

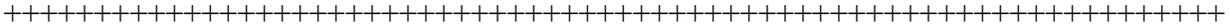
TROUBADOUR

The Newsletter of St. Francis House, New London, Connecticut



Christmas 2012

Vol. 14, No. 4



HOLIDAYS AND LIFE AT ST. FRANCIS HOUSE

by Chrissy Guarnieri

Earlier and earlier the holiday merchandise appears on the shelves which seems to affect the collective psyche of the public at large. Neighborhoods sport Halloween decor as early as the last week of September, and oft linger into November because people aren't certain how to decorate Thanksgiving specific. By the end of America's turkey day dinners Christmas lights and air-filled snow globes, penguins, polar bears and Snoopys with Santa hats have taken over. In the stores we are greeted by all three holidays vying for the consumer bucks.

It takes me a moment or two to get centered in the midst of holiday commercialism. I close my eyes and mentally look for my island of peace. It is easily recognized. It has doubled in structural size since I was a resident, and even with all of the internal hustle and bustle of the daily activities it is still peaceful within. It was a major crossroad in my life that took me to St. Francis House in August 2000. SFH opened its doors and heart and surrounded me with love, hope, grace, justice, and peace of mind. Two of the most influential people, Father Emmett and Aunt Dorrie have stepped out of the physical realm and into God's glory. But for me, they are alive and well inside my mind and heart, as I feel they are in the lives of everyone that they touched.

Throughout the cultures of the world the kitchen is regularly referred to as the 'heart of the home'. I know this was true at SFH. What a tiny little space...but what huge hurdles and pots of soup were undertaken in it. Emmett and I bonded quickly; we both loved to cook. Aunt Dorrie and I bonded swiftly as well because we both loved food and didn't mind playing sous chef. Food is a great place to start building a relationship and so the few steps from the kitchen to the dining room table quickly became familiar. It was the scope of the banquet served at the SFH table that deepened the relationships. I knew at the time that it was good, but it wasn't until I left SFH that the continuous reflection I have participated in allowed me to fully understand why the SFH banquet filled me so completely.

The expression 'from soup to nuts' was only the tip of the SFH feast. Dishes ranged from basics like soup, bread and butter, to beignets (Nate and Sarah's favorites) and the Christmas Eve fondue (Anne's specialty). One of my favorites served up at the table was African Bible Study. The people at the SFH dining room table grew in numbers each Friday night with 'Clarification of Thought', a series of bi-weekly thought provoking programs germane to individual and community growth held in the chapel and continued around a meal.

The dining room table was a place to share thoughts, ideas, and poetry, hold community meetings, work on the *Troubadour* mailings, eat meals, and hold Bible study and philosophical discussions. What we partook of was a completeness of mental, physical and spiritual nourishment multiple times a day. Imagine, if you will, the glory of partaking in communion; it revitalizes and nourishes the essence of the soul with 'remembrance of Christ.' The SFH dining room table always nourished us with a constant 'remembrance of Christ.'

It is ten years since I left SFH to move forward in my life, and I find myself filled with the turbulence of a new major life change. I stand at a crossroad and willingly surrender myself mind, body and spirit to reassessment through prayer. Doing so brings me closer to understanding, once again, what

the SFH banquet presented to me, so that I can move positively through this new transformation in my life.

In Luke 14: 12-14 we read, 12 Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. 13 But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, 14 and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

SFH continues to nourish me. It is always just a thought and prayer away and I take refuge in it. Everyone who passes through its door finds "a place of prayer, a house of hospitality and a center for peace and justice ministry". As I work through my new challenges and wade through holiday commercialism, I am well stocked from the SFH banquet and overflowing with their love, hope, grace, justice and peace of mind.

Chrissy Guarnieri is the Coordinator of Transfer Services at Eastern Connecticut State University. She works with incoming transfer, international and veteran students. She was resident at St. Francis House from August 2000 to August 2002.



BROAD STREET BLUES

by Anne Scheibner

This issue of the *Troubadour* came about more serendipitously than most. A month or so ago we received an email from Chrissy which she entitled "Just a few thoughts" and immediately we thought, "What a great lead article for the Christmas *Troubadour*!" Then we got involved with Laura Burfoot and *Hearing Youth Voices* in working on the *Troubadour* which just came out a few weeks ago. And so we thought "Well, maybe we'll just send out the Annual Appeal as a letter." Then we thought about it again and realized not only how glad we were to hear from Chrissy and receive her photos (see Center Section), but that this was also a great opportunity to ask residents old and new to share news and reflections on their time here. And so here you and we are! Enjoy! And you will find the Annual Appeal on page 7!

There wasn't time or space to include everyone so we will look forward to further updates and reflections in 2013. 2013 will mark the fifteenth anniversary of our beginning to get to know our neighbors from our home here on Broad Street.

Clarification of Thought - - - WINTER/SPRING 2013

EDUCATION

We decided that the energy connected with *Hearing Youth Voices* was such that we needed to explore the theme of education in more depth. The excellent turnout and lively breakout pairs that occurred with Laura Burfoot's November 30 Clarification of Thought session confirmed our decision. We will spend some time over the next several weeks in conversation to discern the best way of carrying out these sessions. We are also exploring securing a bigger space to accommodate the many people in the community who have shown their willingness to engage in this clarification of thought concerning the future of public schools and the meaning of education for the younger generation and indeed for all of us!

Save the dates:

FEBRUARY 8 and 22, MARCH 8 and 22, APRIL 5 and 19, MAY 19

5:30 Evening Prayer, 6:00 Supper, 7-8:30 Discussion

WALKING OUR TALK WITH ST. FRANCIS

Kit and Jane Johnson (by Jane)

There are many reasons our residence at St. Francis/Victory House might surprise our friends and families. The explanation is complicated, but St. Francis himself might be the first to understand. After all, he was a Troubadour—a musician, a poet, a peripatetic seeker, an environmentalist, a peacemaker, a reformed materialist, a non-conformist.

As we approach our 70th birthdays, we are still struggling to walk our talk. We have been a musician (Kit) and a poet (Jane), seekers (mostly Quaker since Kit's C.O. discharge during Vietnam), environmentalists (but mostly talking and not enough walking), materialists and conformists (but uncomfortably so). Looking at our lives in the Light of St. Francis, we might have been headed for 30-32 Broad Street all along!

But what was it that finally got us through the door (and up the many stairs in Victory House)? Come to think of it, a number of co-incidents have brought us here. When the Voluntown Peace Trust was formed, and then re-formed, we found ourselves working with Anne and Emmett on the various committees and programs and board. When Mike Izbicki came to Westerly Friends seeking support for his C.O. application, we housed him in our backyard yurt and eventually introduced him to Saint Francis House where he found a spiritually compatible (and a bit more comfortable!) home. When we began exploring co-housing after years of visiting and considering intentional communities, we considered moving into Quaker Houses in Boston and New York as a way of trying out community living, then realized SFH was right here all the time. When we began meeting with a Sustainable Alternatives group in response to Climate Change, Peak Oil, and the Global Economy, we were looking for a way to save resources by living with less and walking more. When we began being diagnosed with old-age conditions, we knew a reformed lifestyle would also be good for our health. When we considered the Quaker "S-P-I-C-E-S" testimonies of Simplicity, Peace, Integrity, Community, Equality, and Stewardship (or Service or Social responsibility), we decided that Victory House would be a good place to walk our talk.

We don't know how long we will be here. The final impetus for us was the unexpectedly sudden sale of our house as soon as we put up a "For Sale" sign. At the moment we need a refuge where we can catch our breath after a month of intensive trimming of our belongings. We need a transition space where we can do the deep work of discernment before we



know where we should be for however many birthdays we have left. We hope this spiritually centered place will help us gather all these threads (think of a spider's web) and will help us decide where to cast the next string. Remember strings can carry tunes. Imagine a spider ensnaring poems. Picture St. Francis watching and loving it all.

Jane and Kit Johnson began their residency at SFH this Thanksgiving weekend.

Dear Friends of St. Francis House,

New Year's Eve 2009 set the stage for the one moment that continues to unfold for me when I call to mind St. Francis House. After moving away four months prior, I had come back to visit because Anne and I suspected it might be our beloved Emmett's last New Year's Eve with us . . . and sadly, we were not wrong. More than 20 folks were gathered in chairs and on the floor around the prayer room we shared with the ornamented Christmas tree; all of us regulars were packed in as we sang our way into the New Year. When we got to a song that not everyone knew, some were singing, some were talking about it and, as dear old Otis began to howl, the doorbell rang and our indefatigable Anne began to negotiate its answer through the crowd while the rest of us continued singing, talking and howling. I caught Carolyn Patierno's eye just as she caught mine and we began to laugh out loud with great joy . . . everyone was back home engaging in the fullness of life that is St. Francis House!

I am so grateful for my years as a board member serving the St. Francis House community and I am particularly grateful for my sabbatical year living in the beautiful Hermitage. That year of discernment, grounded in daily prayer and community life, prepared me well to return to school to finish the next phase of my theology and ministry studies at the Washington Theological Union; those studies have included ministry placements as a hospital chaplain at the National Institutes of Health, as a retreat director at Georgetown University and studying/practicing peacebuilding through a Catholic mission integration lens in Kenya. Grounded in my faith community of friends and God-children, I currently live at Georgetown University serving as a part-time Chaplain-in-Residence and I also work for the Leadership Conference of Women Religious; the fullness of life indeed continues. Thank you St. Francis House for creating the space for the resurrection of this life.

Peace be with you all, Mary J. Novak



My favorite times at SFH were the Clarification of Thought Friday nights. I really enjoyed having tons of different people come in and share their lives with me---both the main guest and everyone else. I think my favorite one of all was the Christmas party. I hope you all have another good time this year!

Also, I just read through your electronic version of the last *Troubadour*. It looks fantastic! Great job! It's really interesting that this fall's theme was "What is 'the good life'?" because I've been doing a seminar on that exact topic over here as well. Yours was probably a lot more fun though. Mike

Note: Mike Izbicki was in residence from 2010-2011 while awaiting disposition of his CO application from the Navy. He started taking piano lessons from Kit Johnson during that time and did a great piano improv at the 2010 Christmas Party! He is currently a doctoral candidate at the University of California, Riverside.



Max and Henri Alphonse with their mother Bienvenida Mendoza and their dogs Otis and Lassie at their home in the Dominican Republic. Henri and Max honed excellent dog care skills with our own Otis during their residence between 2007 and 2010.

Saint Francis House, significó mi hogar, mi casa, mi familia. Allí encontré a la amiga y al amigo, Anne y Emmett.. Encontré la familia, todas las personas que por allí pasaban y que son parte de la casa. En SFH recibí todo el apoyo que necesite en el momento más duro de mi vida, mi divorcio. Allí llegué y me recibieron como en la casa de mis padres y mis hijos, Henri y Max, y yo nos sentimos protegidos, queridos, amados por todos como uno más de la familia. Doy gracias a Dios y a todas las personas que apoyan y trabajan por el fortalecimiento de SFH, al final significa el fortalecimiento de la familia.

Los queremos, Bienvenida Mendoza, Henri y Max Alphonse

Saint Francis House meant my home, my house, my family. There, I found my friends, Anne and Emmett. I found a family in every person that went through and was part of the House. In SFH, I found the support that I needed during the most difficult time of my life, my divorce. When I arrived there, I was received like in my parents' home and my sons, Henri and Max, and I felt protected, loved by everyone, like another family member. I give thanks to God and to every person that works to support SFH, in the end, it means to strengthen the family.

Love, Bienvenida Mendoza, Henri and Max Alphonse



Some of the current residents of St. Francis House on the porch of 30 Broad Street. From the left: Alaska Bob, Kit, Jane, Paul and Len.

PHOTOS PAST ST. FRANCIS HOUSE





Left: Nate, Sarah, Anne and Emmett in 2000 in the SFH dining Room. Above: Zuli and Nate and their son Alexander Emmett Jarrett held by Aunt Sarah at Aunt Dorrie's funeral reception in the St. James parish hall, January, 2012.

& PRESENT OF THE RESIDENTIAL COMMUNITY



Left: Aunt Dorrie doing dishes and Above: Anne and Chrissy drying dishes after the 2001 Christmas Party

MY TIME AT ST. FRANCIS HOUSE

by Bob Bassett ("Alaska Bob")



I came to St. Francis House for two weeks. That was 5 years ago. I am basically a resident in Alaska, but my family is in my hometown of Norwich. I have developed work here as one of three Native American prison chaplains in Connecticut, and I have supported that work by doing HIV education and community outreach work through the HIV Clinic at Backus Hospital in Norwich. Due to shortfalls in state and federal funding, the Hospital chose to shut down the Clinic this past June. I am hoping to come up with another part time community health outreach opportunity because I enjoy that kind of work and because it makes possible my work as a Native American prison Chaplain. But if I can't find work, I also might end up having to be in Alaska all year round again. If so I would continue the work I have done there in Juneau providing services to people with learning disabilities so that they can continue as active members of the community. But my father's Alzheimer's and dementia continues to worsen, so I hope I can continue to spend time here in Connecticut as well.

Recently I was called to Mississippi as a Red Cross Volunteer, and I was also deployed during our recent experience of Hurricane Sandy. We had 6 Lyme Academy College of Art students evacuated to St. Francis House during Sandy. These were Sarah's classmates and housemates. One day Chris and Adam were able to join me in delivering food and water to emergency shelters in the Eastern Connecticut area. The Red Cross needs more young people involved in its work and these two young men really valued the experience in addition to being a big help.

What have I most enjoyed during my times of residence here at the House? I am really glad to be able to participate in the weekly peace vigils with Viet Nam vet Cal Robertson and other members of the Connecticut Peace and Justice Network. I also really enjoyed the times I was able to join Fr. Emmett and the other Peace Pilgrims during 500 to 700 mile walks which they undertook several years ago. When Fr. Emmett died I was drawn by the Spirit to communicate with him and the Creator in the great mystery of the journey to the afterlife by the use of the chin-upa in the Pipe Ceremony at the grave side.

I really enjoy baking and cooking for a receptive audience and the members of the St. Francis House community are definitely that! I have many roots in southeastern Connecticut and being at St. Francis House enables me to nurture and deepen those roots.

MEMORIES OF ST. FRANCIS HOUSE

by Bob Middeke-Conlin ("VISTA Bob")

I'm glad to hear things are going well and that the House is growing. That is wonderful news! For myself, since you ask, what can I say? Things are going very well for me, far better than I could have imagined and very differently than I ever expected as well. First, however, you ask about my time at SFH.

Well, I can say it was a time filled with memories and to choose just a few is very difficult. I don't think I'll forget my mornings coming downstairs to coffee already brewed by Alaska Bob long gone on his way to his ministries. I enjoyed the mornings before work, talking with Anne as she went through the *New York Times* and we waited for Morning Prayer. I never like waking up early, but there is just something about the calmness of the morning hours before a busy day that I always relish. I don't think I'll ever forget community Bible study with the members of the House as we prayed and gave our thoughts on Bible passages. Paul always had excellent points and the dinner afterward was always good, especially if Wendy was involved in some way. And then there were the conversations with Bob and Mike in the evenings over pizza. Both mornings and evenings were quiet times of reflection and camaraderie I won't forget.

That is not all though. I came during a storm for St. Francis House with Father Emmett's passing from this world and I will never forget his funeral service and the love shown by New London toward him. I think one of the most powerful memories I have is my early morning vigil: Just as dawn broke through the stain glass windows a young man came in off the streets, a young man who never met Emmett but who felt called to play a beautiful tune on his violin. Watching the sun shine through the stained glass as that young man played what he felt in his heart was and is still proof to me that the Holy Spirit works even in what seems dark hours.

The Holy Spirit does work and often in unexpected ways; in my life this is clear. Since leaving St. Francis House I have gone where I least expected; that is, to France. I am a graduate student now at Université Paris Diderot with trips, presentations and articles all scheduled for next year. I don't know how this all happened, other than that I applied for a grant I never thought I'd get. My wife told me to apply even though she must remain in Connecticut. I'm amazed that I am here because I did so poorly in high school, a C and D student at best. God does work through fools and the unwise, that is certainly true for me and it is amazing!

SAINT FRANCIS HOUSE

2012 ANNUAL APPEAL



Dear Friends:

This year has brought many new beginnings. We have four new residents in the House. Len is the first to apply and go through our resident discernment process who never met Emmett. We think this is a sign of the foundation which has been laid on which others may continue to walk. Margaux is a social work student from France who is doing her field internship with the Homeless Hospitality Center (HHC) here in New London. Kit and Jane who are old friends and colleagues in the work of the Voluntown Peace Trust are in the process of settling in even as we write this letter. And we had welcomed visits this summer from former residents Henri now living in the Dominican Republic and “VISTA” Bob who worked with HHC and is now pursuing his doctoral studies in France. We also are delighted to have former resident Marykate as a Bible study regular as she has returned to the area from the West to continue her agricultural production and community work with FRESH New London. Blessed be the ties that bind and continue to interweave our lives.

The work of the Francis Fund has continued to emerge this year with the continued help of our friends and colleagues at Equity Trust. We look forward to reporting more in 2013 on the new connections emerging in our work with the Homeless Hospitality Center and support of local agriculture. Check our website for more information on the Francis Fund and past issues of the *Troubadour*.

Our work with *Hearing Youth Voices* is yet another sign of our being able to build on the foundations which have been laid. Our opportunity to support the work of former resident Laura Burfoot, her colleagues and the young people of *Hearing Youth Voices* including providing them with office and meeting space this fall at Victory House has been a blessing. We are looking forward to continuing our work as “allies” and to exploring the meaning and future of public education and the role of the community in the coming year.

This October at our Annual Meeting we elected two new local board members. Our friend and neighbor Reona Dyess, Director of the Drop-In Learning Center, was part of our annual Fiesta in the park in May with the young people who participated in the non-violence training at the Voluntown Peace Trust and Bill Hossack joined us for Morning Prayer, Bible Study and reorganizing the library during his summer break from work in the Theater Department at Connecticut College. We welcome them as well.

This year started with Aunt Dorrie’s final illness and death in January. We are glad that the photos which Chrissy sent (see the Center Section) include one of Aunt Dorrie from 2001 at her post in the kitchen (as well as photos of Emmett and the children who as you can see are now grown!) This year also brought with it the death of our longtime friend and board member Eunice Waller. We particularly miss them as we enter this holiday season.

We hope that 2013 will bring new beginnings for each of you as well as opportunities to reflect on the paths each of us has been on and the people who have helped us on the way. Your generosity in supporting the on-going life and work of the house is genuinely felt — thank you!

Peace and all good,

Paul Jakoboski
President

Anne Scheibner
Vice President

**NONPROFIT
ORGANIZATION**
U. S. Postage Paid
Permit # 122

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Telephone: (860) 437-8890

Email: stfranchouseenl@att.net

Website: www.stfranchouseenl.org

IN THIS ISSUE:

Chrissy Guarnieri, "Holidays and Life at St. Francis House"

Anne Scheibner, "Broad Street Blues"

Clarification of Thought Schedule for Winter/Spring 2013

Jane and Kit Johnson, "Walking Our Talk with St. Francis"

Mary J. Novak, "Letter to Friends of St. Francis House"

Bob Bassett, "My Time at St. Francis House"

Bob Middeke-Conlin, "Memories of St. Francis House"

2012 ANNUAL APPEAL

Center Section:

Bienvenida Mendoza, Henri and Max Alphonse, "Memories and Appreciation"

Mike Izbicki, "Enjoy this Year's Christmas Party!"

Photographic Retrospective



FRIDAY, DECEMBER 28—

5:30-8:30 ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PARTY

Bring a favorite food, song, poetry, story... to share

