

# Greetings from OZ

13 July 2011



Do you know this native Australian plant?

“Let him [or her] who cannot be alone beware of community...  
Let him [or her] who is not in community beware of being alone.”  
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*



Someone asked us the other day, “So what’s so important about living in community?” The question came from a friend watching us work to get the new house ready at the 1643 Community. Our friend could not understand why we did not spend more time on ourselves. “You work too hard, you need to relax.”

Mark first read Bonhoeffer’s book *Life Together* in 1973 while living and working at Bear Trap Ranch, an Inter Varsity Christian Fellowship training centre in the Rocky Mountains outside Colorado Springs. It was his first experience of living in an intentional Christian community and one that has remained with him ever since.

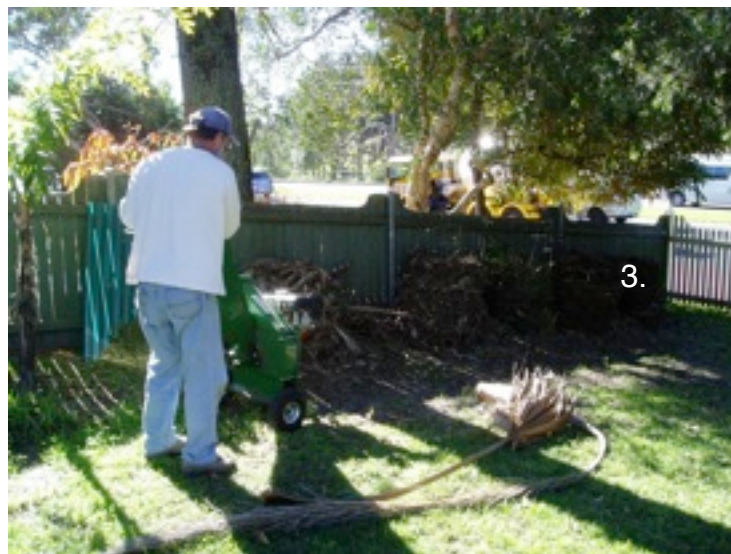
Bonhoeffer talks about different settings where we can experience “the gift of visible community” – visits from other Christians, letters of greeting, common worship on Sundays, the fellowship of Christian families, and living together while studying at seminary. He goes on to note:

*Among earnest Christians in the church today there is a growing desire to meet together with other Christians in the rest periods of their work for common life under the Word. Communal life is again being recognized by Christians today as the grace that it is, as the extraordinary, the ‘roses and lilies’ of the Christian life. (21)*

Bonhoeffer debunks any idea of community being utopian; he knows it is hard work. What draws people to community is not a common dream but a common faith and trust in the way of Jesus. He says it is a gift of grace to live out our discipleship with others.

David Augsburger says something similar in *Dissident Discipleship\** (p.66):

*We do not choose our companions, we receive them as gift; we cannot sort, select, and assemble our kind of people, they come to us by grace. Likeness eliminates challenge; uniformity reduces growth; sameness frustrates creativity.*



This reflecting on community comes, as six new people join us this week at 1643 Community – a single woman and a family of five. They will be living in the two units (apartments) downstairs in the new building. We are still praying for the right people to come and join us in the upstairs unit.

In a month’s time we will be the resource people for the annual retreat of several intentional communities around Melbourne, so the theme of living in community is on our minds. Before the

\*We are studying *Dissident Discipleship* at our monthly Table Fellowship gathering.

retreat, we will be visiting in Tasmania on behalf of the Anabaptist Association (AAANZ) and Mary will be doing some teaching on nonviolence at a TAFE (community college/ technical school).

We have been home over the last couple of months, spending time on the computer and phones with AAANZ members and pastoring Avalon Baptist Peace Memorial Church. We are working on several projects at church – a new website, community gardens, a craft night once a month, and developing a film night on the fifth Sunday evening in the months they occur. Our first film night is on the 24<sup>th</sup> (even though it is not the fifth Sunday of this month). We will be viewing a film on the conditions in the northern part of Australia for Aboriginal people living there. After the film, we will have a guest speaker address questions and soup and bread will be served. The film nights are open to the public and we anticipate a full house.

We should be home from mid-August until we head north to Queensland in October. We want to use that time helping the new folks settle in at 1643 and



pastoring in Avalon. For the first time since we moved into our home at 1643, major construction of one form or another will not be taking place. Getting settled into some kind of routine will be a strange experience for us. Maybe we can even slow down and relax with our friend and discuss what community is all about.

Shalom,  
*Mary and Mark Hurst*  
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1. We just planted a Lilly Pilly hedge along the street. It's new leaves are pink to burgundy in color but change to glossy green as they age.
2. The view of the new hedge in front of the new house.
3. Mark using the mulcher to add carbon elements to the mulch bins to the right.
4. Friday night community meal, a few folks are missing.
5. Nasturtiums may be annuals in North America but they grow year round and like weeds here.
6. We garden for our elderly neighbors. These are a few of their winter veggies.



Contributions may be sent to:  
**Mennonite Mission Network**,  
 Box 370, Elkhart IN  
 46515-0370 and must be  
 clearly marked as a designated  
 contribution for the Mark and  
 Mary Hurst MST

