

Oh, What a Lucky Find

Once upon the edge of time, many years ago, in the eternal NOW, there was a group of people - women and men going their own way - - in their own marriages, their own families....

Then, they were called, each by name and were brought together by a mystery greater than themselves...
They were invited to share their journey with one another I imitation of the first Christians...

And so, in the wistful white of winter, 246 moons ago, the table was set and the dance began.
They expressed one desire, which they held in common....
 to live a fuller, more spiritually nourished life
 willing to be at the service of each other
 ready to open their homes and their hearts...

The newness of the journey carried them on the waves of exuberance and laughter.
They questioned my tradition of rules and rituals presented by those who had set out before them.

They felt optimistic and powerful.
The road beneath their feet was full of promise.

They celebrated baby showers, births, and baptisms, symbolic of their new life together.
Being a Team was fun!
They were 16, at times 17 in number. The table overflowed. Good food and good cheer abounded. And so went the mostly highs of the honeymoon hours.

Little by little,, as happens in life, the newness wore off. Each pondered the journey. Each scrutinized the others. Distrust crept in, at times, even fear. The common good was threatened. Individual needs loomed large. Some caustically confronting the others. These left in anger; others just needed to move away.

Those who remained, continued until their weakened faith once again grew strong.
Community life was not to be an easy one.

The path was no longer so clear or so innocent.
Riding the waves in good times and in bad became an integral part of the journey.

One day, a pastor of great heart was called by name and he joined the remaining 12. He created the needed balance....
 bringing joy and objectivity
 courage and spontaneity
 a signpost of a very human spirituality
And so, he took his place. A brother among sister and brothers. The team vision was sparked, the hope renewed. The journey was enlivened.

There were communions, confirmations, graduations.
They were good at celebrations!
There were picnics, pool side parties and holiday gatherings.
There were lively games and challenging study topics.
They seemed to be growing in wisdom.
Always grateful for mutual support and hospitality.

Still, all was not rosy.
The year end sit down was never a cup of tea.
 Would it be status quo or a leap of faith?
 Would the focus be on scheduling or spirituality?
 Would there be the anxiety of a confrontation?
 The deadening infertility of evasion?
 Or the productive spark of a healthy challenge?

The challenge to open the doors.
Brought in new men and women.
Some lated. Some didn't...

Oh, What a Lucky Find

There was much pain to be endured.
There were always lessons to be learned.
Some people left over personality issues.
Some personalities left.
The others came back to begin again.
And some who had moved away, returned.
Once again, the table was full.
The bitter wine turned sweet.
And the nourishing bread of community shared.

The joy of celebrations continued.
There were wedding anniversaries and catered affairs.
There were star gazing nights...
There were challenging questions
 about vision and world peace
 about commitment
 about sexuality
 about personal growth
 about authentic marriage
 about community and mutual support
Together they made retreats creating a bed of forgiveness with a blanket.
They saw rainbows, tasted possibilities.
They shared sacred meals and nourishing liturgies.
They danced at weddings and rejoiced at Episcopal promotions.
They celebrated next generation births.
They read.
They studied.
They discussed.
They pooled.
They prayed.
They shared.
And once again, they sang.

They trusted and opened themselves to each other.
They cried together over their children who had distanced themselves from their parent's hopes.
And they rejoiced together over their children's successes.
They held each other when jobs disappeared.
And prayed for new careers to materialize.
They came together over losses and increases,
And the years went by....

They grew in love and unselfishness.
Many accepted leadership roles, serving the wider Teams.
Gifts were shared near and far.
New teams were piloted; the torch was passed.
Retreats, Square Dances, Training Days, Information Nights were generously sponsored for the sake of the movement.

Tranquility, however was always a temporary gift. They suffered through the decline of aging parents.
They learned how to set up hospice and give good care.
And they buried those who died.

Instability extended to marriage itself and long distance choices...
And so, they continued to say good-bye,
Coming together for strength to let go.

But the very hardest good-bye,
The most profound upheaval,

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Was facing death among their very own...
The journey never seemed harder.
Coming together, they wept, they prayed, they remembered.
The grieving took root in their souls,
And a thousand years of good-byes lay like lead in their hearts.
But their spirits were made holy as they held together,
Sharing their memories, their sadness and their tears.

Depending on one another, they kept walking the path,
Feeling only half alive...
 even more aware of their own vulnerability
 their human powerlessness
 their need for humility
Community was experienced as a priceless gift.
 a bridge over troubled water
 an oasis in the desert
 a safe refuge in the wind storm
Eternal life was no longer separate from daily life.
And the God who sustains us all was a felt presence in their midst.

Together, they climbed hills that seemed like mountains.
They trekked through woods reverencing the earth and each other.
Together, they were keeping their memories alive
 breaking bread
 sipping from the cup of life
 their hearts burning within them...
They encouraged those who were stepping into new adventures.
And those who were recovering from the losses of betrayal.
Together, they felt strength they could not have felt alone.

And after a time they forgot the lesson they had learned over and over.
That the comforting green leaves of Summer are blown away by Fall.
All the hard Winter surely follows.
Had they not forgotten, they might have known.

But who could have been prepared for the night the door closed.
Not ~ we need to move on...
But ~ we're leaving and there's to be no Team dialogue.
And so, there were more good~bye.
Those left in the Team continued the journey depending on the God who brought them together and promised to be with them on the road.

Most are waiting for that rainbow that proclaims the end of loss and struggle and makes a new beginning creating lighter hearts and freer spirits.

Now they struggle to recognize what it is they are to learn and how it is they are to continue.

They have their fears as well as their hopes
The live in the dying even as they believe in the rising...