

Creative Servants

The theater school students continue to be very excited about ministering to their peers. One InterVarsity student, Maggie, is a playwright — and her play was chosen to be read dramatically during “Wrights of Spring,” an annual DePaul Theatre School event. Our chapter threw a reception for her after the reading. Everyone signed up to bring something, and we went early to the Theatre School and decorated the room with streamers and balloons. After the show, most of the audience joined us. I kept hearing people ask, “who put all of this together?” All of the students enjoyed being able to serve in this way, living out the gospel as we blessed Maggie and her creative abilities.



My family group from Orientation for New Staff. (See the back page.)

Psalms & Hymns

Thank you for your prayers as I led worship at Cedar Campus in May. InterVarsity has been intentionally developing “multi-ethnic worship” resources for our conferences, and so I had the privilege of teaching students songs from various traditions: Gospel songs, Spanish songs, hymns (with parts!), an

African song, and several others. This is my music education degree at work! One of my favorite moments was near the end of the week: we sang a Gospel song from the African-American tradition, complete with a terrific student soloist, a three-person back-up choir, and a trio of women who taught us sign language that matched the words of the song. Next up: worship-leading at Winterfest in February 2004.

Shelf Life

Book Notes from Ann

Holy Listening: The Art of Spiritual Direction by Margaret Guenther

A friend at church recently approached me about being her spiritual director. So I asked my own spiritual director, “What can I read on this topic?” Guenther has incredible insights into the process of spiritual growth — which is enriching to me both as I prepare for another year on campus and as I venture into spiritual direction. One of my favorite nuggets of wisdom from Guenther: “a good teacher encourages play.” She goes on to describe how play,

in its “holy uselessness,” gives us freedom to experiment with a variety of ways to encounter God. She writes: “We are freed from our compulsion for right answers, freed from the need to acquire and achieve, freed from anxiety by the transitory nature of play.” Isn’t God amazing? He longs to meet with us in Scripture, in service — and in the garden, in drawing, and knitting!

Boyd’s Eye View

On Memorial Day, my good friend Linda came over and taught me a few things about gardening. We planted hundreds of petunias and begonias all around our backyard, and even a couple tomato plants. It is amazing to watch them grow — our little tomatoes were just a few inches high, and now they are almost as tall as I am! Jon is a dedicated waterer and nurturer. The other day he was just sitting near the tomato plants. When I asked him what he was doing, he replied, “Talking with the tomatoes.” Isn’t he cute?

Other highlights from the past few months: making a pink skirt with my birthday sewing machine (with the help of faithful tutor Lindsay), visiting Jon’s brother and sister-in-law in Washington, D.C., over the 4th of July weekend (and feeling truly warm enough for the first time this year), and watching the six-hour BBC version of *Pride and Prejudice* with friends.

Prayer Requests

Please pray:

- ☛ for the theater students, as they reach out to their peers.
- ☛ for my preparation as worship leader for Winterfest 2004
- ☛ for me as I seek to “abide in the vine.” (See the back page.)
- ☛ for the DePaul chapter’s time at Cedar Campus, August 16-23

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Extra! Extra! Gardening Gets Real

I had the surprise privilege of serving as program staff for InterVarsity's Orientation for New Staff program in Madison this June. During the 10-day program, I led a small group of eight new staffworkers from all over the country — pastoring them through training in fund development, personal spiritual growth, evangelism, multi-ethnicity, and a host of other topics. I was amazed by how much God refreshed me during this time of training! The schedule was quite full, but I heard God's voice clearly speaking to me through the content.

On one night in particular, a staffworker from California gave a talk entitled: "The Abiding Staffworker." We looked at Jesus' words in John 15: "Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me." The speaker brought out baskets of grapes — some real, some plastic — and we talked about the differences between them.

The plastic fruit isn't inherently bad or unappealing — it is just not real. It was produced in a factory, year-round, by machines, with goals to increase production and improve performance. In the end, people look at the fruit and say, "wow, they really figured out how to make realistic-looking grapes!"

The real fruit is juicy and nutritious. It was grown outdoors to receive the necessary sunshine and rain. The vines need to be pruned in order stay healthy. The fruit comes seasonally — there are times when the vines are dormant and we must wait. The vines don't strive to squeeze out the fruit, but the fruit grows on them because they are grape vines — it flows out of their identity. In the end, people look at the grapes and eat them

and say, "Wow, isn't it amazing that God created grapes?"

Now, this is not a new Scripture for me — I love studying John 15 and have taught it several times. But God spoke to me clearly from this text. We are called to be abiding staffworkers, not factories — thanks be to God! I have struggled often over the years with the small size of our chapter. "God, why have we not been growing more in numbers?" While this is still a real question I ask, I am reassured that God is the gardener — he is the one who is responsible to care for our plants and for the fruit. It is my job not to try to turn into a factory. (As you can imagine, all of this gardening imagery was really hitting home with my newly acquired gardening skills!)

One particular suggestion from this talk was to regularly take a few hours to pray over the tasks for the week, and to listen for God's guidance in them. I want to implement this into my life — and I write this knowing that I will sometimes fail, but also knowing that expressing this publicly will help me to be more faithful in setting this time aside. I am longing to hear God's guidance more clearly for this ministry! May he be gracious to me as I wait for his voice.

For Christ & the University —

Ann

P.S. As always, there's more online at www.annagram.org. This issue's Web Only Extra: "On Book, Off Book."

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