

# City House

## Redemptive Living in Beaver Falls



### Merry Christmas!

'Tis the season at the City House for project presentations, all-nighters, and final exams. For college students, holiday commercials and Christmas lights signal the end of our first semester as well as the excitement of going home for a 3-week break. These are the exhausting weeks of both remembering all that has been learned and anticipating the joy of Christmas.

Perhaps most of us can resonate with this as we find ourselves between Thanksgiving and Christmas – remembering God's faithfulness and longing for Christ's return. As I reflect on this season in the City House, I find myself filled with gratitude, not only for all that we have (i.e. great students, fabulous neighbors, and a warm house), but for the ways in which the Lord has been faithful throughout our 9-year journey. In every crisis, home repair, recruitment struggle and personal hardship, the Lord has surrounded us with his provision and blessing.

But we also find ourselves surrounded by great need, broken institutions, and in a city that longs for restoration and new vitality. And so it is, deep gratitude amidst deep longing.

As we wait with anticipation for the coming King, may we remember once again the Lord's faithfulness. Merry Christmas!

### Building New Connections

For the past eight years, City House has invited Geneva students into our Beaver Falls neighborhood, attempting to bridge the gap between two (very distinct) communities. Students who live in City House learn the value of living in a particular place, how to engage their neighbors, and the importance of community. This year, Emily Dixon our graduate assistant, has worked to provide additional programming for Geneva students living on campus. By creating intentional space for interaction, Emily aids students in cultivating relationships with the Beaver Falls community. Her work has greatly enhanced our vision for the City House and provided new connections between the house, the campus, and our community.

In late September, we hosted our first "Open Mic Night." This event was held in the library park on Seventh Avenue in downtown Beaver Falls. During this event students and community members were given the opportunity to share their musical and creative talents. Students and Beaver Falls residents came together to drink coffee, sing, and read poetry.

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## Reflection: Table Fellowship By Brooke Wible



**Class:** Senior  
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Table fellowship was of great importance to the early Christian church and continues to be for us today. Biblical stories often involve eating (either food provided from the Lord or by some miracle with other people): Jesus performed miracles to multiply food; the Last Supper points to Christ's sacrifice for our life; and a Great Banquet will be held in the honor of Christ's wedding. Further, the early Church in Acts ate together every day, and the Lord added to their numbers. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a famous theologian and author, recognizes the importance of table fellowship because it is there that Christ blesses His disciples. Christ's presence at the table means that we, as Christians, recognize God as the giver of all good things, including the food we

eat. It also reminds us that in receiving this gift, we receive Christ as our "true bread of life." Finally, when Christians eat together, they welcome the Lord's presence. In the presence of the Lord, we are joyful and can celebrate the gift of food, the gift of Christ's sacrifice, and the promise of His presence both now and in the future.

In light of this, table fellowship helps us to recognize the sacrifice required for life to be sustained through both food and Christ. It also draws us closer to Christ, and as a result, to each other. Bonhoeffer says, "The table fellowship of Christians implies obligation." This is because it is not my food, but our food, and we are sustained both by the same Lord and the same food. Christians ought to live in a way that we share our food so that no one goes hungry. The table fellowship acknowledges our Lord as provider, His sacrifice, and our unity in both body and Spirit.

Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, in "Why we eat together," also discusses the importance of table fellowship, describing that it is meant to counter the status quo of our consumer culture: "We're used to grabbing fast food when we're in a hurry, fine foods when we can afford them, lite foods when we want to be healthy, and cheap food when we're broke. But whatever our preferences, food choices are almost always about 'me,' not 'we.' We eat as individual consumers, not members of a body." When we stop our individual day to eat together as a community, we are recognizing, before God, an aspect of who we are created to be - beings intrinsically tied to one another. We are both dependent upon one another for our food, as well as the soil from which it grows. Wilson-Hartgrove points out this crucial reminder, that our eating together should remind us collectively that we depend on God's gift of the creation to sustain us, and in recognizing that, we should be mindful to protect that good, life-giving gift.

Finally, Wilson-Hratgrove asserts that eating together not only connects us to each other and the soil, but to the Trinity. God is in perfect relationship, and He desires this for us as well.



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## Lamppost Farm Trip

### Civic Engagement: Beaver Falls

Students living in the City House participate in our course entitled Civic Engagement: Beaver Falls. This semester, we spent considerable time discussing food: what we eat, where it comes from and why this matters. Several guest speakers shared their insight and experience related to health, the environment, hospitality, and local economies. We also visited two farms.

First, we spent an evening with Wayne, Elva and Aaron Harley at Oak Spring Farm in New Brighton (PA). The Harley's raise beef cattle and grow over 150 different vegetables, which are sold at four farmers' markets in Beaver County. Along with a few neighbors, the students enjoyed a hayride tour of the farm and recognizing the hard work, unpredictability, and deep commitment involved in the production of food we enjoy everyday.

Then, in October, the City House students spent a night at Lamppost Farm near Columbiana, Ohio. The Montgomery Family, along with a few interns (two

former City House residents), invests themselves in the careful stewardship of their land and animals. Further, they provide meaningful learning opportunities for "engaging in purposeful and productive work, contagious relationships, and the celebration of 'good, ordinary food.'" On our trip to the farm, we were able to hear the Montgomery's vision for the farm over dinner and then, in the morning, help with the farm chores which included picking eggs, moving cattle, feeding sheep, and transporting chickens and turkeys from one pen to another – all new experiences for each of us.

Even though we had to avoid "cow pies" with every step, our time at the farm was a meaningful reminder of our call and responsibility to care for creation. Just as Adam was given the task of naming the animals and tending the garden, we too are called to love and care for the land and animals. As city-dwellers, we must acknowledge the ways in which we eat as it relates to this task. For us at the City House, our time on the farm was a good reminder of this responsibility.

## Building New Connections (Continued from page 1)

There were a number of Geneva students who ventured downtown for the event as well as community members. Doors were opened for students to interact with neighbors as they shared in their common love for music.

Another event that City House hosted was the movie on the lawn. Students were invited to bring a blanket and enjoy a movie under the stars. The students who attended enjoyed hot cider and popcorn as well as a night off from homework and the busyness of being a college student. City House will host another movie on the lawn in the spring.

Next semester City House looks to host several events such as: a 3-3 March Madness Basketball tournament and a speaker series, held at the Carnegie Library, on the history, present state, and future outlook for the City of Beaver Falls. Additionally, City House students and staff will be working to reclaim a vacant lot in conjunction with a project called, "Spaces in-Between". This project is sponsored by the Beaver Falls Community Development Corporation and seeks to facilitate the development and beautification of several vacant lots along 7<sup>th</sup> Ave in the core business district.

The new programs and events have been an exciting way to invite the campus community into our neighborhood and our city. We hope that it will be a blessing to them as it has been to us.

## A Reflection from Brooke Wible (Continued from Page 2)

Table fellowship, particularly shared communion at the Lord's table, is God's desire for His people. Each of these relationships - with God, others, and creation - are reflected in eating a meal together. These relationships ought to be marked by love and the celebration of God's goodness. Further, eating together presents us with a more complete picture of what the image of God truly is, as we enter into His presence and recognize how deeply connected we are made to be.

Overall, I think these two authors are pointing to the central image of eating together throughout the Bible. The image is both a physical and spiritual reality that points to Christ and who we are. We are fully dependent upon God, upon each other, and in creation. That dependency is not meant to be negative - it is beautiful and intimate. Together we recognize our communal identity in Christ as image bearers reflecting God's desire for deep relationships filled with love and service.

## Photojournal: Anne Patterson, City House Resident Director



What does it look like to allow yourself to be influenced and changed by a place? To respect what a place is with both its beautiful and broken characteristics? When I first moved to Beaver Falls, I was pretty nervous. I had heard many stories from people about the sometimes dangerous and dilapidated state of the city. I wanted to be safe so, after I moved, I didn't sit on my front porch, didn't talk to strangers, and didn't walk anywhere to make sure I had as little contact as possible with the people of Beaver Falls. I blindly believed the narratives people had told me about Beaver Falls without bothering to look for different stories about the city. Thankfully, I was not allowed to stay in my isolated bubble for very long. Within the first two months of living in Beaver Falls, I met many people who loved this place, and they told me different stories. These people were committed to living

in the city. Sometimes that life was beautiful and sometimes it's quite broken, but when they encountered brokenness, it did not tempt them to abandon their place. Through the help of people who loved this place before I could, I have been shown the beauty of Beaver Falls. I still have much to learn about this place and from the people of this place. So I will continue to seek out these stories, and as I am shown the beauty of the city through others' eyes, I hope that I will become a person who also tells a rich narrative of Beaver Falls—one founded in love and not fear.