

# Across the Border

## Connecting to God's World

by Heather Block

I've known of Janet for years, through family, work, and friend connections. I think we may have met in the past, but I wouldn't say that I know her. Recently, I learned that Janet and her husband are about to build an eco-friendly home in southern Manitoba, Canada.

Janet Kroeker is obviously a woman who thinks deeply about



her choices. These choices have included a history of voluntary service with MCC, home schooling her children when it's been in their best interests, and leaving a career as a health promotion professional to become the main producer for Shepherd's Dream North (<<http://www.woolbed.ca/steinbach.htm>>). This spring she and her husband will be breaking ground on "virgin land" and beginning to build a home made of a straw-clay

*Janet Kroeker, preparing "virgin land" for planting in Manitoba.*

*Photo by Tim Kroeker*

mix.

As Janet tells me about their plans, I quickly get caught up in her enthusiasm and am intrigued by the many ideas she has been researching. She tells me about Biomimicry, a new discipline studying nature's best ideas and then imitating these designs and processes to solve human problems (<[www.biomimicry.net](http://www.biomimicry.net)>). The straw-clay method being used to build their home is modeled after the way that a bird builds its nest. Like some of the other ideas being used in biomimicry, this is a return to an ancient technique. Another ancient technique that they are using is radiant heat. Their heat will be provided by a masonry heater – a stove surrounded by stones, allowing them to heat their whole house by burning wood

# Across the Ocean

for a mere 1 ½ hours per day.

While this decision may feel as though it is on a scale too large for many of us to emulate, it is clear that, for Janet, it is simply the outgrowth of a lifetime commitment to caring for creation. Long before its public acceptance, Janet took her own bags when shopping. She walks or cycles whenever possible. She gardens, cans, composts, uses seaweed fertilizers, and avoids non-natural pesticides. She tells me that when she has a choice to make, she often thinks of the words of William McDonough, “Does this serve all the children of all the species for all time?”

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As Janet and I talk, it becomes evident that her commitment to the earth and her faith are closely entwined. The choices she makes not only benefit our world, they enrich her soul. She tells me that when she walks, she is forced to slow down. Walking takes more time, allowing her to be more aware of her surroundings, seeing creation with a sense of wonder and appreciation. Perhaps the activity that most enriches her soul, however, is gardening. She tells me that she often thinks of the line, “I’m never nearer God than when I’m in the garden”, knowing that it rings true for her.

After talking with Janet, I think of a verse she quoted that seems to summarize our conversation. I pull out my NIV Bible and look for Jeremiah 6:16:

This is what the Lord says,  
“Stand at the crossroads and look;  
ask for the ancient paths,  
ask where the good way is, and walk in it,  
and you will find rest for your souls.”

I sit for a while and think of the lessons I have learned from my ancestors. I find that I feel connected to an ancient appreciation for our earth. And I find that as I think about caring for creation, I feel a sense of calm and connectedness to God. I look forward to the day that I go visit Janet and Tim’s new home. 📍