



Her Fleeting Heart Red by Jeffrey Fulmer, Lima, Perú

Faded blue-gray walls watch over a lifeless little body sprawled across bloodstained sheets and a tired old mattress. It smells of latex gloves and four-day-old stale socks in this four-cornered hospital room where minutes and hours seem insignificant. Time seems to stand still in this living silence. In this room, the world only exists within the brittle bony legs of this girl that adorns this old mattress. The world only beats within her fleeting heart red.

It is an awkward entrance for me into this silent space. Honestly, I am frightened. Although I have visited the Infectology wing before in the Hospital de Niños here in Lima, Perú, this new experience is of a different sort. I have seen premature babies and young boys and girls recovering from rare illnesses with their mothers by their sides, but this is the first scent of human decay. This is the first time I am looking at the raw soul in transition from this world to another.

I sit on a footstool at the end of the bed. I am at eyelevel with the feeding tube inserted into

“Time seems to stand still in this living silence. In this room, the world only exists within the brittle, bony legs of this girl that adorns this old mattress.”

the base of her innocent ankle. Gloria, the volunteer, tells me that the girl’s arms are too depleted to be able to receive the tubes as normal. The veins are too weak.

I have met Gloria before. She is a lively, older woman with the magnetic energy of a volcano. She has visited La Posadita where I have been working for the last few months with children who have been infected with the HIV virus, the same illness that lurks within this hospital room as we speak. Gloria has dedicated herself to these children, loving them as her own.

Suddenly the girl turns my way and meets my eyes for a glance, but she does not stay with me long. I smile an uneasy smile. She turns away and falls back into her pain with a fitting moan; eyes plunging to the back of her head.



Jeff with children at La Posadita, an AIDS hospice in Lima, Perú.

“She is a simple servant this Gloria. This sixty-something woman dedicated to one simple chore—easing the pain of another.”

"Her head is in constant pain, like one eternal migraine," mentions Gloria, while sweetly caressing the forehead of the young girl. She makes simple strokes across her hair and face, reminding me for some reason of Veronica wiping the bloody face of Jesus en route to his own death.



Jeff Fulmer
GSV in Perú

Another piercing moan. Gloria is there to shift the girl’s limp body a little more to the middle of the bed. She is a simple servant this Gloria. This sixty something-year-old woman dedicated to one simple chore - easing the pain of another. She is teaching me a great lesson today about simplicity, about simple living. Something about reaching out to somebody, anybody, with what you have to offer them - your time, patience, understanding, your touch.

The footstool transforms into a classroom desk for me. I follow the lead of my instructor and reach out my turbulent hand to the fever-blown forehead of this little child. I tuck her hair behind her left ear and wipe her sweat, just maybe easing a piece of her pain. I feel honored with this work. To be allowed to touch another’s pain is a gift to me. It humbles the worries of my past and hushes the fantastic dreams for my future. Time does not exist for this moment. And it would be an insult to this little hurting life if it did.

I stand up and say goodbye to Gloria. She smiles. I walk gently towards the door and raise my hand in one last farewell, and stepping into the hallway, I hear the clock begin its work again.

Embrace the
World...

Good Shepherd
Volunteers
Mission Statement

Good Shepherd
Volunteers is a service
association

of women and men
which exists to express

the gospel values of the

Good Shepherd in
today's world.

The Sisters of the Good
Shepherd and

the volunteers share
the same work and

values in this
collaborative project.

The basic elements of
the GSV philosophy are

exploration of simple
living, working towards

social justice, the

development of

community bonds, and

attentiveness to the
spirit.

From the Director

Dear Friends,

The Good Shepherd Volunteers have welcomed the New Year with great enthusiasm and commitment. They continue to make a quiet but important commitment to youth and families in need with programs sponsored by the Sisters of the Good Shepherd across the USA and in South America. On the winter retreat, they were able to explore their understanding of social justice with Nancy Small, former Pax Christi USA Coordinator, who presented the theme "Justice as Right Relationship".

They also had an opportunity to put their faith into action by participating in the rally to close the School of the Americas in Ft. Benning, Georgia. There, they stood with thousands of concerned people to give voice to the disappeared and murdered individuals of Latin America. They are also giving

expression to justice by managing sales for the Global Women's Exchange, a fair trade initiative sponsored by the Sisters of the Good Shepherd to give women a dignified source of income.

Also, this year, in the office, we are excited about new placements in Philadelphia and Mexico.

We invite all of our readers to journey with our GSV as they reflect on the words of St. Mary Euphrasia: "If we cannot accomplish great things, let us be content with doing a little". In their everyday, very busy schedules with Commitments, they are engaged in doing what seems to be small drops in a large bucket of overwhelming needs, but they are active with their whole hearts and souls in doing each of their responsibilities with great meaning.

Peace,
Maureen



Living in Community

Written by Sara Schell, who lives in community with
the Jubilee Ministry Volunteers in Washington DC

I have quickly discovered while living in my DC community that *community*, or should I say *intentional community*, is not simply a place where space is shared, but rather it is a place where you meet yourself and learn the true meaning of love. God is the catalyst for such awesome and sometimes painful revelations. It is of no surprise to me that He is the source of these lucid moments and spiritual transformations, yet the experiences with which He chooses to mold me have caught me off guard. I have had no "burning bush" experiences. Rather, God has revealed Himself and my *true* self through my everyday relationships with my community members. Here, I am challenged in little ways to offer gifts of self-denial for the good of the community.

For instance, I take the time to walk behind my community because I tend to walk too fast, which would inevitably distance me from the others. Our "cook" for any particular evening graciously takes extra care to create a wonderful meal that will allow the gluten intolerant, vegan enthusiast, and meat lover to comfortably fill his or her tummy while sharing precious fellowship.



The DC Community and support staff

Though these simple "little" moments do not have the allure of a "burning bush" they do have the potential to become pure self-abandoning acts of love. Intentional community focuses our attention on these "little" acts of love that transform. Thus, it is here that I am called, for it is here I become less of me and more of God.

Alumni Corner

Over the many years former GSV has spoken about how they could remain “connected” to Good Shepherd from where they live. Others have asked how they could be involved. These are wonderful and challenging questions that seem rooted in a desire to explore the deeper understanding of the mission and values of Good Shepherd after the time of service is over.

In an attempt to respond to the questions, we will be setting up some listening sessions with former GSV to hear what this means for you. We have begun this discussion, with a wonderfully creative dialogue in November with GSV alumni in LA. It left us all with a stronger sense of what the Good Shepherd experience has been and continues to be for them.

Watch for an invitation for a gathering in your area.

Please verify your contact information with Sita:
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Embracing Social Justice

On November 21, 2003 the Good Shepherd Volunteers embarked on a three-day pilgrimage to Ft. Benning, Georgia to protest the now known as Western Hemispheric Institute for Security Cooperation, formerly named SOA. Rallying for the closure of the SOA, GSVs gathered with peace activists from across the USA and Latin America. Those gathered remembered the victims who died at the hands of SOA-trained soldiers, they were “presenté” in spirit and memory. They will always be with us.



Peter Markovics and Judith Widmer at the gate of the SOA



¡No más violencia!



GSVs at the SOA Protest

The Harmony Room by Sarah Faehnle, New York

Written early in the morning on New Year's Day at Euphrasian Residence, a short-term diagnostic residential center for girls ages 12-16.

It's amazing that we would find you here
or amazing that we wouldn't.
It takes the light through a window
streaming out into a little room meant to contain
the private tears and would-be punches
in the wall.

The windows here are clouded
as if some malicious builder of years past
decreed the literal sunshine may not enter
the lives of these girls
because the other kind seldom does.
So it may be a beautiful sky
but the windows paint it the darkest,
rainiest gray.
If they didn't go outside -and a few rarely do-
they might not know what sunshine is.

Except for this little room
with no door
and an emergency buzzer
and stained chairs
and crumpled-up notebook paper with the beginnings
of beautiful misspelled poems in the vernaculest
vernacular,
written by those who come in here to grieve
to hide
to get away with things

They are all asleep now
so they did not see the miracle of sun
streaming determinedly through this window,
the warm expanding light
that spread soft yellow across a patch of floor in the hall-
way
next to the box of unsterile sharp white angular light
coming from the open toilet
room across the hall.

It came in straight
no wavering
direct horizontal
eye level
unabashedly.

This Light that
not the malicious New York builder
not the staff who are too tired
not the teachers that don't listen
not the System with its capital S
not the judges that don't understand
not the drugs who bleed wounds
not even the mothers and fathers who greedy injured lost
incapable merciless
withhold all love from their daughters
can prevent from streaming in
warm and sideways
filling the room to overflowing with soft
spilling out into the lonely institution hallway
while they are still sleeping.



Sarah Faehnle

Change

 by Judith Widmer, New Jersey

I did not know about the personal challenges that volunteering at an alternative high school would bring, nor did I realize how humbling the experience would be for me. The stories of the students at Collier High School are moving. Being a teenager can bring many twists and turns, but that these teenagers have special needs makes their stories all the more compelling.

Recently, I heard a story, which reflects how I see and feel about my work at Collier High School. One day, a wise old man was walking along the shore and as he looked down the beach he saw a young man reaching down and picking up small objects and throwing them into the ocean. As he came closer he asked what it was he was doing. The young man paused and replied "throwing starfish into the ocean". "Why are you throwing starfish into the ocean?" the old man asked.

To this the young man replied, "The sun is up and the tide is going out. If I don't throw the starfish back in they will die". The old man commented that there were miles of beach and there are starfish all along the miles. Then he added, "You can't possibly make a difference to all of them." The young man bent down, picked up yet another starfish and threw it into the ocean. As it met the water the young man said, "It made a difference for that one".

In many ways, our students are the starfish and are open to transformation as long as there are people who show them love and respect. I am grateful to be able to support each student and privileged to help bring him or her "back into the water", making a difference in their life. I am happy to see the changes that happen and can see God at work in this transformation. I have deep regard for all the people who are involved in the work at Collier. While my role may seem small, I see how it works in the big picture. I am humbled and thankful to be able to reach out and make a small difference in the lives of each student.



Judith Widmer

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Embrace the World!
13 years of service

**Please let us know if
you have a change of
address or if a friend
or relative would like
to receive the
Shepherd Voice.**

GSV thanks you for your support.
The strength of GSV depends on the
generosity of our donors.

“If we cannot accomplish
great things, let us be content
with doing a little.”
St. Mary Euphrasia

