



# ROOTS – JOE METZ

Roots: 1972-1975

## NEW JERUSALEM COMMUNITY ROOTS

Those seeds which were planted during that November retreat, and the prayer meetings that followed, took root – deeply and firmly. The prayer meetings grew so quickly by word of mouth that in a matter of 6-9 months, we moved from the front room at St. Anthony Friary, to Rosie Kremm's house in Northside, to the library at our Lady of Angels High School, then to Ursuline Academy's chapel. Ultimately, we ended up in Ursuline's gym as the group grew to around 800 people. Early on our gatherings went past our curfews. Sometimes Richard had to write notes to parents assuring them we had, in fact, been at a prayer meeting & mass so late.

Most of us were still high school students, although some college students and other adults began coming during this time too.

While we were still meeting at Rosie's, Richard and Brother Dennis had planned to hold a Life in the Spirit seminar, but the Spirit took care of that when many of us were baptized in the Spirit one Friday night. They decided instead to begin a scripture class to root us more deeply in the scriptures, so once a week we'd meet at the friary for that. On Sundays, we would descend *en masse* on the Community of Hope, the non-territorial parish at the friary, and would spend hours afterwards hanging out (what we later came to call "wasting time together"). At Easter of 1972, we had an all-night vigil with mass at dawn on the beautiful grounds there at Mt. Airy.

In February of '72 Richard met with Archbishop Paul Leibold and told him that if we could have a center for the TEC retreats, he could reach kids throughout the whole city. Archbishop Leibold died late that spring, but during the summer we learned we would have the Powel Crosley Mansion in Mt. Airy to use for our TEC retreats. Besides the retreats, the mansion became a center for us. We would hang around talking about life and sharing about our faith. We would become so excited that we'd ask Richard to say mass for us. We'd all head up to the room we used for a chapel, already called The Upper Room (with the red shag carpet), and spontaneously have mass.

Richard began teaching on the "Cost of Discipleship." A core of us gathered at the mansion for a TNT group (we think it stood for Teens in Training) to help deepen our faith. This group grew so large that it was decided we should break into smaller "Cost of Discipleship," or COD groups located around the city. This was the start of Small Groups.

We were only at the mansion for that one school year, ending at Easter of 1973. In June, after St. Bernard's school closed, Archbishop Bernardin gave us both the convent and the school to use for the TEC retreats and as a center for the community that was developing among us. It was shortly after arriving in Winton Place that we named ourselves New Jerusalem Community. We began the hard work of renovating both buildings. Working on this renovation together united us and helped build strong relationships among us. Hard work notwithstanding, it was a wonderful time.

It has been extraordinary looking through photos from the last fifty years, talking with people about our experience in these early formative years when the community took root. We were so young. In talking with Emily Besl, she mentioned that whenever she'd head out to an evening meeting, her mom would ask about her homework. Someone from the pastoral team talked with Diane Laake about moving into a household. Diane had to tell them that she needed to finish high school first! By the end of 1975 when New Jerusalem decided to stop the prayer meetings at Ursuline and to bring everything down to Winton Place, many of us from the first years were still in college! God set this group of young people on fire

with the Good News and began what has been a lifetime journey we could not have imagined. As we've sung throughout the years: Oh how good, how wonderful.