

Quest

Our theme for the month of November is comunidad // community.
 In honor of that bilingual theme and the Spanish-speaking members of our CLF family, some parts of this issue of Quest are in both English and Spanish. Would you like to see more Spanish language content from the CLF? Please write to us with your thoughts, we would love to hear from you! As always, we're so grateful to be in community with you.

Nuestro tema para el mes de noviembre es comunidad // community.
 En honor a este tema bilingüe y a los miembros de habla hispana de nuestra familia CLF, algunas partes de esta edición de Quest están en inglés y en español. ¿Les gustaría ver más contenido en español de CLF? Escríbanos por favor con sus pensamientos, ¡nos encantaría saber de ustedes! Como siempre, estamos muy agradecidos de estar en comunidad con ustedes.

Breaking Our Hearts Open // Romper y Abrir Nuestros Corazones



REV. DR. MICHAEL TINO
*Lead Ministry Team,
 Church of the Larger
 Fellowship*

Our hearts break open for the pain of the world. For the pain of our planet, whose delicate balance has come undone, and for all her creatures. For mudslides and floods, for rising seas and melting ice, for storms and droughts.

Our hearts break open for the pain of nations. For the cries of war, for the brutality of despots and dictators. For bombs and guns, trained on enemies whose hearts beat the same as ours. For leaders whose greed goes unchecked while their people starve, whose anger defies reason and ignores compassion.

Our hearts break open for the pain of

communities. For hatred that marches down the street, and for history that has not yet been relegated to the past. For acts of terror that leave blood in their wake, for cries for help that go unanswered, for every time those sworn to protect instead inflict harm, for the brutality of our carceral state.

Our hearts break open for the pain in our homes. For sickness and death, for abuse and its aftermath. For those we desperately want to help but cannot. For relationships that require constant work, and for the anger that erupts to signal yet more work is needed. For children who struggle to keep up, bodies that no longer do what we want them to, and siblings who lose sight of what is most precious. Our hearts break open for the

Breaking Our Hearts, cont. on page 5

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"We have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes with community."

DOROTHY DAY

in this issue

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Gary

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CLF Nominating Committee

REMEMBERING
Rev. Dr. Michael Tino

connect. deepen. act.

COMMUNITY / COMUNIDAD

Who makes up your community? What role does community play in your life?

On Community

TALIB (ANTHONY)

CLF Member, incarcerated in IL

My community consists of two parts: 1) my fellow prisoners, and 2) those who correspond, speak on the phone, or visit. Each plays a necessary role helping me to maintain some semblance of mental and physical stability.

I've been incarcerated for almost 17 years, and if it wasn't for my community I don't believe that I'd be here writing this for you. They have been there in my loneliest moments, my rock bottom, and have talked me back from the edge.

The first part of my community that I'd like to talk about is my fellow prisoners. There are guys who I've known for over a decade, living day-in and day-out with them; they know me better than my own family does. There is your cellmate: when you live in a bathroom with another person for years, you can't help but develop a bond with them. You eat together, sleep around them, celebrate birthdays and holidays together, and when you're going through hard times, that's who you share them with. You are at your most vulnerable around them.



PHOTO BY MIKE ERSKINE ON UNSPLASH

Beyond the cellmate, you also develop a familial bond with those around you. When you do so much time, you are living a life, and when you have people that do that much time with you, they become your family – you end up sharing big life moments together. When a brother of mine became a grandfather, he shared that with me. He got off the phone and called out to me, beaming, "Talib, my daughter just had a kid. I'm a grandpa!"

There were years that I went without anyone because my family and friends on the outside had abandoned me to live their own lives. I had nothing coming in, no one to help, and I had to rely only on my own devices. I had to build a community of people around me in here who helped when I needed it the most: they supported

my business, they would cook and send me something to eat, and if I was in desperate need, all I had to do was ask them for help.

A quick anecdote that puts it into perspective: my last night in a maximum security prison, my property was packed up, so I had nothing, and the cellhouse had already gone to commissary that day. My friends and neighbors all contributed food items and snacks, and they cooked burritos to celebrate my transfer to a medium security prison. They even threw me a going away party.

Now, I'd like to speak on the second part of my community: those who correspond with me, speak on the

On Community, cont. on page 3

Correctional Community

GARY

CLF member, incarcerated in SC

Prison is a microcosm of the larger society. You will find individuals from virtually every walk of life serving time. I have met former doctors, dentists, attorneys, police officers, airline pilots, business owners, ministers and people from all aspects of society. Just as in every community.

Rare, however, is that sense of community behind these walls. Prison often acts to separate and even isolate individuals in a "me versus the rest of the world" mentality. Feelings of having to constantly be "on guard" and being unable to extend trust and friendship for fear of being taken as "weak" is bred into the atmosphere.

The foundation of any community is trust. Attributes of community are a sense of responsibility and unity. Overcoming the despair and sense of isolation requires the willingness to step out in faith, extend oneself, and become vulnerable.

Here at MacDougall C.I. in South Carolina there exists this sense of community. The Men Achieving Character or MAC Unit is built upon the community mind orientation to foster a prosocial environment, accountability, spiritual growth, and responsibility to each other and ourselves. Acceptance, zero-tolerance for violence or conduct degrading to humanity for oneself is enforced.

This bond is unique. It acts to reverse all the negativity so often found behind the wire and replace it with a spirit of community. Built upon teamwork, a positive mental attitude, and social responsibility, one is typically greeted by others with a smile and "good morning"; there are random acts of kindness and generosity, and an environment that encourages development of skills leading to a successful transition back into the larger society.

Acceptance, tolerance, kindness, a spirit of unity: all these are vital components of my community here.

*"Where two or more are gathered
There I am also..."*

(Adapted from Matthew 18:20) ■

On Community, cont. on page 3

phone, or visit from the outside. I'd like to speak directly to those who are reading this who write to individuals in prison — you are so important. You are our connection to a world outside of this one, and sometimes a connection to a community that some of us have never known.

I know that it may not always seem like it, or maybe you have a pen pal who asks for so much that it seems they are taking advantage of you, but remember that you may be the most important connection that person

has. Imagine that you have been starving for years, barely surviving on scraps, and then someone comes to you with a plate of doughnuts. Are you going to take just one and nibble on it? No, you're probably going to devour as many as you can before the plate gets taken away. As a pen pal on the outside, you may be the first person who's cared about them in a long time.

Sending books, magazines, and anything else; taking the time to write or answer the phone; and caring about our wellbeing all goes a long way in making us feel connected to the outside world. We lean on you out there.

We do not have the means to connect to the world, nor the resources to obtain the means — you are that.

Human beings are social in nature, and community is key to our survival. It is no different for those of us who are in prison. We lose so much when we're incarcerated, so we turn to connection and community to survive, mentally and physically. My community has helped me to make it through.

I appreciate all those in my community, inside and out. You're the reason that I'm able to write this. ■

[Breaking Our Hearts, cont. from page 1](#)

everyday pain that being connected and vulnerable brings to us.

Our hearts break open for the pain in our hearts. For the mistakes we're still beating ourselves up over. For the imperfections we have yet to embrace. For relationships we have lost and fear are irreconcilable, amends we have yet to make with those we have hurt, and the unfinished business of forgiving ourselves. Our hearts break open for life.

If you care about the world, your heart breaks open on a regular basis. If you care about another person, your heart breaks open on a regular basis. This business we call life, it breaks our hearts open wide. Again and again. And as our hearts break open, we have an opportunity to put them back together differently—to put them back together connected to one another.

Juana Bordas, in her book *Salsa, Soul, and Spirit*, challenges us to move from "I" to "we," from the individualism rampant in modern-day European and Euro-American society to a collectivism found in Native American, Latino, African, and African-American communities. As Bordas writes from her own experience, "Latinos cherish belonging, group benefit, mutuality, and reciprocity. Interdependency, cooperation, and mutual assistance are the norm."

Forming real relationships in community means engaging in the



PHOTO BY BRUCE HONG ON UNSPLASH

vulnerability of exposing our hearts to the world. And it means finding ways to engage in healing our hearts together—as one community, as a "we" instead of simply a collection of individuals. Forming real community means finding ways of mutuality and connection.

Beloved, you are not alone. You are part of a "we" that extends beyond your understanding. Let us knit our hearts together in community and commit ourselves to mutuality, curiosity, reciprocity, and cooperation.



Nuestros corazones se rompen y se abren por el dolor del mundo. Por el dolor de nuestro planeta, cuyo delicado equilibrio se ha roto, y por todas sus criaturas. Por avalanchas de barro e inundaciones, por el aumento del nivel del mar y el derretimiento del hielo, por tormentas y sequías.

Nuestros corazones se rompen y se abren por el dolor de las naciones. Por los gritos de guerra, por la brutalidad de dеспotas y dictadores. Por bombas y cañones dirigidos a enemigos cuyos corazones laten igual que el nuestro. Por líderes cuya codicia crece incon-

trolable mientras su gente se muere de hambre, y cuya ira desafía la razón e ignora la compasión.

Nuestros corazones se rompen y se abren por el dolor de las comunidades. Por el odio que marcha calle abajo, y por la historia que aún no ha quedado relegada en el pasado. Por los actos de terror que dejan sangre a su paso, por los gritos de auxilio que quedan sin respuesta, por cada vez que los que juraron protegernos hacen daño, por la brutalidad de nuestro estado carcelario.

Nuestros corazones se rompen y se abren por el dolor en nuestros hogares. Por la enfermedad y la muerte, por el abuso y sus secuelas. Por aquellos que queremos ayudar desesperadamente pero no podemos. Por las relaciones que requieren un trabajo constante, y por la ira que estalla para indicar que se necesita más trabajo. Por los niños que luchan para no quedarse atrás, por los cuerpos que ya no hacen lo que queremos que hagan y por los hermanos que pierden de vista lo más preciado. Nuestros corazones se rompen y se abren por el dolor cotidiano que nos causa el estar

[Nuestros Corazones, cont. en la página 5](#)

Nuestros Corazones, cont. de la página 4

conectados y vulnerables.

Nuestros corazones se rompen y se abren por el dolor en nuestros corazones. Por los errores por los que todavía nos estamos castigando. Por las imperfecciones que aún tenemos que aceptar. Por las relaciones que hemos perdido y que tememos son irreconciliables, por las enmiendas que aún tenemos que hacer con aquellos a quienes hemos lastimado y la tarea pendiente de perdonarnos a nosotros mismos. Nuestros corazones se rompen y se abren por la vida.

Si te preocupas por el mundo, tu corazón se rompe y se abre regularmente. Si te preocupas por otra persona, tu

corazón se rompe y se abre regularmente. Este asunto que llamamos vida, nos rompe y abre el corazón de par en par. Una y otra vez. Y a medida que nuestros corazones se rompen y se abren, tenemos la oportunidad de volver a unirlos de manera diferente, de volver a unirlos conectados con otros corazones.

Juana Bordas, en su libro *Salsa, Alma y Espíritu*, nos desafía a pasar del “yo” al “nosotros,” del individualismo desenfrenado de la sociedad europea y euroamericana de hoy en día a un colectivismo que se encuentra en los nativos americanos, los latinos, las comunidades africanas y afroamericanas. Según escribe Bordas a partir de su propia experiencia, “los latinos valoran la pertenencia, el beneficio grupal, la colaboración y la reciprocidad. La

interdependencia, la cooperación y la asistencia mutua son la norma.”

Formar relaciones reales en comunidad significa comprometerse con la vulnerabilidad de exponer nuestros corazones al mundo. Y significa encontrar formas de participar juntos en la sanación de nuestros corazones, como una comunidad, como un “nosotros”, en lugar de simplemente una colección de individuos. Formar una comunidad real significa encontrar formas de reciprocidad y conexión.

Amados, no están solos. Son parte de un “nosotros” que se extiende más allá de su comprensión. Unamos nuestros corazones en comunidad y comprométamonos con la colaboración, la curiosidad, la reciprocidad y la cooperación. ■

The Strength of Community // La Fuerza de la Comunidad



NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Church of the Larger Fellowship

In a recent conversation with other religious professionals at Liberal Religious Educators Association (LREDA) Fall Con—the annual conference for religious educators—Aisha Hauser, one of our CLF lead ministers, invited us to name what gives us joy and what sustains us in these difficult times that feel like a slow-moving apocalypse. Some of us named family, and some of us named fun hobbies; what became clear in that conversa-

tion was that communal joy, and the sharing of it, was a key ingredient to gaining resilience in these challenging times. Community gives us strength and amplifies joy. Knowing that we are part of something larger than ourselves can be comforting, it can help us feel less buffeted by the challenges of our lives.

The Church of the Larger Fellowship is just that: a great community of communities made up of people connected and committed to reminding each other that we are more together, that we can take turns at the resistance, that cultivating and growing

communal joy is part of what helps us stay stronger and focused on the collective liberation and transformation of all.

One of the tasks of the Nominating Committee is to help our community leadership stay fresh and strong. The Nom Com knows that the lead ministry team and staff of our church need the energy and joy and enthusiasm of leaders to co-create our future. Does CLF help you grow your joy and keep your eyes on the prize? Would

Strength of Community, cont. on page 6

Strength of Community, cont. from page 5

you like to join leadership teams to continue to work for liberation and transformation at church?

Nominating is seeking individuals who are actively involved in our congregation to assist how we engage in ministry, leadership, and governance together. Specifically, we are looking for individuals to serve on Nominating who are committed to matching peoples' gifts with opportunities to contribute and who understand the role of Nominating in widening the circle of care and leadership on Nominating and the Board.

We are also seeking individuals to serve on the Board who are deeply rooted in Unitarian Universalism. The Board and Nom Com are explicitly seeking ways to incorporate CLF members with personal or familial experience with incarceration, as we continue the journey of involving incarcerated and recently incarcerated members in leadership opportunities.

Please let us know if you or someone you know is interested in this way of investing in our community. Email nominating@clfuu.org with the subject "Board/Committee Interest" and let us know if you would like to learn more about leadership opportunities at CLF, or if you think someone in your circles would be an excellent person to recruit. Thank you!

En una conversación reciente con otros profesionales religiosos en la reunión anual de Liberal Religious Educators Association (LREDA)—la asociación de directores liberales de educación religiosa—Aisha Hauser, miembro del equipo líder de CLF, nos invitó a nombrar lo que nos da alegría y nos ayuda a sobrellevar estos tiempos tan difíciles. Algunos de nosotros nombramos actividades creativas, y otros nombramos la importancia de nuestras familias; lo que quedó muy claro en nuestra conversación es que la alegría comunal, y el poder compartirla, es un ingrediente fundamental para generar resiliencia en estos tiempos de apocalipsis lenta.

La Iglesia de la Gran Comunidad es exactamente eso: una gran comunidad compuesta de otras comunidades más pequeñas, todas con personas conectadas y comprometidas a recordarnos los unos a los otros que juntos somos más, que podemos tomar turnos en la resistencia, que al cultivar y crecer la alegría comunal estamos ayudándonos a mantener la fuerza y el enfoque hacia la liberación y la transformación de todas las personas y todas las instituciones.

Una de las tareas del Comité de Nombramiento es ayudar a mantener un liderazgo comunal que es fuerte y vital. El Com Nom (nuestra abreviación cariñosa) sabe que el equipo líder y el personal que trabaja en nuestra iglesia necesitan la alegría y la energía y el entusiasmo de nuestros muchos líderes en esta gran comunidad, para co-crear nuestro futuro. ¿Te ayuda esta Iglesia de la Gran Comunidad a crecer tu alegría y mantener tu compromiso

a la liberación? ¿Te gustaría unirte a los equipos de liderazgo que también están comprometidos a este cambio?

El Comité de Nombramiento busca a individuos que ya son activos en nuestra gran comunidad y que quieren asistir en nuestros esfuerzos de ministerio, gobernanza y cambio. Específicamente, buscamos a gente que tiene la habilidad de aparear los dones naturales de las personas con oportunidades para contribuir, y que entienden que este comité juega un papel importante al crecer el círculo de cuidado y atención en nuestra comunidad.

También buscamos a individuos que les interesa ofrecer sus habilidades en la Junta Directiva, y que ya tienen una profunda conexión al Universalismo Unitario. La Junta Directiva y el Comité de Nombramiento están conduciendo una búsqueda explícita de miembros de la Iglesia de la Gran Comunidad que tienen experiencia directa (en persona o en familia cercana) con el sistema de encarcelamiento. Deseamos seguir explorando oportunidades de liderazgo en particular para esos miembros.

Déjenos saber si tú o algún conocido tiene/n interés en este tipo de contribución a nuestra comunidad. Manda un email a nominating@clfuu.org con el tema "Interés en la Junta Directiva/Comité" y haznos saber a quien debemos invitar, o siquieres recibir más información. ¡Gracias!

*The CLF Nominating Committee:
Michele Grove, Gail Forsyth-Vail,
Debra Gray Boyd, and Julica Hermann
de la Fuente*

Remembering // Recordando

REV. DR. MICHAEL TINO

Lead Ministry Team, Church of the Larger Fellowship

One of the annual events we recognize every November is the Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDOR). It is a somber day as we recognize that transphobia all too often ends with violence towards

our siblings. At the time of writing, since October 1, 2011, some 367 transgender people have been killed in incidents of anti-trans* violence all around the world.

As we mourn these beautiful people and name their unnecessary deaths, we also recommit ourselves to building a world where every person, of

every gender identity and expression, understands their inherent worth and dignity. Where every person is known as beautiful and whole and given the opportunity for their authentic self to shine bright.

On this day of sadness, beloved, please know that you are loved for exactly who you are.

Uno de los eventos anuales que reconocemos cada noviembre es el Día del Recuerdo Transgénero (TDOR, por sus siglas en inglés). Es un día sombrío porque reconocemos que la transfobia con demasiada frecuencia termina en violencia hacia nuestros hermanos. Al momento de redactar este informe, desde el 1 de octubre de 2011 a la

fecha, unas 367 personas transgénero han muerto en incidentes de violencia anti-trans* en todo el mundo.

Mientras lloramos a estas hermosas personas y nombramos sus muertes innecesarias, también nos volvemos a comprometer a construir un mundo donde cada persona, de cada identidad

y expresión de género, comprenda su valor y dignidad inherentes, donde cada persona es reconocida como bella y completa y donde se le da la oportunidad de que su yo auténtico brille.

En este día de tristeza, amados, sepan que son amados exactamente por quienes son. ■

FOR YOUR REFLECTION

In this section, we offer questions for reflection based on ideas explored in this issue. You may wish to explore it individually or as part of a group discussion. To submit your reflection for possible inclusion in a future issue of Quest, tear off your answer and mail it back to us using the envelope included in the middle of this issue, or mail a longer reflection separately.

- I'd like to be contacted to find out more about joining the CLF leadership team

Here's a bit about me and why I'm interested in serving CLF:



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- Me gustaría recibir más información para apoyar los esfuerzos de liderazgo en la Iglesia de la Gran Comunidad.

Aquí incluyo un poco acerca de mí y porque me interesa ayudar: