

# Life Together in One Heart



**WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR THE MANY AND VARIED WAYS** in which our community life is continually enriched. There is a Spanish proverb that says, “God’s hand is always opening.” Through the following we want to share some of the blessings and memorable occasions that we have experienced in these past six months.

## May

In the third week of May we welcomed Rabbi Michael Cohen of Manchester, Vermont, to share with us the work of the Arava Institute where he and his family spend several months each year. The Institute is based at Kibbutz Ketura in southern Israel where the borders of Jordan, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia are only kilometers away. As they describe themselves, “The Arava Institute is based upon developing person-to-person relationships that advance respect and trust among students who come from Israel, Jordan, the Palestinian Authority, North America and other parts of the world.” The Institute is an oasis of learning whose premier environmental teaching and research is to prepare future Muslim, Christian and Jewish leaders in the Middle East to cooperatively solve the region’s environmental challenges. Those challenges, including water, air quality, and energy cannot be solved in this region unless neighbors can work together effectively. Their web address is [www.friendsfarava.org](http://www.friendsfarava.org)



*Rabbi Michael Cohen*



*Dr. Noelle Thabault*

## June

On Saturday, June 5<sup>th</sup>, Carolyn Meub of Rutland, VT, and Noelle Thabault M.D. of Burlington, VT, came to speak with us about their work in support of the people of Haiti, the poorest country, economically, in the Western hemisphere. Dr. Thabault has left her medical practice in Vermont to work with the people

of Haiti. Carolyn, and her husband, Bill, have formed an NGO, Pure Water for the World (PW), which seeks to provide people in the most impoverished areas of Haiti and Honduras with pure, potable drinking water, hygiene education, and sanitation. PW installs locally made and technologically appropriate water filters, provides latrines, trains community stewards, and leads hygiene education workshops for school-age children and their families. To date PW has installed water filters in 725 schools, 493 households, and 91 health clinics. PW states, “Our mission is to improve the health of children suffering from the pain and misery associated with drinking contaminated water.” Their web address is [www.purewaterfortheworld.org](http://www.purewaterfortheworld.org)

On June 12<sup>th</sup>, all of us brothers went to Hartland Four Corners, Vermont, to visit with members of Cobb Hill Cooperative Housing and Cedar Mountain Farm. As they describe themselves, “Cobb Hill is an intentional co-housing community comprised of people learning to live lightly on the earth and building community among ourselves

and with our Hartland neighbors... The intention of sustainability underlies the living, farming, learning and teaching activities across all components of the community.” Our good friend and former Weston brother, Stephen Leslie, his wife, Keri, and their young daughter, Maeve Rose, welcomed us to Cobb Hill. Through them we



*Cobb Hill Cooperative Housing*

saw the fruits of nineteen years of their sustainable farming at their Cedar Mountain Farm and eight years of co-operative effort with the Cobb Hill community. Cedar Mountain Farm offers year round organic vegetables, seasonal fruit, farm raised beef, and Jersey raw milk. Other members of the community offer local chicken, farm raised pork, artisanal farmstead cheese, maple syrup, and honey from the bees. Their web address is [www.cedarmountainfarm.org](http://www.cedarmountainfarm.org)



*Stephen Leslie*

Our visit concluded with a shared meal with members of the Cobb Hill community followed by a two-pronged round table discussion: Using the consensus process in community; The experience of land management in community—values, goals and practical application. Their web address is [www.cobhill.org](http://www.cobhill.org)

On June 17<sup>th</sup>, we again welcomed Rabbi Michael Cohen for a community scripture reflection based on Genesis 2:8-3:24, the second Genesis creation story. This mutual breaking open of our common scripture was enriched by our complimentary perspectives, Jewish/Rabbinic and Christian/Monastic. The reflective and thought-provoking exchange generated many meaningful insights that kept building on one another throughout our discussion. We are blessed to know Rabbi Michael as a Vermont neighbor, friend of peace, and partner in exploring the Scriptures.

## July

In July, our friends Bill and Ruth Farley accompanied Sr. Miriam Therese Winter on a visit to the Priory. They met with a group of brothers for a lively exchange on contemporary developments in spirituality. Sr. Miriam and her Medical Mission Sisters were inspirational leaders in creating contemporary liturgical music in the United States following Vatican Council II. She is professor of Liturgy and director of the Women's Leadership Institute at Hartford Seminary. Her latest book is "Paradoxology, Spirituality in a Quantum Universe" (Orbis Books 2009).

From June 28<sup>th</sup> to July 4<sup>th</sup>, we hosted our semi-annual Monastic Living Experience/An Exploration of Monastic Values. It was our joy to have Landon Peck of Carmel, Indiana, and Nicholas Carbuto of Glen Cove, New York, with us for the seven-day experience. Mutual dialog, reflection, study, common prayer, work, and opportunities for relaxation marked the hours of each day and brought us to the beginnings of a valued friendship. This is the fourteenth year we have been offering this opportunity to young men who have an interest in taking a closer look at our monastic life and understanding the values by which we live.

On July 10<sup>th</sup>, the Saturday before our celebration of St. Benedict's Day, Carolyn and Bill Meub of Pure Water for the World (PW), offered a power-point presentation to over one hundred persons gathered in our Visitors' Center. Its focus was on the recent tragic earthquake and its aftermath in Haiti. Each year we try to make available some timely and valuable offering during this week-



*l to r: Landon Peck, Nicholas Carbuto*



*Carolyn and Bill Meub*

end when we commemorate our Benedictine heritage and our founding as a community. A rich dialogue followed the presentation. It was one way we could make known the compassionate efforts by local friends from Pure Water for the World (PW) on behalf of the poor of Haiti.

From July 15<sup>th</sup> to July 29<sup>th</sup>, four of our Benedictine Sisters from Mexico were with us for two weeks. We were happy to welcome Sisters Georgina, Leticia, Roselia, and Altigracia for this special time together. Celebrations of prayer, discussions, inter-community dialog and laughter, common work and dancing made for a beautiful experience of our two Benedictine communities engaging one another with mutual respect and love. It is always a special pleasure when some of our Sisters are able to make the trip from Mexico to be with us. Opportunities such as these strengthen and renew the bonds of love and friendship that have blessed our two communities for more than thirty-four years. Adelante!



*l to r: Sisters Georgina, Roselia, Leticia, and Altigracia*

## August

On the morning of the second Sunday of the month, Rabbi Michael Cohen came to offer a second presentation on the Arava Institute in our Visitors' Center. We welcomed a large gathering of interested friends, neighbors and visitors to hear the presentation. All recognized the Institute as a light of hope that challenges the darkness of fear, mistrust, and anger in the hearts of conflict-weary people in the Middle East. (See the **May** heading for more information about the Institute).

## September

At mid-month, brothers Richard, Peter, Mark and Daniel traveled to the monastery of the Trinitarian Nuns in Suesa, Cantabria, Spain (Comunidad Monjas Trinitarias de Suesa). The Sisters are a vibrant and creative group of women, marking the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their founding. They had a week-long exchange with our brothers in preparation for a Women's Monastic Forum of contemplative nuns from seven other monasteries in Spain. These included Carmelites, Benedictines, Poor Clares, and Trappistines. Two of our Benedictine Sisters from Mexico, Sister Miguelina and



*The Trinitarian Sisters of Suesa with four Weston brothers and two Mexican Sisters*

Sister Fidelina, joined us in this exchange. Brothers who had the experience remarked that the exchange with these women monastics “was beyond what we could have imagined!” We hope to share more about this unique monastic gathering in a future Bulletin. Their web address is [www.montrinisuesa.net](http://www.montrinisuesa.net)

## October

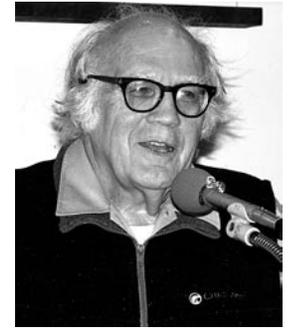
Since 1984, when Felipe and Elena Ixcot and their five children arrived at the monastery to be received in “Sanctuary”, our community has been gifted with their friendship. On October 2<sup>nd</sup>, Felipe’s and Elena’s daughter, Juanita was married to James Conroy of Cleveland, Ohio. They are living in Virginia. Jim works as a geophysicist and engineer, and Juanita is pursuing her graduate studies in International Relations at John Hopkins University. She continues to advocate for indigenous people’s rights in the Americas and throughout the world. We are grateful for the love and care that all the Ixcot family continue to have for us and for the many friends who welcomed them here in Sanctuary. We wish Juanita and Jim blessings and joy in their married life together. They are a beautiful couple and their love for each other is a true gift



*Juanita Cabrera-Lopez and Jim Conroy*

to us all. (See the poem in this bulletin, “The Wedding Day”, written as a reflection on the occasion. Also see our Fall/Winter 2009 Bulletin.)

On the afternoon of Sunday, October 3<sup>rd</sup>, author and Catholic activist, Jim Douglas, gave a presentation at the monastery with a focus on his latest book, “JFK and the Unspeakable: Why He Died and Why It Matters.” (This book was originally printed and is available in hardcover from Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY, 2008; reprinted in paperback by Simon & Schuster, New York, NY, 2010.) The gathering was held in our outdoor Barn Chapel, given the large number of people who wanted to attend. Jim and his wife, Shelly, founded and live at the Catholic Worker House in Birmingham, Alabama. Jim is a peacemaker and has been involved in civil disobedience, protesting Trident submarines and White Trains (missiles) at Ground Zero in the State of Washington. His friendship with Thomas Merton helped to direct his life energies towards working for peace and justice. Jim has written four books on peacemaking theology, including “The Nonviolent Coming of God” (1991). Jim framed his dynamic presentation with the following: What does it mean to be transformed as President of the United States into a peacemaker as the country and the world hovered at the edge of total nuclear war?; Can we discover hope for our enlightenment and resurrection as one human family through the dark truths of his assassination in Dallas?



*Jim Douglas*

On Monday October 23<sup>rd</sup>, Joyce Ajlouny, Director of the Ramallah Friends School in Palestine-West Bank, came to speak to a gathering of brothers, friends and neighbors in our Visitors’ Center. Joyce believes passionately that one day there will be peace and justice for the Palestinian people. Through her work at Friends School Joyce is dedicated to helping her people discover within themselves a sense of their own dignity and self-worth. She is one of the few Palestinian Quakers left in the West Bank. She and her family, including her parents, live in the town of Ramallah. Her mother was born in East Jerusalem and is unable to return to her birthplace because of her being Palestinian.



*Joyce Ajlouny*

Joyce was on a two week tour in New England to raise funds for the Ramallah School. The School has 1,200 K-thru-12 students, both Christians and Muslims. Twenty percent of the students receive financial assistance. The school is celebrating the 140<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding by two Quakers from Maine in the 1860’s. It has the

reputation of being the best Palestinian school in the West Bank. Almost all of its graduates go on to college or university, many in the United States.

Especially challenging was Joyce's sharing her experience living under military rule in the occupied territories of the West Bank. Daily reminders of second class status meet ordinary Palestinians wherever they go: on the way to work, in the streets on the way to the store, going for a walk in the hills, at a military checkpoint, encountering a military patrol on the road and trying to get travel documents. Despite all that we are able to read and hear about the situation in the Palestinian territories, it is in the persons who live there that we can touch the fear and oppression under which they try to live and survive. Many no longer see a viable future for themselves and their families in the current situation.

People like Joyce dream and work for a better tomorrow. She brings a hope that the peoples of the land will one day truly be friends, brothers and sisters to one another. For her, this is the only solution! Our prayer is that all may be one, one with our God and with each other. Their web address is [www.palfriends.org](http://www.palfriends.org) ■