



**STARCROSS  
MONASTIC COMMUNITY**

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# Sharings

Summer 2014

## MAKING DO ON A STRANGE PLANET



There have been many deeply troubling things happening in our world this summer. But have you noticed that in a number of newspapers and in other media these things have been disappearing from the front page? I heard a political advisor explain that the American public has become “fatigued” by the apocalyptic events happening in the Middle East, Africa, Eastern Europe, Asia, Central America and even the plight of the poor in the USA. I get the feeling that the people we at Starcross are in contact with in one way or another are not in that “fatigue” group, letting nothing interfere with plans for a pleasant end of summer.

I admit that the closer these humanitarian tragedies come, the stronger the feelings. We've had friends who lost children and family in these conflicts. And anyone who is old enough knows that wars on the other side of the world impact us all. At the same time, I don't know anyone who doesn't have a sense of powerlessness.

Jump to our peaceful olive groves. I love them, so does everyone. But this year they are not the isolated oasis of last year. Now there is clear evidence that climate-warming has reduced the winter “chill-factor” and we will have very few olives to press this season. Oh, the same political consultant also said the whole 18-21 year-old-set has “climate-change fatigue.” If true that is pretty bad news for our olives!

An old friend who has spent her lifetime in the political halls effecting social change writes us with uncharacteristic sadness that the present situation is so fractured and dysfunctional that the only hope is “at the local level where it is still possible to begin to make a change.” And, THAT puts me in mind me of an ancient butterfly story!

You remember? When a butterfly on the other side of the world flutters its wings, the tiny breeze, in some unexplainable way, makes a wind that benefits the whole planet.

So let's start fluttering! Here that means little things like: *Sustainable use of the land, preserving a sanctuary of spirit and nature, finding ways to open our lives to those who want closer spiritual involvement, getting medical equipment for young health professionals we raised as orphans in East Africa, sharing food with the local hungry, using the internet to send out support and encouragement to an increasingly wide circle of friends on all spiritual paths....* Well, you get the idea.

Flutter away! Make a little breeze to cool down this overheated world of ours. It can't hurt! An occasional quiet time for prayer and meditation wouldn't hurt either. I am going to do that now — in the olive grove!

**Brother Toby**



## YOU MADE THIS POSSIBLE!

Who are these young people marching into Africa's future? We see them founding primary schools for poor children; installing computer systems across East Africa; investigating corruption for a large news organization; interpreting sign language on TV; attending medical school on full scholarship.

Do we know these people? We sure do! We have known them since they were frightened little children, alone in the world after their parents and relatives died in Uganda's horrible AIDS pandemic.

The 150 or so "Old Girls and Old Boys" who grew up at the Starcross Kin Worldwide HOUSE OF HOPE in Kampala had a loving home, nutritious food and access to education, lifting them out of poverty and despair.

Without exception, these responsible young adults are giving back to those less fortunate in their communities. Their accomplishments bring us great joy! They are family to each other and keep in touch with Sister Julie. The story goes on...

## AND HERE AT STARCROSS. . .

The abundance of the harvest has come, and we turn to apples, pears, tomatoes and all the other wonderful vegetables in the garden, and Christmas Wreaths. Wreaths? Yes. There are bows to be tied, supplies to be ordered, and many plans for getting wreaths made and shipped. It is hard to think of Christmas at this time of year, but our holiday sales of wreaths, fruit, books, (and usually olive oil, but not much this year due to global warming) are our biggest self-support. Except for donations, holiday sales make the most difference in our lives financially.

*So please remember to decorate your home with our beautiful wreaths, and send them as valued gifts to your friends.*

And speaking of donations, the response to our fund appeal this year was generous and appreciated, but less than usual. So if you have been thinking of sending a contribution, we would be very grateful.

Thank you! And many blessings.

*Sister Martí*



**BROTHER TOBY'S FRIDAY REFLECTIONS** started appearing 3 years ago at the request of friends. From our e-list they seem to be spreading into many households as friends forward them to others. Toby has been described as a "gentle spiritual explorer and storyteller who captures a sense of the sacred in nature and ordinary lives in a way that enriches the lives of people from many backgrounds and on many paths."

If you or a friend would like to receive them, just send your email address (which is never given out to anyone else!) to [community@starcross.org](mailto:community@starcross.org). They are also posted on our website at [www.starcross.org](http://www.starcross.org).



## A SANCTUARY FOR ALL



Starcross is a sanctuary. But what does that mean? Is it the front part of a church? Not here! From the moment we came here in 1976 we were aware that all this land is sacred space for nature and for people.

The suffix “-ary” refers to a container for keeping something in, and “sanct” is Latin for holy. A sanctuary is a source of help, relief, comfort and a shelter from danger or hardship. In a sanctuary a person is immune from harm while an animal or plant is protected from extinction. Sometimes the intense pressures of life threaten survival but within a sanctuary the functioning of a natural ecosystem can be maintained. There can be a peaceful respite. The Native Americans also sensed something special here and used this land for their annual festivals.

We often talk about our back 50 acres being “forever wild.” When we came here almost 40 years ago there was no concern about conservation. Now Redwoods are growing there. We see deer with their fawn. Many species of birds now make their home in that forest — I love the owls. Nowadays large commercial land use poses a real threat here and everywhere. All too often, as Wendell Berry wrote, “Our eyes can find no resting place.” We hope Starcross is and always will be a place where eyes can rest.

Our front 50 acres are a sanctuary for people —with orchards, gardens and housing. The beautiful organic olive groves are places of peace and rest. Young folks from around the world come to learn sustainable farming practices through the WWOOF program (*WorldWide Opportunities on Organic Farms*).

Unfortunately these sanctuaries for people and nature will probably become rarer in the future. The world needs sacred places. It is our privilege with your help to live here and serve as stewards of this special land.

*Sister Julie*



## HELPING YOU REMEMBER THOSE YOU LOVE

Liz Mullins, one of our valued Companions, recently joined us in the chapel for Vespers. She wrote this:



*Liz Mullins*

*“I sat in the serene chapel at Starcross recently, participating in the ancient rite of Vespers or Evensong. I thought of the deceased people whose names were read honoring them on this day the anniversary of their birth or death. I was touched to be there and to participate in this remembrance. I thought of my parents and other relatives who are in the Starcross Vespers Memorial Books. On their anniversary day in this lovely chapel, overlooking groves of olive trees, a universal symbol of peace throughout the world, they too will have their names read. I felt at peace.”*

We would be honored to remember your loved ones. Just send us the name, the date you would like us to remember them and a phrase or two about them, by mail or e-mail ([community@starcross.org](mailto:community@starcross.org)).

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Non-profit Org.  
Permit #20  
Santa Rosa, CA

- A Sanctuary for People and for Nature
- Cooling down over-heated times. A reflection by Brother Toby
- From AIDS orphans to Africa's leaders
- What is going on at Starcross in the next few months?
- Haiku/Pictures by Sister Marti

**SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2014**



## COMING UP AT STARCROSS

We hope that friends living in or visiting northern California will join us for these events.

*AUTUMN WIND*: Finding the spiritual in nature, haiku & other things! A day with Brother Toby. **Saturday, Sept. 27<sup>th</sup>, 10 am-4pm**

*OLIVE HARVEST* – Hand pick the fruit with us. Dates will depend on Mother Nature. Contact sister Julie ([sj@starcross.org](mailto:sj@starcross.org)) to be on the volunteer notification list. It is a great experience which has been going on for many centuries!

*CHRISTMAS FAIRE*: Country gifts (like our Apple Butter!), wreaths, dried fruit, books, lavender, tea and other good things. Taste the freshly pressed Olio Nuovo. **Saturday, November 29<sup>th</sup>, 9 am-5pm**

*WORLD AIDS DAY*: A meditative hour of remembrance. Candles are lit as we honor those who were lost in the AIDS pandemic. If you are unable to come, tell us and we will light a candle for you. **Monday, Dec. 1st, 3:30 - 5 pm.**

*MIDWINTER EVENSONG AND TEA*: Carols and poetry. **Saturday Dec. 20<sup>th</sup>, 3:30 - 5 pm**

If you need to stay over, there is limited space in the farmhouse. For more information, contact Sister Julie, [sj@starcross.org](mailto:sj@starcross.org).

**STARCROSS MONASTIC COMMUNITY** is a small independent and autonomous community of lay-people trying to live peaceful lives in the monastic tradition and offering encouragement and affirmation to gentle folk on all spiritual paths. Our home is in Sonoma County's coastal hills. We adopted and have been caregivers and advocates for children who have unique gifts and needs, most of whom were born HIV positive. We also support individual children around the world, and established HOUSES OF HOPE for children impacted by the AIDS pandemic in Romania and East Africa.