

A Pastoral Letter

Encouragement During These Transitions

January 18, 2009

Dear friends,

Over the past year we have grown together - it has been beautiful and it has been messy. As we head into a time of big transitions, we wanted to bring you all some assurance and empowerment.

As we've facilitating conversation about the future of The Netzer Co-Op, we've heard several themes. We have heard anxiety and concern about how many of the transitions coming to the Co-Op will effect participation for many of you. While distance will certainly be a challenge, we want encourage to take full ownership of the opportunity here. This is your ministry and you are the change you've been waiting for. The staff stands beside you ready to support you fully.

Another theme we have heard is a disconnect with our value of shared ownership. As a "co-op," we value everyone's voice and full participation in the life of the community. Our role as staff is simply to facilitate our work "behind the scenes." After two years of ministry together, we are starting to notice that we are becoming a closed community. While we would like to think we are open and inviting, our own intimate relationships with one another often are experienced by others as unwelcoming. For example, in our community conversations we heard quite a bit about personal participation but very little attention to the opportunity of inviting others in, becoming more diverse and expanding our circle of relationships. We want to assure you that most of the events of the Co-Op will continue because we are excited about the deeply meaningful relationships that are being created. We also want to encourage you to pray about the relationships that we can open ourselves up to, both inside the Co-op, and outside.

As we have been constantly asking ourselves, "what is God up to in all of this?" it is encouraging to know that we are at an exciting milestone in the life of the community. The transition to "re-center" our Co-Op in Austin brings with it the opportunity for new relationships, organizational sustainability and the chance to become a beacon of kingdom living in a city filled with cultural creatives. Because we are engaged in kingdom work, we are led by the Spirit and following with fear and trembling. But rest assured that no matter what decision our community makes, God will be the one making this thing work. We are merely trying to keep up with a God who has already been paving our way.

In the Book of Acts, we read about the early Christian church and about the early missions of the Apostle Paul. In the sixteenth chapter there is a critical moment where Paul and Silas are prevented from bringing the good news to three cities. In the midst of the confusion and frustration, Paul receives a vision from the Spirit telling him to go to Phillipi (Macedonia). In the end, the church he plants there becomes the strongest of the early church communities. While we are no

Apostle Paul and we probably are not even like Phillip, the story points to a larger picture of the journey of faith - trust that the Spirit is guiding us.

To be honest, we can not be sure where the Spirit will guide us. We can not predict where this journey will take us. But we can rest assure that we are in this together. Rest assure we, the staff, are committed to encouraging and empowering participants along the way. Rest assure, we are surrounded by loving and wise elders and board member. Rest assure, God is with us.

As we move forward, we want to invite you into the momentum of the Spirit at work here. We want to invite you to participate in new ways (not necessarily more), contribute, create, invite and share the story of the Co-Op. Most of all, we invite you to *be the change you wish to see in the world...*

Peace,

Tim Snyder & Brianna Morris-Brock
CURATORS, **THE NETZER CO-OP**