

JUBILEE PARTNERS REPORT

Winter 2016



“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 4:6-7

Six women from Burma, the United States and Central America stood facing one another in pairs doing simple hand motions as they sang this song in worship one Sunday evening:

“Shalom, my good friends, shalom, my good friends, shalom, shalom.

May peace be with you, God’s peace be with you, shalom, shalom.”

Tears were streaming down lots of faces as we repeated the refrain together. This was Ingrid’s last Sunday before she and her five children would move on from Jubilee, after two years of living among us.

In our December 2014 newsletter we shared some of Ingrid’s story using the name *Esperanza*, which means *Hope*.^{*} Ingrid would like her name to be used now and more of her story told in this newsletter. Ingrid came to Jubilee with great uncertainty. As a single mother of three young US born and two recently arrived children she was vulnerable and without many options. Ten years earlier her mother had offered to care for her two young boys so she could find work in the US to earn money to send home for their survival.

When her mother became ill, Ingrid returned to her home country to care for her until her death and to then bring her boys back to live with her and her other children in North Carolina. In 2014 the three traveled by horseback, foot, bus and car to unite with her three youngest kids and build a new life safe from the



Our Fall Festival was enlivened by Congolese dancing, as shown here by (L-R) Alina, Nyasa Bitanga, and Apolina. Face painting was also a great hit, as you can see on the faces below left of Jaime Ree and Re Bu.



gang violence that is destroying her home town. Not long after her return to the US, her husband, the family’s primary breadwinner, was detained at Stewart Detention Center and deported. “2014 was a very hard year,” she said. We welcomed her family into our community as she worked with immigration lawyers to explore longer term possibilities for her family.

Over the past two years, Ingrid has learned English, expanded her job skills and grown in her confidence and faith. She and her children helped to welcome families from Congo and Burma as well as volunteers and staff, all of whom found friendship and lots of good food and dancing at her door. In

^{*}You can read the December 2014 newsletter as well as the first *Jubilee Journal* on our website www.jubileepartners.org

Inside this newsletter you will find the second edition of *The Jubilee Journal*. The Jubilee School currently offers morning English classes to seventeen neighbor students and their young kids as well as to refugee families from Congo that are living here short-term. Some neighbor students come to class straight from working the nightshift so that they can improve their skills in reading, writing and speaking English. Many of our neighbor students have gone on to take citizenship classes taught at local churches and to pass their citizenship exams. Last spring Jubilee teachers and students made the first Jubilee Journal.* In this edition, English students and teachers were asked to share their hopes. Advanced Green Class students wrote their hopes for Ingrid's family. You can read Ingrid's hopes for her classmates in her own words.



Visitation by a prophet from of old?? Nah, it's just fall volunteer Mike Genau, imitating partner Al Lawler and his famous bushy grey beard.

We are reminded in this new season of Advent, when the world seems to be nearly overcome with darkness, to pray and work for Shalom. There is not a single English word that encompasses the full meaning of the Hebrew word *Shalom* or the Arabic word *Salaam*. *Shalom*, which is often translated into English as *peace*, suggests the presence of health, wholeness, harmony, completeness, well-being and tranquility. These words, *Shalom* and *Salaam*, are spoken when people greet and when they part. This is what angels proclaimed to shepherds about a poor baby in a barn when they sang, "peace on earth, goodwill to all." Just like the times in which Jesus was born, these are dark and dangerous times. Our commitment to welcome refugees, work for

November, Ingrid decided to move back to North Carolina to be closer to people from her home country and to find paid work. She and her family started this next phase of their life on Election Day this year. We urge you to pray not only for Ingrid and her kids but for all the families like theirs, our brothers and sister in Christ, who are working hard and praying harder for peace and protection between a rock and a hard place. We are thankful that there is a rising new sanctuary movement of churches and communities across the country continuing to love, welcome and walk with families such as these.

In Jeremiah 29:7 the people of Israel were commanded to "seek the Shalom of the city in which I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its Shalom you will find your Shalom." From people like Ingrid's family, people living in a kind of exile in this country, we see with fresh eyes what this scripture is saying. We believe that the well-being of our whole nation is bound up in the well-being of the people living here in the shadows and we pray Shalom for everyone.

You go, girl! Seraphina Guess shows both agility and determination in competing in the hanging donut event at our Fall Festival.



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peace and follow Jesus will not be overcome by darkness. So, we leave you with a picture of our Thanksgiving celebration which seems to grow bigger every year.

The weather was warm and sunny and around 350 people from 14 different countries showed up for a worship service and an amazing Thanksgiving feast. Philippians 4:4-9 was read in Khmer, Vietnamese, Swahili, French, Spanish, Karen, Karenni and English. We heard and affirmed so many things for which we are thankful. Russ Dyck's mom, Mildred, shared how she has grown closer to God as she has struggled with multiple cancer diagnoses and treatments. Mildred praises God and knows that Jesus is with her even though the cancer is still in her body. Even though evil is still very present in our broken world and there is much to lament, we too are encouraged to keep praising God.

Before Mildred spoke, Dinah laid her hands upon Mildred and prayed for her in Swahili. Dinah and her family came to Jubilee in 2013 as refugees from Congo, and live in Tennessee now. They came for Thanksgiving because they, like so many others, wanted to see their Jubilee family. Their eldest daughters, Deborah and Esther, sang a song that kept repeating, "Come on, come on, come on, come on, come on, give your love to God."

Dinah was pregnant with their youngest, Emmanuel, when they arrived in the US and they now look forward to welcoming another child in January.

So, we keep giving, we keep praising, we keep welcoming new life and working for peace. We keep on in faith that the one who brought us all this far will be with Ingrid and her family, with the other undocumented families living in the US, and the millions more refugees and internally displaced people around the world. We pray courage and strength for all of you, wherever you are, to keep welcoming and living in a perfect love that casts out all fear. Shalom.



[above] Mildred Dyck's faith and courage were both evident in her Thanksgiving message, while Deborah and Esther [below left] give testimony to God through beautiful song.



from the people of Jubilee

Who we are

Jubilee Partners is an intentional Christian service community in north Georgia. Our primary ministry is offering hospitality to newly arrived refugees. We are a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization; donations are thus tax-deductible. Your donations and support of our work are most appreciated.

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Come, ye thankful people, come... and they certainly did! We were blessed with a picture perfect mild sunny Thanksgiving Day and a gathering of 350 friends. We began with worship (pictured above) and continued with lots of good food, warm fellowship, games and fun for kids of all ages, and a big "thank you" to the Lord God who made us and loves us all.