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Sweet, Sweet Justice: Maple Syrup and the Call to Serve

Evans Lodge, ABSL Natural Sciences & Math

For the past two years, the Outdoor Recreation/Creation Care floor on 1st van Reken has spent roughly a month each spring carrying out the ambitious, outlandish plan to tap sugar maples across Calvin’s campus in order to produce maple syrup. This effort is the brainchild of Environmental Studies professor Jamie Skillen, a veteran syrup-maker and avid Sugar Maple Research enthusiast. If you’ve ever wandered your way to the north side of campus in the early spring, you’ve probably noticed a group of large white barrels standing outside of the west door to van Reken. You’ve probably seen white, 5-gallon buckets connected to trees all over campus. You’ve probably smelled fire on the weekends emanating from an enormous metal evaporator



Students evaporate maple syrup late into the night outside van Reken hall.

set up near the van Reken bike racks. But why? Why go to all the trouble?

The maple syrup project sticks in my mind as one of the best ways that we have to get students and faculty from all over campus interested in the conversation that 1st van Reken hopes to promote.

Why do we do it? We do it because we care. We care about creation, the natural world that supports and sustains us, and we want to find and practice methods of harvest that respect and provide for our own needs without significantly degrading the beauty of the environment on which we rely. The idea of creation care is as varied and many-headed as the conversation surrounding justice, but the connections between them are many. Through the simplicity of a project like making maple syrup, students and faculty alike can dig deeper into questions addressing the ways we use and consume the world around us. How do we feed ourselves without starving



others, the trees included? We are part of the ecosystem in which we survive, responsible not only for the flourishing of humanity but the flourishing of all.

Stewardship implies more than self-care; it demands a focus outward on all of creation, not just the parts that look and think like ourselves. And while it’s impossible to hope for perfect success while chasing after justice, we certainly can’t stop trying, stop seeking small victories in a battle too big for us to fully observe. Those small victories, however insignificant they may seem, point to a picture much bigger than our own. They point to *true* justice, to justice under the Lord. And that justice... That justice is sweet.



The Service-Learning Center Staff Fall 2013

Staff Covenant

We practice resurrection;
we don't know what will be.

With joy, we commit to:
Fostering a community that
values

Individuality,
Cultivating conversation and
Imagination,

Honoring the progress of
Small steps and unhistoric acts,
Seeking justice within God's
Improbable grace.

We don't know what will be;
we practice resurrection.



Back Row: Noah Kruis, Allysa Metzner,
Tonisha Begay, Briella Cumings

Middle Row: Nic Scobey, Megan Kruis, Katie Van Zanen,
Derek Buursma, Nikita Miner

Front Row: Jessica Hess, Jeff Bouman, Jeff Brown, Virginia Lodge,
Evans Lodge, Kelsey Stark

In the student's words...

What does practicing resurrection mean to you?

Evans Lodge, ABSL Natural Sciences & Math: While writing our covenant we searched long and hard for something to counterbalance, "We practice resurrection," looking carefully for a phrase that recognizes the uncertainty that comes implicit in faith. It isn't that I don't want to practice resurrection or am completely incapable of ever doing so; the issue is that I'm not sure what it even looks like. Hence, "we don't know what will be." I shuffle between the two on a daily basis, at times feeling absolutely rooted in the truth of Christ and his resurrection while at others feeling completely isolated and alone, stuck in a system that emphasizes doubt and uncertainty above all. But resurrection remains even when I can't see it, and that's the beauty of it all.

Katie Van Zanen, 50th Anniversary Research and Projects: Practicing resurrection makes hope a liturgical habit. Together we seek out and seek to foster new life, over and over, again and again, living beautifully in the face of all that is wrong in the world.

What is your favorite part about working on staff?

Jessica Hess, Transportation Coordinator: I love each day's richness. I have never experienced a place more filled with genuine laughter, frustration, empathy, and hope. The people here pour their whole selves into every discussion and task, and a day never passes where I don't feel I have grown because of this community."

Briella Cumings, ABSL Coordinator, Language, Literature and the Arts: DEFINITELY the relationships. The S-LC is more than an office, it's a place where great friendships are formed. With these relationships, I know that I can come into the office, bring up a current issue, and everyone is eager to take part in the conversation.

A 50-Year Legacy of Service-Learning

Katie VanZanen, 50th Anniversary Research and Projects

1964

“I feel like Calvin is all about being present, being present in your society and being present in your life and being a servant of God in whatever you do... It’s just like—I offer my heart promptly and sincerely; ‘I’m here to serve and I’m here to give and do because I have this connection to God.’ And the Service-Learning Center can be the hands and feet of that,” says Deborah Walker, ’05, who returned to Calvin this summer to share stories of her chapter in the Service-Learning Center’s legacy.

The S-LC’s fiftieth anniversary, to be celebrated in 2014, occasions reflection and story-telling. Alumni have spoken specifically about the ‘family feel’ of the Service-Learning Center. When she joined the staff in 2003, Katie Timmermans Brower ’06 recalls thinking, “I have found people who want to talk about these things that I’m thinking about, who want to learn how to engage and be a good member of a community. It felt like a home.” Rich relationships and thoughtful dialogue have characterized the S-LC since 1964, when it carried another name.

When KIDS (Kindling Intellectual Desire in Students) kicked off, Calvin occupied the Franklin St. campus. KIDS began as a tutoring program connecting Calvin students and Sigsbee School in Eastown, but it quickly took off. In 1967, a full-time director was hired, and the opportunities expanded. The name changed to Student Volunteer Service to reflect broader services. In the 1990s, service-learning found its name and its way into the classroom. Professors began to use service-learning as a teaching tool, and SVS became the Service-Learning Center.

The S-LC has become more and more a part of Calvin College, and a larger and larger family over the past half-century. Service-Learning is now a key component of the Calvin experience, from Streetfest to Academically-Based Service-Learning and Residence Hall Partnerships. “We went from this kind of narrow view of what service-learning could entail, to looking at service-learning as something that fits every field,” says Lisa Dekker, ’98. Service-Learning Center alumni testify to this as they serve and learn all over the world, offering hearts, hands, and feet promptly and sincerely.



November 14th, 1970, KIDS received “The Outstanding Volunteer Award” from The State of Michigan.

2014



Stepping Out: StreetFest 2013

Nic Scobey, StreetFest Coordinator and Spring Break Trip Coordinator



Below are selected comments from Nic Scobey's morning message to first year students on August 29th, 2013.

The theme for this year's StreetFest was "Stepping Out: Loving the city, Learning from neighbors, Living the call." This theme references Matthew 14:22-33 when the disciple Peter sees Jesus walking on the water.

First, we find that Jesus did not *command* Peter to get out of the boat; he *invited* him to step out. In the same way, God may offer you many opportunities to "Step Out," but he probably won't force you to move. An essential part of "Stepping Out" is your reaction. God may put you in circumstances that

are out of your control and make you uncomfortable, but He will not control your response. If we want God's will to be done, we need to be ready to move our feet when He asks us.

Second, we must recognize that "Stepping Out" is not comfortable or easy. When I picture the imagery of this story, I can't imagine that Peter just joyfully hopped out of the boat and onto the water. I expect that his "Stepping Out" was an internal battle full of tension and fear. "Stepping Out" requires a great deal of faith: it involves not knowing what lies before us and understanding that we serve a God who is in complete control and has the power to pick us up when we sink. Through all circumstances, we must be willing to move our feet, and to not let our fear dictate our movements.

Third, and finally, we must remember that we are walking *with* God. As we practice "Stepping Out," we have the privilege of joining God as he furthers his kingdom here on earth. We have the marvelous opportunity to work with a God who makes us stewards over the land, animals, and ourselves. We cannot do any of this work without Him, but He also doesn't want to do it by Himself. "Stepping Out" should be uncomfortable. Don't be afraid to ask questions, to challenge the way things are, and to make a mess of things we think are fine. God has *invited* us to do this: so go on!



Giving to the Service-Learning Center

Since 2003, the Service-Learning Center at Calvin College has been building an endowment of its own at the Grand Rapids Community Foundation. Begun with generous support from the State of Michigan, this fund enabled donors who wanted another way to support Calvin College. Thanks to your generous contributions, the endowment fund reached \$50,000 in 2012. We may now access usable interest which will contribute to the growth of vital Service-Learning Center programs. What does this mean for you and for the Service-Learning Center? Your current and future gifts to the S-LC can now be made directly to Calvin College. Simply indicate you would like the gift to be designated for the S-LC in the check memo line, or via online designation. These gifts will be added to the useable interest from the endowment fund to enable programs like Spring Break Trips, StreetFest, and a variety of academically-based service-learning projects to flourish.

If you are interested in giving to the S-LC please donate on-line at www.calvin.edu/support

President Le Roy: Thoughts On StreetFest

During this year's StreetFest, President Michael Le Roy participated along with students, visiting various sites and serving within the Creston Neighborhood.



S-LC: What have you learned about Grand Raids through StreetFest?

ML: Grand Rapids is a city of neighborhoods and during my first two years with StreetFest I have learned a great deal about the vitality of civic organizations in the city. I am reminded of the challenges of poverty, brokenness, and alienation that are present around us every day. I also confess that the circles I live in every day isolate me from these realities and lead me to forget my neighbors. As I listen and learn from community leaders and neighbors I walk away from these experiences feeling convicted about my need to love my neighbors and hopeful about the inspiring service provided by community leaders, organizers, teachers, and public servants in Grand Rapids.

S-LC: Why do you feel being a part of the StreetFest experience is important?

ML: When asked about the most important commandments Jesus responds by reminding his inquirer of the commandments to love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength and to love your neighbor as you love yourself. In my busy life I confess that I don't stop to think of my neighbors often enough, and I certainly don't love them as directly as I ought. In fact, we can't love what we don't know. The point of this second commandment is a call to a relationship with our neighbors. This year I spent time learning more about the Creston neighborhood and the great community work happening there. Now when I drive through this neighborhood I picture the people and the activities I witnessed during Street Fest.

S-LC: What purpose do you think StreetFest plays in student orientation?

ML: Calvin College is not just a destination, but it is situated in a social context. StreetFest provides a welcome and a handshake offered to our students from the people of Grand Rapids. I hope it serves to invite students into the community as respectful citizens and neighbors who will also begin to learn what it means to have civic and social obligations to others. Democracy in America relies on citizens who believe they have obligations to their neighbors and these obligations are the deep roots necessary if we are to have a thriving and healthy community.



President LeRoy visited Creston Community Gardens with staff mentor and Creston resident Greg Veltman.



Who is My Neighbor?

Musings on Christian Higher Education and the Solidarity of the Vulnerable.

Jeff Bouman, Director of the Service-Learning Center

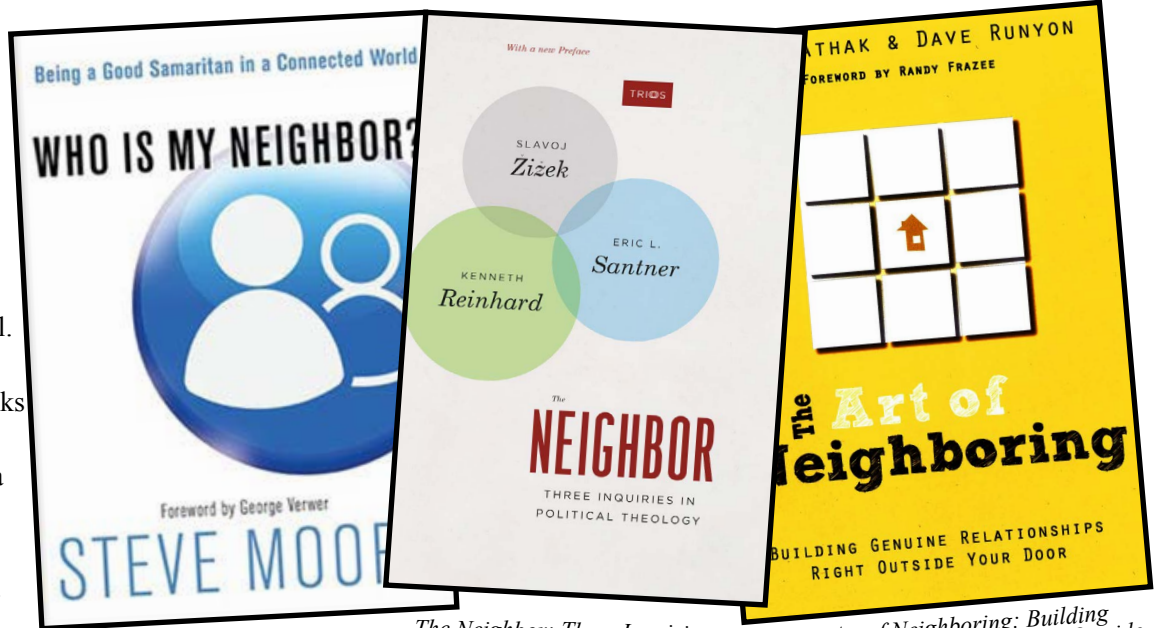
The first rule of a good neighbor is to keep your sidewalks shoveled clear of snow in the wintertime. This is my hard and fast rule. Pay attention to this rule, and you will know what it means to “neighbor” well. The fundamental rule is that a good neighbor thinks of others first, and acts on that thinking. Being a good neighbor is a corollary of the golden rule - treat others as you would have them treat you.

Three books I read this past summer delve deeply into the art of

neighboring, and how the question of the neighbor has been complicated by the horrors of the twentieth century. Each derives its fundamental question from the Biblical injunction to love our neighbors as ourselves found in Leviticus 19:18 and repeated in Matthew 22:38-40:

“You shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.” (NIV) The three different books make different assumptions about neighbors and neighborhoods. Pathak and Runyon work on the basic assumption that neighbors all live in plotted subdivisions in American suburbs, complete with garages and grills, Little Leagues and grass. Moore writes on the premise that the world is a global village shared by rich and ultra-poor alike with many opportunities to love neighbors with the good news of the gospel. And Reinhard, Santner, and Žižek write mindful of the neighborhood of philosophers and theologians who wrestle with the massive human questions that have resulted from the bloody and inhumane atrocities committed within the human community, particularly in the twentieth century.

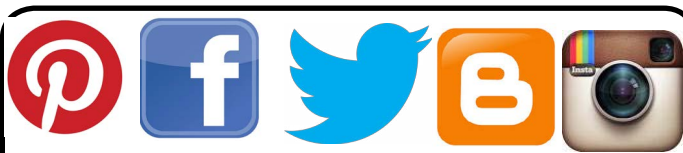
Whether in a suburban American context, a mission field, or in the context of the brutalities of man’s inhumanity to man (think Poland, Argentina, the American South, Somalia, Rwanda, Syria and many others), loving neighbors through service-learning provides an opportunity for Calvin College students to put this command into practice.



Who is My Neighbor? Being a Good Samaritan in a Connected World, Steve Moore, 2010, NavPress

The Neighbor: Three Inquiries in Political Theology. Slavoj Žižek, Eric Santner & Kenneth Reinhard, 2005, University of Chicago Press

The Art of Neighboring: Building Genuine Relationships Right Outside Your Door, Jay Pathak and Dave Runyon, 2012, Baker Books



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September Blood Drive Results!
Pints Collected = 176 Total attempts = 286

Service-Learning Goes International

Derek Buursma, International Service-Learning Coordinator

I love the simple eloquence of Calvin's mission "to do God's work in God's world." This profound phrase exists among a plethora of Calvin buzzwords, but what do these statements truly mean, how are they lived out? Through the McGregor Summer Research Fellowship program, this past summer, I had the unique opportunity to explore how Calvin students studying abroad are seeking shalom, and acting as agents of renewal in and around the world through International Service-Learning (ISL).

As a McGregor Fellow, I researched ISL guided by two intentional and thoughtful mentors, Don De Graaf, the director of Calvin's Off-Campus programs and Jeff Bouman, the Director of the Service-Learning Center. As the two directors have explored ways in which the experiential pedagogies of study abroad and service learning intersect, service-learning pedagogy has been included in the curriculum of four off-campus semester programs: Ghana, Honduras, Hungary, and Peru. Organically developing within the unique context of each host country, ISL has been implemented as ethnographic studies, practicum internships, and course-specific academically based service-learning. Our research sought to discover the challenges and opportunities of each distinct semester program, critically examining the benefits and outcomes of ISL placements from the student's perspective, to intentionally develop curricular resources, training material, and assessment tools to be used by program directors and staff.

Throughout the summer I engaged in conversations with faculty and students, hearing how they have attempted to improve the learning experience for students. I learned of the eye-opening opportunities



Calvin students in Honduras served and learned by running a week long soccer camp.

students had to research water filter effectiveness in Honduran communities, teach English in schools throughout Budapest, study small business development in Ghana, and walk through physical therapy with students who have disabilities in Peruvian clinics. We thoughtfully considered the various experiences and perspectives in light of the existing ISL literature, to create resources equipping faculty and students to develop reciprocal relationships, inspire intercultural wonderment, ensure appropriate reflection, and support incisive evaluation. Doing God's work in God's world is never predictable or perfect, but in faithful expectation of God's coming kingdom we seek shalom around the corner and across the globe.

Spring Break Trip Preview

Kermit, WV – Coal Mining and Appalachian Culture
Mendenhall, MS – Social and Racial Reconciliation
Knoxville, TN – At-Risk Adolescents
Three Rivers, MI – Food, Community and Creativity
Houma, LA – Ministry among Marginalized People in Cycles of Poverty and Storm Damage
Mobile, AL – Adults with Intellectual Disabilities

Grand Isle, LA: Ministry in a Hurricane-Prone Coastal Community
Americus, GA – Farming and Intentional Christian Community
Jackson, MS – Christian Community Development
Pittsburgh, PA – Urban Community Development
Chicago, IL – Racial Reconciliation and Poverty Alleviation



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Celebrating 50 Years on June 7th!

To find stories and more information,
follow the link below:

www.calvin.edu/slc/50th-anniversary.html

