

## Las Casas de Jubileo

### Networking Households to Energize Jubilee Practices

#### Introduction: Households Imagining and Going a Different Way

*Las Casas de Jubileo* is a project of JEM (Jubilee Economics Ministries) that focuses on households as a prime location to live sabbath-jubilee practices. Many of us today want to go a different way. We want to distance ourselves from the neoliberal economics giving us corporate rule and corporate-led, top-down globalization that stressing us out. We are attracted to imagining and creating new-old patterns for living sustainably – an alternative to the unsustainable patterns of materialism and consumerism. But we have not connected all the dots in a way that helps us see how our own households can be a major player in changing the direction in which our world is going. And, when we network those households, the impact multiplies into a movement.

Our households seek a different style of homelife than presented in the “good housekeeping” images of the dominant culture or by the “traditional family” of some religious and political groups. Networking such households appeals to many of us. We want to be in solidarity, encouraging one another in lifestyles that express more of the Spirit’s movement, less of the spirit of the times. Our desire to find and practice patterns that sustain life invariably means we resist much of what is in vogue. Recognizing that swimming upstream to the cultural flow can be both freeing and demanding, we seek community with others who also want to pursue this other way. As our households help one another find more and more patterns of jubilee, we energize and inspire one another – a contrast to the despair that comes when we feel that to participate in the culture and systems of domination are our only choice. So, networking our households and forming intentional communities are key strategies.

#### Reasons for Las Casas de Jubileo at this time

Together, we want to strengthen the following practices, decisions, and daily patterns within our households recognizing that much of what is happening in the U.S. at this time is going the opposite direction:

- 1- We want to practice participatory democracy and inclusive egalitarian relationships.
- 2- We want our daily lives to practice active nonviolence in word, deed, and economics.
- 3- We want to find common ground with all who are marginalized.
- 4- We want to drink regularly from the sacred wells of awe and mystery that we experience in nature.
- 5- We want to counter the undemocratic rule of corporations in economics and government.
- 6- We want to show love of country in different ways from the practice of patriotism as narrowly defined by the right.
- 7- We want not to participate in the galloping consumerism.
- 8- We want not to surrender so much religious language and practice to the dominant culture.

- 9- We want to minimize the stressors on households in an advanced capitalist society that contribute to collapse in many families.
- 10- We want to practice community instead of the privatization and individualization of all of life.

The decisions made in households are commonly also on the agendas of economic powers, and very often they, not households, determine our actions. The 40 hour workweek is now the 50 hour plus week. Decisions made by managers of corporations and other organizations often impact our households more than decisions made in churches or in our families themselves. Sabbath-jubilee economics practice restores power to our households – especially if we network households and seek to make them as multi-generational as possible.

In Las Casas de Jubileo, the global and local are strikingly and intentionally joined; so are the political and the spiritual, the economic and the sacred. Whenever these vital linkages become fuzzy, conversations with other households are likely to bring them into focus again.

### Resonating with the ancient wisdom of sabbath-jubilee

Our practices resonate with an ancient wisdom, that of sabbath-jubilee in the bible (see JEM's website, [www.jubilee4justice.org](http://www.jubilee4justice.org)). It also imagines households living out values that differ from the imperial economics of domination that drain people and destroy the earth. From the increasing writings on sabbath-jubilee available today, we call attention to the first two chapters in a book by Richard Lowery, professor at Phillips Seminary, Tulsa, OK, entitled *Sabbath and Jubilee* (Chalice Press, 2000). According to Lowery, networking households in the practices of sabbath-jubilee economics is a deep and well-tried tradition. It was a strategy by which biblical peoples survived and thrived amid empires. Without networks, they were far more vulnerable. Though "clans" and "tribes" are not common words for how we describe ourselves, they clearly represent what we mean with words such as "networking" and "intentional communities."

"Multigenerational households were the fundamental economic units, though households tended to group together in clans around small villages. There was a high level of social solidarity within the household and between households in a clan. Individual behavior was directed toward the survival of the family and its property, and households provided mutual support at no charge as needed. Land was held by families over long periods of time. . . ." (p. 21)

Las Casas de Jubileo reconnects us with the revitalizing spirituality and practices of Sabbath-jubilee. In so doing, we note that Jesus turned to sabbath-jubilee practices as his alternative of choice amid the Graeco-Roman Empire. Today, empire extends itself from a different geo-political center and with a different economic structure, but its domination of life in our common home, planet Earth, needs just as much to be countered with the sabbath-jubilee ways.

### Our networking households are guided by five sabbath-jubilee themes

Five sabbath-jubilee themes, forming the acronym SCENE, grasp our attention as especially important at this time, given how the culture seeks to shape us in its own way. These five convert, transform, and shape us over time. Their power to shape our inner person as well as our outer practice particularly commends them to us. We accept that sustainable lifestyles and spiritual formation go hand-in-hand. This attention to inner and outer work is essential to our understanding of what households linking around jubilee practices need to embody.

1. Sabbath – Because we often feel fatigued from our engagement with the powers of the dominant culture and its 7/24 economic systems, we seek patterns of sabbath, rest, and restoration. We want to reclaim time as a gift of God, reclaiming it from all powers who want us to give it to them in labor. Times each week for resting and centering are essential for living in abundance. Sabbath resists the seven days a week, 24 hours a day of the dominant culture. Prayer, in its many forms, moves our minds and hearts out of cultural domination and opens us to a different consciousness – one infused with God’s thoughts, passions, and patterns. Individual and collective prayer nurtures jubilee practices and is, therefore, vital to households intent on jubilee practices.
2. Communitarian – Agreeing to make certain private properties common properties; certain projects, common projects; certain meals, common meals – all these pierce the individualism and privatization of the dominant economics and culture. By restructuring our lives to hold in common with others as many things, events, and moments as can be made to fit, we invest ourselves in one another’s spaces and lives. In this way, private space, time, and activities are balanced with a creative, regenerating “commons.”
3. Economics – We want our money choices to contribute to local living economies, so we avoid as much as possible the chain stores and shopping mall outlets of global corporations, preferring locally owned businesses. We also address the economic and social apartheid between rich and poor by seeking ways to be in relationship with both, bringing them together when possible. Seeing the divide as structural in our world, we know it must be addressed with new structures of connection.
4. Nonviolence – In relationships, words, and acts we continue to face our own impulses toward vengeance and getting even, or to best or hate someone else. Also, we aspire to militant pacifism in our stance toward the state, towards militarism, and toward corporations with aggressive practices that undermine the common good externalizing true costs and maximizing profits.
5. Ecology – Sustainability names why the grassroots economics of sabbath-jubilee is a must for all of us who want to give our grandchildren a life-sustaining world, who want endangered species of plants and animals to thrive, and who love our Creator. We are committed to living on this planet so that all benefit from her provision, each according to life’s needs.

#### Forming networks: some suggestions

1. Geography is a huge issue for a successful network. Close proximity facilitates common practices; distance hinders it.
2. Size must not stop us from starting. Two households are a wonderful beginning.
3. Each household is encouraged to form a list of the issues it wants to address. The purpose is for households to encourage one another to go further into the practices that they have chosen for themselves. Note that households do not need to conform to one another’s lists. Different issues are right in different households at different times. The key is to encourage one another so that each household achieves its goals regarding increased jubilee practices.
4. Start gently. Gathering over a meal once a week or once a month is likely better than deciding right away to eat five meals a week together, for example.
5. Grow practices naturally and organically. Learn from each other. Resist having to do a practice just because someone else is doing it. All of our lives have different dynamics.

6. Give yourself (and one another) time. Jubilee practices require structural adjustments in our days and ways. These can take months to change. Gradual conversions are as important as quick ones.
7. Households are encouraged to develop a statement in words, graphics, and/or art to declare their commitment, to share it in the network, and to put it where they are often reminded of it.
8. Congregations are a natural grouping within which a network may be formed. It is just as true that a network will likely be enriched by forming with households outside of such a grouping.
9. Connecting with other networks from time to time will be enormously beneficial and encouraging.
10. Avoid making any one practice normative for jubilee households, such as, "If you do all these things, then you are a jubilee house." Jubilee is always a work in process.
11. Leaving the network. It happens. Whatever the reasons, let it happen with as much grace as you've learned to give. It's not about failure. Jubilee practices are so counter-cultural! Give yourself and others breaks!

### Forming communal houses

Some households may desire to become an intentional community that lives under one roof or in some other communal arrangement. Las Casas de Jubileo also encourages this creative possibility. Many people are unaware that such living arrangements are increasing. In fact, Peaceweavings, an intentional community in Chicago that has been influenced greatly by sabbath-jubilee, has been a seedbed for Las Casas de Jubileo. The creation and use of private space along with communal space is one essential in communal houses. It is because JEM recognizes that such living arrangements, though very right for some, feel like an impossible stretch for others that we emphasize networking of households. If you do choose to live in a communal house, we still encourage you to network with other households engaged in jubilee practices because of what you can give and receive in such networking.

### JEM's ongoing role in Las Casas de Jubileo

JEM does not wish to "own" the networks. We are interested in collecting ideas that work and are happy to share what we learn. We are maintaining a directory of networking households that let us know about their network. We will put the directory on our website, [www.jubilee4justice.org](http://www.jubilee4justice.org), unless a network asks not to be.

### Guidance for specifics

We encourage every house to live the themes of sabbath-jubilee in ways that shape their particular situation. The following list names some of the areas of a household's life where resistance through alternatives can be practiced in varying degrees. They are thus suggestive for all of us as we continue to be converted from the culture's ways to the ways of jubilee. They are not, however, to be restrictive or burdensome in ways that wilt the spirit of a household. Location and climate affect many of these suggestions. Our understanding will grow as we work with these and others, and then share with one another whenever households gather.

#### Rest and restoration

- Sabbath time
- Prayer and meditation, individual and collective

- A hospitality room (some have called it a “Christ room”) will work in some homes

#### Transportation

- Walk and bicycle more
- Use public transportation as much as possible
- Drive high mileage cars, alternative fuel cars

#### Food & beverage

- Eat organic; avoid genetically modified foods as much as possible
- Low meat and vegetarian diets
- Eat locally grown food as much as possible
- Preference for purified water over sodas with a good home purifier the best option
- Quantity food purchases from co-ops and local farmers can be done cooperatively and then shared among households in an area
- Compost food scraps
- Buy as little from supermarkets and agribusiness as possible

#### Clothing

- Buy from recycle shops as much as possible
- Buy from locally owned businesses and green businesses as much as possible
- Buy organic cotton as much as possible
- Recycle clothing no longer used

#### Finances

- Use locally owned banks and credit unions
- Invest in socially responsible ways and in local communities as possible

#### Play, re-creation

- Art, music, drama, dance, poetry, rhythm, hiking, beaches, parks (city to national), and many more low-cost types of re-creation are encouraged in their best folksy, homegrown expression

#### Energy

- Lighting – use low energy, high-efficiency bulbs
- Heating – weatherproof windows and doors; wear an extra layer, keep lap/leg blankets handy in sitting rooms, and set the thermostat as low as is comfortable; heat only rooms in use
- Cooling – do the reverse of “heating”
- Transportation – see above

#### Yard and Garden

- Be organic; avoid chemical pesticides, herbicides; use xeriscaping and as little waster as possible
- Grow some organic foods, flowers
- Have a composting container or area

#### Healthcare and Wellness

- Blend western and alternative therapies
- Share knowledge and abilities within the network in order to reduce costs and increase availability

To indicate your interest and to share your knowledge

We hope you will register your interest in being part of *Las Casas de Jubileo* by contacting either

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Inquiries may also be addressed to them. Both are part of Jubilee Economics Ministries — a jubilee network and animator of *Las Casas de Jubileo*.