

## Contributors in this issue:

**Floyd and Sally McClung** began the first Dilaram House in Afghanistan in 1971. Floyd is director of Dilaram Houses, and a leader of the Heidebeek community in Heerde, Holland.

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**Paul Lebeau S.J.** is a Jesuit priest from the Centre International D'Etudes de la Formation Religieuse in Brussels, and is a theological advisor to Cardinal Suenens of Belgium. His article is from an address delivered at the 1975 Fountain Trust Conference in London.

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**Charles Ringma** has a Reformed background, was director of Teen Challenge in Australia, and lives in Brisbane.

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**Peter Davids** presently lectures in New Testament at the Missionshaus Bibelschule Wiedenest in Germany.

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Omitted from last issue's article on the Baha'i Faith: **William McElwee Miller** served as a missionary in Iran from 1919 to 1962. His book, 'The Baha'i Faith: Its History and Teaching', is published by the William Carey Library, 533 Hermosa St, Sth Pasadena, Cal. 91030, USA, for \$8.95.

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**Carol Saia** who edited the initial three INCITE issues, and her husband Mike are presently in the U.S.A. on a lecture tour. On their return, Carol will be involved in research and on the editorial committee.

**Jeff:** *'Community' as a topic has been much talked about, written about, preached about, experimented with, discussed, derided and romanticised about in recent years. Has this interest among evangelical Christians just been another case of 'me too' -ism, where Christians latch onto another good idea the world came up with first?*

**Floyd:** That is an excellent question because many say we have just imitated the spirit of the world, adopting the commune fad of the hippies and the earlier beatnik movement. However, in response to that first we must understand what we mean by 'community'. I use the word in two ways. First, in a general sense to apply to the body of Christ. The church of Jesus Christ is not just an organisation or a denomination or an institution, although it certainly includes those things. But first and foremost the church of Jesus Christ is a community. That is, a group of people who belong to each other, a family, people who share their lives together. Then in a more narrow sense, the word 'community' means that there are some people who have chosen to come together under one roof or under several roofs to share their lives even more closely together. We would call that an intentional community. I believe that it's inherent in the gospel that people do share their lives very closely. Anybody who belongs to Jesus belongs to anybody who belongs to Jesus. I don't mean that just to be another cliché but when we kneel at the cross together then we belong to each other, we are one in Christ, the same Spirit flows in us, we are brothers and sisters.

Therefore, the interest amongst evangelicals today in community living and a more closely shared life is not just a fad or a response to the world. What we see is Christians going back to their roots, Christians becoming radically biblical, or biblically radical. They understand that following Jesus Christ means sharing their lives with other people who are doing the same thing, that

the church is not just a collection of individuals who can do anything they want, it's not just a club of people who can decide individually how they will live out the Christian life.

So what I find happening both in the church renewal movement and in the interest in community is that people are realizing the tremendous joy and fulfillment that comes in fulfilling Christ's command to live a common life. God has intended that we follow in building each other up, encouraging one another, healing one another, being a means of grace to one another. Grace is not just received through communion and baptism, but we receive grace through each other. Often God could give His grace to us in more direct ways, but many times He chooses to do that by ministering to us through us. So I understand that God is building His Kingdom not only through us but in us so that we might be living examples of what heaven is going to be like. We educate the world by the power of our example. We just don't point to the future and verbally say, 'that is what heaven is going to be like,' but we must point to it by the way we demonstrate the gospel. We must say, 'here's the way it's going to be,' so that people can come and see the way we love each other.

**Jeff:** Sally, you and Floyd worked with Y.W.A.M. in a street-witnessing ministry for four years, working in Asia, Africa, Latin America and North America. Now you have settled in a community. Have you lost your vision and burden for world evangelism? Has living in community made you lose sight of your calling and your priorities: that is, to know God and make Him known?

**Sally:** Rather than lessening my burden for world evangelism I think living in community has qualified it and intensified it. I find that by living together with people there is a greater opportunity to become totally involved in their lives beyond just giving a short witness to Christ. We are able to help them work out their problems, their questions, their



Jeff Fountain  
talks with FLOYD and SALLY McCLUNG  
about life in a community

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frustrations, to work with them on a day by day basis of helping them to come to know the Lord, and then to grow and become more mature in their walk with Him. Also as a busy, active mother of two small children, if I were living in a normal set-up, my time to be involved directly in evangelism would be very limited because of the priorities of my home and family. But by living in community, I am able to combine my home, my family, and ministering, and

witnessing to people. It gives me a greater time for involvement that I wouldn't have in a normal situation.

**Floyd:** Christians need to understand their priorities. I was brought up with the understanding that I had two priorities; to know God and to make Him known. But I overlooked another essential priority taught in the New Testament that every Christian should understand. Not only are we to put God first in our lives, but we are

also to put believers above our ministry to non-Christians. Paul says in Galatians that we are to love all men, especially those of the household of faith. Jesus prayed for the church in John 17 that they might be one so that the world would know that he was sent from the Father. Many times Christians walk by each other in order to reach the world. We accept unloving relationships, strained, broken friendships. We allow hatred, jealousy, bitterness, resentment to exist in our hearts; alienation, and division to exist in the body of Christ, all that we might get on with the job. God's people are just as or more important than God's program. Therefore, God is building His church, and I see that this is the second priority. I see it like an overflowing fountain. God is to be first in our life and we are to overflow out of our relationship with Him into each others lives as believers. Then as we minister to one another, encourage one another, build up one another, admonish one another, strengthen and support one another, we are to overflow into the lives of non-believers.

**Jeff:** How did you get involved in a community lifestyle?

**Floyd:** The word 'community' was not in our minds in 1971 when we first began our ministry in Afghanistan. We went there as a team to witness to the hippies. We had a goal of doing a lot of street-witnessing in Kabul, the capital. We first lived in a hotel for a month or two, then rented a house. So we made a migration from a street-witnessing team to a family opening our home to people. Then we began to realize that often our relationships in our home were so poor that people couldn't see the gospel being lived out in our lives. We were trying to help people but we really couldn't because of so much shallowness in our relationship to each other. Now the word 'community' was never in our mind. But when we became a community, that is a group of people sharing our lives with each other, we became a family more than just a

team. We became a group of people wanting to share the life of Christ out of an overflow out of our love for each other, more than just a team who wanted to go out on the streets for a cause.

**Jeff:** So you were not self-consciously establishing a community?

**Floyd:** Not at all. We just sort of slipped into community through the back door. After being in Afghanistan for some time I made a trip to the States and became aware that there were a lot of communities. I thought: 'Hey, we're a community! What does that mean? What are we supposed to do to be a community?' I went back and realized that we were becoming a community - if you want to call it that - because we were just a group of people trying to share our lives with each other, and love each other. We found out we had a priority to love each other even above personal evangelism. That did not mean that it excluded personal evangelism for us. Not at all. We were still spending time witnessing and we were taking in many non-Christians into our home and we were going out on the streets and into hotels and hospitals and prisons. But it meant that we couldn't walk by each other. We couldn't ignore each other's needs.

**Jeff:** In other words, you were beginning to discover a relationship between evangelism and discipleship?

**Floyd:** That's right. The great commission had been very important to me for a long time. As we began to commit ourselves to non-Christians, that is, as we identified with them, became one with them without compromising with them, cared for them deeply as human beings and not just lost souls, we realized that if they did become Christians our responsibility had not just ended there. It had actually just begun there. As we studied the New Testament we saw we had the same responsibility that Jesus took upon himself to his disciples. The responsibility of making Christians is God's. The responsibility of making disciples is our's. Jesus told his

disciples to make disciples. We saw we had a responsibility to help people come into maturity, and that to lead them into the Kingdom of God without helping them to grow into maturity was to commit spiritual abortion. Of course there were times when we faced temptations to become ingrown and insular, to get involved only in the lives of those we were helping to build into maturity, and to lose our compassion for people outside of our own group. We found there was a good kind of tension between going and sharing the good news and staying and making disciples. If you don't go, you lose your vision. But if you only go and you don't make disciples, then you become shallow and superficial.

**Jeff:** For many people, the word 'discipleship' conjures up a strong hierarchical structure of absolute authority over people's lives. To what degree did you exercise authority over those you were 'discipling'?

**Floyd:** As I was in a pastoral, eldership position over these young Christians, I naturally had to take some authority over them. However, I found my authority over them was no more effective than my friendship with them. To the degree that I identified with the young Christians in our community that we had responsibility for, to the degree that I had friendship and trust with them, to that degree my authority, I believe, was biblical. In other words, I don't believe I was to lord over the young Christians and domineer their lives, but rather I was to be a servant to them. Now naturally sometimes we had young Christians who had severe problems and they needed strong authority, just like a little child sometimes needs somebody to say 'don't do this' and 'do that'. At times, because people were so mixed up in their minds and they had a little understanding of Christianity, they needed a strong authority figure who said 'you shouldn't do that' and 'you should do this'. But I found this effective only when they knew me and I had shared my life with them and they trusted me.

One of the biblical responsibilities of a pastor or an elder, is to lead the body of Christ. There are three pastoral responsibilities: one, to feed the body of Christ through teaching and counselling; two, to protect the body of Christ (e.g. from false prophets and false doctrines); and three, to govern the body of Christ. Not as domineering, said Peter, but as a servant. Now I believe absolute authority is to be in the hands of Jesus. We always taught the young Christians that, although they are to be in submission to us, absolute authority was to be in the hands of the Lord Jesus himself. If they disagreed with us they had recourse to the Lord and they could go to other mature Christians. We also found it very important to be sharing our lives with other mature Christians in the body of Christ. As a community we identified with other believers. We sought out their counsel and tried to act in a submissive way to their counsel. This gave protection in the counsel we were giving to those under us. I do see that there is a hierarchy of authority in the New Testament but I believe it is a very qualified hierarchy. Every Christian has a responsibility ultimately to the Lord. That does not mean that every time his pastors or elders ask him to do something he has to question or challenge them. We find in Hebrews 13:17 that we are to obey our leaders and submit to them. But I do believe that if there is a strong question as to what is right or wrong, the believers should submissively question his leader.

I believe authority must be earned by ministry. There's no question in the New Testament that there can be trans-local authority: that is, that somebody living in one place or ministering in one place can have authority over somebody in another place. We see Paul having authority over different churches. But the reason he had authority was that they had come into being through his ministry. In other words, Paul had authority because of his ministry to

those people, because he had given birth to them and because of his relationship as a brother in Christ and a spiritual father. I believe it is unnatural to impose authority on groups that we had not ministered to, brought into being, or given birth into the Kingdom of God.

**Jeff:** You must have experienced hurts and tensions as you started learning about community living. What kind of lessons did you learn about building relationships and maintaining them?

**Sally:** As we began talking about being honest with each other, opening ourselves up to each other, expressing our needs, being vulnerable, I began to see that I had to first of all understand myself. And I realized I hadn't done that. I saw insecurities I had never dealt with, a low self-image the Lord needed to minister to. I had a lot of underlying problems and weaknesses to deal with before the Lord so as to become vulnerable. I'm also a sensitive person so when I began opening myself to others and expressing my needs, my hurts, my desires, there were some initial occasions when I was hurt. This made it harder to continue to open myself. But once I'd begun feeling the freedom of openness there was no backing down. I wanted to continue to be open to my brothers and sisters. I realized how much I needed them. Many of the ways the Lord wanted to minister to my insecurities and needs were through my brothers and sisters. If I didn't express my needs to them there was no way that they could minister to me. Some of the strongest tensions we felt at that time were areas concerning priorities. We were involved in a brand new situation, seeing people coming to the Lord. We were getting involved in discipling and it was an exciting time and there were just things going on all around us. It was easy, for Floyd especially, to get very caught up in this. Of course this was beginning to affect our relationship. We began to see that our relationship as a husband and

"We saw we had a priority to love each other as believers even above personal evangelism."

wife, and later our relationship as a little family, had to take a priority over our relationship to other Christians and non-Christians. If we didn't have things right at home we couldn't effectively minister to others. If we tried to, without things being smooth in our relationship, people would notice that. Floyd and Sally hadn't spent much time together

lately or they really needed to talk some things over. We learnt how important it was to spend time together as a husband and wife, and as a family. That was a priority over all other human relationships. As that was established then the freedom and the release came to be more involved in others' lives and to establish relationships with them. I also learned that I couldn't spread myself too thin. We might have had 25 or 30 people living in the house at that time and now we have about 70 on the farm, and there's no way I can be involved in all those people's lives. So who were the people that the Lord wanted me to become deeply involved with? That would be limited to probably three or four, simply because of time. I learned the hard way that I just couldn't be involved in 25 people's lives totally, that I had to limit myself and to ask the Lord to lead me to those He wanted me to know.

**Jeff:** Jim Wallis (see page 20) said during his visit with us before Christmas that community meant losing control of our lives to our brothers and sisters. What is your response to that?

**Sally:** I felt threatened and frightened when I first heard that statement. I didn't know how to respond and I'm still learning. There's a place for God-given responsibility over my actions and over my responsibilities as a wife and mother. I'm going to have to answer how I've controlled that area of my life, what I've done, how I've managed these areas that the Lord has given me. My husband cannot answer to being a wife and mother over my children. Jeff, you cannot answer to how I minister to my husband and my kids. At the same time, there's a place to share these areas of my life with my brothers and sisters. I'm still just learning. I thought I had learned a lot but I'm just on the first step up the ladder. I think there's a fear in me that the Lord is trying to work on. As we talk about ideal situations or as we talk



about the way things should be, there's an underlying fear that I'm going to be lost as a person in achieving these ideals the Lord has for us. That's threatening to me and frightening. Yet I'm realizing we don't have to achieve the perfect situation overnight but the Lord teaches us in the amount that we can take at one time. He wants us to grow and he wants us to achieve the more ideal situation. But He also wants us to move at a speed that doesn't overwhelm us. So He's wanting me to grow in the area of relinquishing control to others. But He's taking me a step at a time and He's bringing me understanding along with it.

**Floyd:** When I first heard Jim make that statement, I rushed home, jumped into a heavy discussion with Sally flinging around all kinds of spiritual phrases about how important it is for us to be open with other people. I tend to be impetuous, and I really need Sally to balance me out. As we discussed what it meant to be committed to our brothers and sisters we realised that if that meant sharing our lives with them, it meant sharing our victories, sharing our needs, our defeats, sharing our worldly goods and also sharing our decisions. When it came to sharing our decisions, we both saw how this had to be really based upon a knowledge and close friendship of our brothers and sisters. In other words, if Sally and I are going to share a decision about our lives with somebody, then we want to know that they understand us and they care for and they are committed to us. We believe this to be the biblical foundation for sharing so closely, or as Jim put it, to 'lose control'. When I ask a brother or sister or my pastors or elders to pray with me over an important decision I have to make, then if all those people disagree with what I think is right, I'm not going to go ahead and do it anyway. I'm

going to be accountable to those people, and recognise that God can speak to me through them. That doesn't mean I'm going to give up the responsibility I have for decision-making, but it does mean I need other people to help me make those decisions. Recently a pastor of a Baptist church told me how hurt he got when people who became members of his church, stayed for a year and a half, and then walked into his office to say, 'Well, I got a promotion in my company and I'm moving to another city. See you later. It's been nice knowing you. They treat their relationships and their decisions as if other people don't really count in their life. The only thing they take into consideration is moving up in the company, more money, moving to a city they like better. They don't take into consideration the fact that they are involved in people's lives. Perhaps it is just a good human idea that they take a promotion, or perhaps Satan is behind it to break up the close fellowship and the needs of the church. I saw how frustrated this pastor was because people weren't committed to each other. They didn't believe they needed each other to make decisions and to understand what God was saying to them.

So I believe the Lord is teaching us in Dilaram Houses that He wants us to be individuals, but He doesn't want us to be individualistic. He wants us to be responsible, but He doesn't want us to be selfish. He wants us to be open. This seems a big area that God is wanting to teach the whole body of Christ at this point: that when we become members of a church, or when we identify ourselves with a local congregation, our responsibility is not fulfilled by going to the Wednesday night bible study and two meetings on Sunday, and maybe getting involved in a pot-luck supper now and then. But that there's a quality of relationship with the other brothers and sisters in that fellowship to be lived out. Where we build each other

up we minister to one another, we encourage one another, and we're so involved in each other's lives that we earn the right by our commitment, our loyalty, our friendship, our love for each other that we can minister to each other. Jesus said to his disciples, and then he prayed about us as a church in John 17:21-23, that we should love each other as he loved the Father and the Father loved him. I wonder if we're willing to love each other with the same intimacy that the Father and the Son had. Are we willing to be known as intimately as the Father knew the Son? So many times the reasons we don't share what is going on in our lives is that we're afraid to share, we're too proud to share. We don't want to be hurt or we don't want people to really know what's happening to us. So I feel God is wanting to teach the body of Christ about commitment and deep love. This of course provides a tremendous framework and basis for helping each other grow and to understand the will of God for our lives.

**Jeff:** How much do we lose control of our possessions?

**Floyd:** I've often defined community as an organism of Christians living in a common environment, accepting responsibility for one another by sharing what they are and have, and in doing so endeavoring to minister the life of Christ. I've heard many groups go to the book of Acts and, from a poor exegesis of chapters two and four, say that the early church had a common purse, so we should too. We should go back to New Testament Christianity. That's true and it's not true. It's not true if it means that there must be a legislated common purse, because I read in Acts that there were many people who still kept their land, and they had not sold all that they had. But I also read that there were many people who had their land and they still belonged to each other.



"Our relationship as husband and wife and as a little family takes priority over all other human relationships."



No, I don't believe that emphasis is in Acts. What should be the emphasis in the body of Christ today is the spontaneous sharing of our goods with those around us who are in need. Not only those around us but also those in remote parts of the world who are brothers and sisters in Christ and yet who are starving to death and who have great needs. When we become materialistic, when we become greedy for more material possessions and a better lifestyle, there's a great danger

that we're verging on greed. I do believe that it is right that we share with each other. Sally and I have often given away everything we have and we want to be able to keep on doing that. And if we get into a situation where we have a legislated common purse, then we can only give away all that one time and from then on it's a rule that we have to do it. So it can't be a spontaneous thing where we respond to the need that God brings along our path. I think it brings us

into a position of irresponsibility where the group has made a decision for us as to what should happen to our goods. It's easier that way, but I don't think it's necessarily better that way. I think it teaches far more where we are put into a position where the group says to each other, 'we should share our goods with each other.' We have a responsibility to go out of our way to find out what each others needs are and then to give to each other and to share. That takes a lot more responsibility. I have to go out of my way to find out what is going on in my brothers' and sisters' lives. I have to spend time with them to find out their needs. Then I can respond and give. So I do believe God wants us to come to a place where we're losing control of our possessions primarily to Him and then to each other. I believe the Bible says there's a place for personal property, private property. But I also believe from the Old Testament that God put restraints on the control of private property. He protected the people by giving laws to them about how much they could own and what their responsibilities were to the poor and needy. In the West, free enterprise (which I believe is a biblical concept) has often been allowed to develop without the controls and restraints found in the Old Testament. Uncontrolled free enterprise has encouraged greed, exploitation, imperialism and idolatrous materialism.

So in such attitudes towards material possessions, Christians living together can have an impact on society. We can act as 'corporate salt', educating the world by the power of example. God's people are called to be a corporate alternative: to demonstrate God's standards in all they do. Christian communities provide the framework for resisting the world spirit as it tries to squeeze us into its cultural and spiritual mold. This means living together by a different set of values and standards. This is the challenge of community.