

# Field for Treasure

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1

WINTER 2005/2006

## Bethlehem Farm Issues Newsletter!

By Ed Pluchar

Thank you for subscribing to the inaugural edition of the Bethlehem Farm Newsletter! Didn't put your name on any list, you say? Never sent in a reply card? You didn't need to! That's right – we heard through a friend of a friend, or perhaps from you directly, that you were interested in the mission of Bethlehem Farm. For that reason alone, you are receiving a free subscription to the Bethlehem Farm Newsletter!

Now many of you volunteered at the Farm, many have made generous donations, and still others have their own "little" ways of contributing to the mission. This news-

letter will, in all hopefulness, provide our volunteers with updates on the projects they (wo) manned, the people they met, and the community they communed with. Donors will see how well their generosity has promoted our cause, and those who are elsewhere in body but here in spirit can keep astride of our physical progress.

So, consider this newsletter a meal – and let the chef hear about it! Would you like more of this and a

little less of that? More meat, less cheese? Vegetarians – This time, you will not be accommodated! Is everything perfect, *al dente*? Hope so! Say so by e-mailing us at

**BFarmNewsletter**

**@gmail.com.**

*Bon appetite!*



*Our Beautiful Barn!*

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### BETHLEHEM FARM WISH LIST:

- Prayers
- Funds for road repair
- Table saw
- Chop Saw
- Stamps
- Upright vacuum
- Dust buster vacuum
- Pillows
- Mattresses
- Splitting Mauls
- More Prayers

## ND Leaves Mark(ed)

A reflection by Matt Haggerty

Our group from Notre Dame in the flat of Indiana had an amazing experience at Bethlehem Farm. We loved the beauty and majesty of nature, the incredibly hospitable local residents, and, most importantly, the incredible connection with each other and with God. We did a variety of service activities, from working on the farm to painting and roofing houses. Aside

from the service, we had a great time with our group and Ed, Chris, and Russ. Together, we played parking lot kickball, ultimate Uno, indoor bowling, all sorts of mind games, had a bonfire... only to name a few of the memorable experiences. One of the most important factors of the trip was all the prayer: morning, evening, before meals, night Bible study, and when the Spirit guided us. Leaving the Farm after a week

(and all of us wanting to stay), we can feel that we are a tight community with us back at Notre Dame and the people we met at Bethlehem Farm. The four Cornerstones of Prayer, Simplicity, Community, and Service will be forever ingrained within us, and it is comforting to know that we have a loving, caring family in the mountains of West Virginia.

## A Word from a Distant Relative

By Pat Ruggaber

"How was your trip to West Virginia?" That was the question on everyone's lips when our group of 10 parishioners from St. Michael's in Wheaton, IL, (and one Prodigal Ruggaber from Virginia) returned home after the first adult week at Bethlehem Farm.

Well, let's see; how was it? Well, for starters, it was fun! More fun than I expected it to be, quite frankly. Our group, some of them new to me, gelled from the very start. Though coming from different stages of life, we all entered the week with open minds and hearts. Need help in the kitchen? Sure, not a problem! Garden overgrown? We can handle that! Strangely designed plumbing systems? Bob, our expert plumber, tackled that immediately. But it was not all work and no play; in fact, it felt like a camp for overage children at times! The jokes and banter

that flew back and forth made the work of painting, or weeding, or whatever was being done, go quickly. Sometimes, serious discussions took place while gesturing with a paint-filled brush. Community was built in the work, in the meals, in the sharing, and in the fun. The contacts with the larger community of Hinton, WV, provided us with a different view of daily life. That a family would take on the ministry of hospitality for the Alderson prison, for example, was a real witness to their faith. Though Catholics are not plentiful in that part of the country, the Catholic community was strong, if small. (The owner of the local hardware store, a Catholic, gives 10% discount to Catholics!) The pastor of the local parish is very supportive of Bethlehem Farm, as he sees it as a way to further connect with the community.

It was also a prayerful experience for me. The depth of spirituality among the participants was evident, even when we were not in formal prayer times. When we shared prayer in the mornings and evenings, the openness to each other and to God's direction for us was a moving experience for me and provided more of a "retreat" experience than many retreats I've attended. The "simple" lifestyle was not that difficult. While we didn't have all the comforts of home, we were certainly not uncomfortable. The food, though inexpensive and simple, was delicious. One can do a lot with a little, with some thought and

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## At the Food Pantry

By Ed Pluchar

There is a line of quiet people, with one or two who chatter without thinking much about it. Others listen without looking. It's 8:50am, and food is distributed at 9am. Russ and I have come to lug grocery bags for those receiving food.

All patrons fill out a small form indicating the number of people in their family, the number of children, and amount of income. Some people have three or four slips filled out, as they are picking up orders for absentees. There is a subdued understanding that these people may be cheating the system, but it is better to give the food than keep it from those who may really need it. When it is discovered that a person is probably honest about picking up orders for others, it is refreshing.

A tall black woman has three of these slips, one for herself, one for her sister, and one for "James." Charlotte, who collects the slips, looks up at the black woman.

"Who is James?"

"James, he's from church."

"What's his last name."

"James, ah, I don't know. He asked me if I could pick up his food."

"I need a last name. You don't know his last name?" Charlotte is gentle, but firm.

"No I – What's James' last name?" the woman says to her friend, who is next in line.

"Shoot, I don't know. He's older, has white hair," the second woman says.

"He's come here before," the first woman says, causing Charlotte to search the registration binder, "They call 'im Santa Claus."

"Oh, James!" says Russ. "Yeah, he lives up at Alderson Manor."

"Yeah, he's at Alderson Manor," says the first woman. The second woman "mmm hmm's" her agreement. "Hey Dee," says the first woman, calling down to a black, uniformed man near the end of the line, "Do you know James' last name?"

"James – Santa Claus?" the man responds cheerfully. "He's got that white dog he walks around!"

"What's his last name?" the woman asks.

"Aw, I don't know."

"Just look up 'Santa Claus,'" jokes Russ.

"That's how everyone knows him."

"Cromwell?" Charlotte asks the first woman, looking up

**Cont. on page 3...**

*"James - Santa Claus?" the man responds cheerfully.*

## Julie's Journal: Memorable Moments in the Early Months

January 10: the weather is beautiful and warm. I feel like it is a temperate climate. This house is very quiet and the life size St. Joseph statue outside my room needs to move. There is nothing creepier than two people staring at you as you walk through the house.

January 12: the snow has begun to fall. The temperature has dropped and Arnold, the pig, is not happy.

February 15: Russ and I attempted to bring the trash down the hill today. Eight bags, four hands and ice underfoot makes for an entertaining combination.

February 21: OHH, our fabulous 'Wooding Festival'. With an adjacent lot with many downed trees, we are given permission to gather wood, but for only one day. We, of course, choose the one day where it is cold, wet, and raining to collect all of the wood we are able to move.

March 6-12, 13-19: Our first groups arrived from Saint Joseph's University and Indiana University these weeks. God bless those adventurers. Due to snow, SJU hikes up the half mile driveway with their packs and sleeping bags. *Note for next year: schedule sleep for the staff.*

March 10: We prepared twenty

loaves of bread today due to a volunteer's confusion between the *teaspoon* and *tablespoon* measurements. No worries, it was great bread and it will be enjoyed for months.

March 30: we lost the donkeys today. Yes, it is true. We lost four large beasts. They vanished after a violent storm blew down a gate.

*May 4: Our neighbor has informed us that our male cat, BJ, might be pregnant. We are not doing so well with this animal care thing apparently.*

April 1: Russ found the donkeys. Russ called me in town and I flew back (on the magic broomstick that someone kindly donated. I love random donations). Then we chased the donkeys back to the farm for an hour. Have you ever chased a donkey? Have you ever chased four donkeys? It really should be an Olympic sport or at least a county fair event.

April 4: Russ began skimming the garden today by hand. Skimming is the art of removing the growing grass from the soil to plant a garden. He finished a 2'x5' area in only five

hours. It might be the move slow moving, monotonous work.

April 11: We said goodbye to Gerald today. Thank you for your wisdom and your laughter.

April 13: Our angel arrived today in the form of a donated garden tiller. God bless you our New York Angel.

April 21: We had to take Fire-cracker's, our horse, temperature today. The tools required: pig feed, a thermometer, a brave spirit, some twine, and a clothes pin. You can imagine the rest.

May 4: Our neighbor has informed us that our male cat, BJ, might be pregnant. We are not doing so well with this animal care thing apparently.

May 18: I ordered stain for the porches today. Everyone at the hardware store thinks that I am insane because I ordered 20 gallons. They have no idea.

May 31: Wood chopping began today. You think that people that hike the Appalachian Trail are tough. Try chopping wood for three months. With every stroke of the ax, we picture the warm fire in mid-February.

### At The Food Pantry, Cont...

from her records.

"Cromwell, Cromwell – I think so." She turns to the second woman, "Is it Cromwell?"

"Cromwell...I don't know."

"I think that's right," says Charlotte. The first woman calls down to Dee again, "Is it Cromwell?"

"Cromwell – I'm not sure."

"James Cromwell...I think Cromwell is right," says Charlotte. With nods of satisfaction, everyone agrees to this, and the first woman takes a couple extra bags for James Cromwell.

### Distant Relative, Cont...

creativity. The star filled sky at night was more beautiful than the city skyline; the breeze, much more comfortable than air conditioning. Driving the mountain roads is a real character-builder, but observing the view is breath-taking.

So – how was the week? It was the embodiment of the four cornerstones of Bethlehem Farm: community, prayer, simplicity, and service, with beautiful scenery, good friends, and a few animals added in!

Bethlehem Farm

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**We're on the Web!**  
**[Bethlehemfarm.net](http://Bethlehemfarm.net)**

(However, our site is still under construction. You might peruse the homepage, but you won't get much further).

## OUR MISSION

Bethlehem Farm is a **Catholic** community dedicated to living out the **Gospel** and **Social Teachings** of the Church.

We base our lives on the cornerstones of **prayer, community, service** and **simplicity** and adopt **sustainable practices** in response to the Appalachian pastoral "**At Home in the Web of Life**".

We provide volunteers a **communal experience of Church**, while working to promote **social justice** through the **empowerment** of the local community.

We are a **center of reflection and prayer in the service of action**, inspired by the **Eucharist** and open to the **Spirit**.

### **A Poem By Heather Angell,**

**who begins as a Farm Caretaker in January**

Take a census of yourself:  
Where you've been, where you are going,  
who you are.  
Be it railroad ties or highway signs  
that brought you here,  
through tunnels echoing a name,  
you are home.

The gravel crunches and you realize  
the driveway really is  
as long as they said it would be.  
Half a mile up, half a world away,  
spinning on the same axis  
as the rest of this green skinned earth,  
but at a slower pace it seems.

The landscape presents itself  
as rolling amber swirling sweetly  
below green curly topped-trees resting  
in the orange wink of night,  
framing the inn that waits for you  
with room this time.  
You are home.

This will be the place  
where you rise each morning  
with the mist hung low through  
the valley of life  
that surrounds you:

A web of hollows and neighbors,  
land waiting for seed  
people waiting for harvest, you among them.

Tools lay out before you  
A hammer, a nail,  
a plowshare rusted through,  
two good hands, grown rough from caring.  
You will haul and build beside your neighbor.  
There is no other way.

A million stars scatter like descendents.  
They have been waiting for you.  
Walk the crest of the hill and listen  
to the stories this place holds.  
Set yourself for the adventure  
of an advent of the heart.  
You are home