end.

I know that we are ready to transfer the farm according to our original intention, in large part because of what Be Present offered the circle. I am deeply grateful.



CWV's Vision for A Transformative Retreat Center

By Alease Bess

In our fervent pursuit of justice, many grassroots organizations and affinity groups have need of meeting and retreat facilities that are affordable and luxurious, with outdoor conveniences and indoor amenities, possessing options for activity and exercise as well as rest and refreshment, where the available media options are vast, the organic food varieties are extensive, and no one has to share a bed to be able to attend.



Our vision is to build a retreat center designed to be able to sustain the transformation of our relationships with God, self, others, and things (including the whole earth).

Our vision centers on creating a place where people practice bringing their spirit forward, on land that will sustain the heart and soul of that work. We have made a long-term commitment to our vision of a retreat center and to serving the needs of the local community surrounding *the Promised Land*. As we fulfill this vision and commitment, the land becomes more and more sacred as do the activities on the land.

We expect to create a sustainable retreat center that employs the most recent green technology and best building practices. The Retreat Center will one day include a building of bedroom suites to accommodate 30 people, a main center with dining facilities, exercise rooms, and meeting space; two Hermitages; a recording studio, and a pavilion. On the grounds there will also be a community campfire area, meditation gardens, sweat lodge, sound barriers, butterfly gardens, walking trails, labyrinth, pastures, food growth, and alternative energy areas.

\$1000 an acre

Request for financial gifts to complete this gift experiment

Harvest Time and Community Wholeness Venture worked together to develop a vision for funding that would support the legal transfer and provide a solid foundation for Community Wholeness Venture as they step into the next phase of developing the retreat center. At one point, we realized, with awe, that the total amount of money we were seeking was just about \$1000 an acre.

Both organizations are reaching out to their networks, seeking gifts to manifest this vision. Below is a summary that details intentions for gifts that Harvest Time is seeking to complete phase one of this journey, the giving and receiving of land. I have enclosed a return envelope for those who would like to send a gift to support this process. Harvest Time is also able to receive wires and gifts of stock. Please contact me for more details.

If you are interested in helping CWV to manifest their vision for a retreat center beyond Harvest Time's involvement, let us know that and we will put you in touch with CWV director, Alease Bess.

Transfer Costs (legal and recording fees): \$3,150

This category includes estimated costs for title insurance, taxes, recording fees, attorney fees, and miscellaneous.

Storytelling and fundraising Costs: \$2000

This is the cost of printing this newsletter and postage fees.

Retreat for members of the circle to reflect on and celebrate this journey: \$5000.

During the next several months, Harvest Time hopes to gather with people who have been involved in this project to reflect on what we have learned and honor all that was given to support the dream that the land be a source of healing and reconciliation. This will include the final signing of the papers to legally transfer the land to CWV.

Land Maintenance and Management: \$10,500

At transfer, CWV will create a land maintenance and management fund that will cover expenses related to caring for the land while the retreat center vision is developed and capital funds are raised. Our hope is to provide for two years of funding for taxes, insurance as well as legal and administrative costs, pasture and land maintenance, travel to the land, miscellaneous expenses, and contingencies.

Gift to CWV to support strong foundation: \$4000

This figure is intended as "seed money" to allow the new owners to be able to begin implementing their long term vision for the land.

Total: \$24,650

These numbers do not include Harvest Time's staff or operational expenses. Gifts to support those dimensions of this ministry are gratefully received as well.

CWV is also seeking gifts to fund similar expenses.

Gifts to support CWV's expenses may be made on their crowd-funding site.

To talk with Rose about making a gift: rose@HarvestTime.cc or 408-960-9139
www.HarvestTime.cc

Mississippi Wrench By Rose Feerick

My Mississippi wrench is in my pocket.

I grabbed it this morning on my way out the door. I was too tired, too harried to pack something for a traveling altar last night. But this morning in between pouring cereal, packing lunches, and giving boys hugs I grabbed it off my altar and thought “this will do.”

From time to time today, I found myself reaching back to touch its cool metal handle. It made me feel powerful in that grounded kind of way. Like I knew who I was – Jesus’ girl – the one who is not afraid of the gritty parts of life. Like I knew I could fix things.

I had it underneath me as I talked about Haiti on the conference call line. It reminded me of the kind of process I want to be in now – healing, mutual, listening – not that I always know how.

I’ve got it here with me now.



I knew the moment that I received it during our gathering on the Mississippi farm that it was a magical tool. A local man, the one who had unexpectedly joined us for lunch and invited everyone to tell our stories, gave it to me. It was the end of the day. He was getting into his truck. I was standing there by the window and wanted to do something to thank him for his storytelling around the table of grace. I reached into my

bag and found a CD by another great storyteller friend of mine.

“Here’s a gift for you,” I said reaching out across denominational competition, generations, political orientation, and prejudice, not to mention North and South stuff.

“If I’d known you were gonna give me a gift,” he responded, “I would have brought one for you.” He reached down into his truck and came up with the wrench.

“Here,” he said and was gone.

I’ve got my Mississippi wrench in my pocket.

I think it’s gonna fix things—that wrench—that love—that reaches past prejudice, assumptions, bad habits, and fears. Maybe it’s gonna fix me or hold me in the light.

Gratitude

Many individuals and organizations gave their time, vision and presence to this journey with land in Mississippi.

I honor and appreciate every one of you. Specifically, I thank Mary Brooks Tyler, David Harper, members of Be Present, Inc., Common Fire, Community Wholeness Venture, Harvest Time’s Beloved Community & Board of Directors, The Young People’s Project and the local couple who hosted our lunch under the tent at our first gathering.

Thank you for the many gifts you offered in service to the land and the Mississippi Land Circle. I also thank our friends who offered their time and feedback to help us tell this story. Deep bow of gratitude, Rose

Photo Credits

Most photography in this newsletter by:
Noa Mohlabane and Howard Thurston

