

TROUBADOUR

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



Center Section: 15th Anniversary Celebration and Annual Appeal

Fall-Winter 2014

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Keeping Our Eyes on the Prize

A Call to Action and Witness for Peace

by Mike Hatt

When I moved to New London about five years ago, I began seeing Cal Robertson holding signs about ending war. Being a Vietnam Veteran myself, I have good reason to detest war. I would stand with him occasionally, quietly keeping vigil. He had his signs, "Nonviolence or Non-Existence" Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and "War is Not the Answer" as well as always handing out the poem by Vietnam Veteran George Mizo who died in 2002 from the effects of Agent Orange:

*You, my church, told me it was wrong to kill...except in war.
You, my teachers, told me it was wrong to kill...except in war.
You, my father and mother, told me it was wrong to kill...except in war.
You, my friends, told me it was wrong to kill...except in war.
You, my friends, told me it was wrong to kill...except in war.
You, my government, told me it was wrong to kill...except in war.*

*You sent me to war to kill...
And when I had no choice...
You told me I was wrong.*

*But now I know, you were wrong...
And now I will tell you...*

*My church, my teachers, my father & mother, my friends, my government
It is not wrong to kill... except in war
It is wrong to kill...period.
And this you have to learn...Just as I did.*

When I first approached Cal back then, I asked him how long he had been protesting. He quickly and firmly corrected me. "Not protesting, Brother; Witnessing for peace." It was the first, but not last, lesson I have learned from him.

In the 1970's, veterans Duncan Murphy, Chaplin Charlie Liteky, and Brian Wilson became friends to Cal and were fasting for peace. This inspired Cal, who felt he too had to do something for the cause of peace. Since then he has been bearing witness for peace by standing vigil for six days a week since 1986 and handing out copies of George Mizo's poem which has been a great inspiration to Cal. He has stood at the gate of the Submarine Base in Groton, the Court House in New London and the Soldiers and Sailors Monument in downtown New London. Cal is well known throughout the community for his dedication and commitment to this cause.

Cal was a medic in the Navy and served with the Marines in Vietnam in 1965 and 1966. He was discharged in 1967. He became an EMT for about a year. He then joined the Merchant Marines. He was sent back to Vietnam. After a month, he had enough and so left the Merchant Marines and traveled to Honduras. He stayed for a month, returned to the United States and began working again as an EMT. He then began traveling as a migrant worker. He also states he was drinking very heavily though the drinking did little to help him forget the horrors of war. In 1977, Cal suffered a blood clot which he attributes to his excessive drinking. He has been alcohol free since then.

My own journey from war and addiction to commitment to working for peace began in the Philippines while serving in the Marine Corps. I was on the *USS New Orleans* as an electronic technician with a Marine helicopter squadron. When I went ashore there I became aware of America's role in the world. Prior to this, I was against the war in a general way, but was not aware of the broader implications. The port was a string of bars and prostitutes. I learned that the unemployment rate was 70 percent. I noticed the men sitting in huts in the background. I could see and feel their hostility to the situation. I knew how angry I would be if I were in their position. I went to the Navy chaplain and tried to explain my observations and feelings. He misunderstood me and thought I was feeling guilty about being with prostitutes and told me it was all right. This led to a breakdown fueled by the drugs I was using. I just wanted out and not be a part of the military service. After six months of psychiatric hospitalization, I was honorably discharged. I eventually started working within human services, attending college and working for the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. Ironically, I continued to use alcohol and marijuana along with occasional use of other substances. I also got married and have two beautiful daughters. After retiring in 2009, my drinking became a significant problem, leading to rehab and divorce. Cal's experience resonates with me as I came to the New London area as part of my recovery from substance abuse. I'm happy to report that I have been alcohol and substance free since my arrival. I see now how a door was opened by God to do the work for peace that Cal and I have embarked on. Retirement is not in the cards.

Since I started working with Cal, we have discussed how to bring a stronger presence to the vigils. We have contacted Veterans for Peace and are looking to establish a local chapter. Our immediate goal is to increase the number of people standing in vigil, witnessing for peace. While Cal and I stand in vigil in different places on various days, we want to establish a regular vigil time in front of the Soldiers and Sailors Monument in New London. We invite veterans and non-veterans to stand with us for as little or as long as you can. Check the St. Francis House website for specifics on our actions each week.

We hope that through our discussions at vigils and with the Peace and Justice group that has been meeting as part of St. Francis House that we can be part of developing effective outreach and action. The Voluntown Peace Trust is looking for ways to observe this year as the 50th anniversary of the start of the Viet Nam War. We look forward to working with those involved there and with Veterans for Peace. We look forward to your joining with us.

Mike Hatt worked most recently as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker at Natchaug Hospital, Mansfield Center, CT

Broad Street Blues

by Anne Scheibner

Cal's moving into St. Francis House in September was made possible by a concerted effort of love and support from both Cal's family and the extended SFH community. Some 25 people answered the call to say "yes" to providing a base for Cal's moving in. Paul Jakoboski coordinated the renovations needed for the bathroom and a stair chairlift while Len Raymond has been resident point person for ongoing needs and concerns. Some nine people are providing regular evening meals. Deacon Ellen Adams and Jodi Johnson coordinate that effort. New cooks are always welcome and welcomed to stay and eat as well as prepare a meal! Frida Berrigan is coordinating participation in peace vigils. The far-flung network of support includes the Hartford Catholic Worker with Brian Kavanagh coming down monthly to vigil with Cal and bringing with him good home cooking from Jackie Allen-Doucot; both Joanne Sheehan and Rick Gaumer of the War Resisters League from Norwich come down weekly to vigil and provide food as well. Mike Hatt's stepping forward to take a major role in caregiving and turning the usual way that caregiving is done on its head by having Cal's peace work be front and center for both of them has been a delight to witness.

An unexpected blessing to the life of the House has been the reestablishment of a regular dinner time and table fellowship for both House residents and members of the extended community. Relationships have flourished in new and deeper ways thanks to this opportunity. It has been four years since we had such a regular meal time anchor to community life. Cal's need as a diabetic for a regular meal schedule has thus been the occasion for the power of God to be manifested in the life of the entire community.

We started the fall Clarification of Thought series on "Exploring Our Presence in the World" with a session on "Porch Duty." Cal and his colleagues have been anchoring a peace witness on the porch when not down at Soldiers and Sailors Monument or at the Submarine Base. St. Francis House has hosted meetings of the Peace and Justice Network over the years. But Cal and Mike's interest in starting a Veterans for Peace chapter and recent developments growing out of our hosting a community circle gathering when the Buddhist peace pilgrims came last spring indicate that we may be on embarking on a new commitment to being peacemakers.

We also want you to know that Paul is in Coventry with Wendy recovering from a very difficult bout with pneumonia. Prayers and cards are definitely appreciated: 65 Bissell Rd., Coventry, CT 06238.

Anne Scheibner has lived and worked at St. Francis House for the last fifteen years.

St. Francis House 15TH ANNIVERSARY & 2014 ANNUAL APPEAL

Dear Friends:

This fall's Clarification of Thought series has focused on "Exploring Our Presence in the World." This theme has coincided nicely with our 15th Anniversary as well as the spring's reflection on what it means to be an intentional community founded on Christian foundations in the name of St. Francis and in the tradition of both the Catholic Worker movement and Gandhian nonviolence.

We started our fall Clarification of Thought series with a session on "Porch Duty." In his *Troubadour* article in 2010 announcing the publication of *Broad Street Blues*, Emmett said:

Almost any afternoon or evening you can find one or more members of the St. Francis House Community sitting on the front porch of 30 Broad Street, New London, Connecticut, engaging our neighbors as they stop for conversation or simply nod and walk by. After prayer, this is the most important "ministry" of St. Francis House..... We know addicts and bankers, lawyers at the nearby courthouses, defendants and crime victims, social workers and volunteers at the food co-op across the street, schoolteachers and kids on their way to or from school, elected officials and police officers, clergy and secretaries, shopkeepers and petty thieves – "all sorts and conditions" of people who only have two things in common: they are created in God's image and likeness, beloved of their Creator no matter what they have or haven't done; and they are our neighbors. These individuals, and many more like them, are not only our guides and teachers for life and work at St. Francis House, they are the faces in which we see the face of Jesus.

"Presence" is a soul-ful word. "Practicing the Presence" is a phrase Paul has often used to describe the way the Holy Spirit informs our day to day interactions with neighbors, colleagues and indeed with members of the St. Francis House community itself! The people signing this letter reflect our developing understanding of who is part of that community. Starting with two "Community Conversations" last fall with 30 people who are regulars at Clarification of Thought or other parts of the work of the House, we developed the idea of the Anchor Team composed of both resident and non-resident members of the extended community to be part of our regular Tuesday Business Meeting and thereby part of decision-making for St. Francis House. Cal's coming into residence likewise involved calling on the wider community to make his residency possible.

We are grateful to all of you, our readers, for your ongoing presence of support! We look forward to your continued support as we continue our presence in this part of God's vineyard. Thank you!



Ellen Adams Hannah Gant David Gonzalez Rice Paul Jakoboski Len Raymond Anne Scheibner
Anchor Team Members



Cal Robertson Frida Berrigan Mike Hatt Jodi Johnson Grace Post Panko
Cal's Team Organizers



Anchor Team Member David Gonzalez Rice prepares to demonstrate Disc Golf on the 3-par course he set up as part of our Saturday, October 18 Fiesta in the park next to St. Francis House. "Holes" borrowed from the Voluntown Peace Trust.

CELEBRATING OUR 15th ANNIVERSARY





Left: Residents of SFH after Easter Dinner in 2010—Sarah, Emmett, Wendy, Anne, Paul, Max, Henri, Bienvenida: Seated—Aunt Dorrie.

Below: When Cal moved in we wanted him to pose for a photo for our new brochure. “Not just me; everyone!” he said. So here is part of Cal’s team on the Porch: Hannah, Jodi, Anne, Cal, David, Len, Ellen.



Left: Hearing Youth Voices does a presentation on their work on school reform as part of the Fiesta. St. Francis House has provided shared office space and community support during their first three years.

Marykate Glenn performs her song about St. Francis as part of the Fiesta. She lived at SFH in 2010 and continues to work with FRESH New London in food production and youth empowerment.



St. Francis House — Ten Principles



- 1. Nonviolence.** This is the foundational value. Gandhi called it *ahimsa*, and it means much more than refraining from killing. It is our “way of life,” involving conversion of heart in order to honor all creation as of equal value with ourselves. We believe nonviolence is the law of the universe and we aim to live in harmony with all of creation. There are people and values we are willing to die for, but not to kill for.
- 2. Truth.** Truth likewise is a foundational value. No one religion or philosophy has a monopoly on truth, and neither do we. Our commitment is to the truth itself, and to spending our lives seeking truth, being open to truth wherever it appears, and however others apprehend it.
- 3. Nonpossession.** The root of war and violence is possessiveness. While human beings cannot live without material things—food, clothing, shelter—and relationships, when we turn those goods into commodities and seek to possess them, they possess us, and drive us to violence to protect them. When we achieve personal and communal self-control, we can use good things and not be used by them or destroy others in order to acquire them. Self-rule and personal responsibility are spiritual disciplines for us.
- 4. Right Relationship.** Right relationship is the fundamental virtue of faithful human relationships, not only sexual relations. It involves openness to all people and sees others as belonging to God and not as a means of self-fulfillment. Right relationship is the form nonpossession takes in personal relationships.
- 5. Local Economy.** Gandhi called this *swadeshi* and saw the revival of local economy – in the food we eat, the clothes we wear, our houses and businesses – as the primary vehicle for individual self-control and communal independence. Use of locally grown food and other goods is not only healthy, it builds community with our neighbors who are farmers and artisans.
- 6. Work.** Creative work is one of the most satisfying human achievements. Physical work is not less valuable than artistic or intellectual work. Our bodies need physical work for their well-being and our spirits need work to express our creativity. Shared work is a source of joy. Living is not something we earn, but something we do.
- 7. Respect for all beings.** Respect for our families and neighbors is only the beginning of an attitude of respect for all beings. Such an attitude leads us to combat racism, sexism, class and ethnic prejudices and other forms of oppression, but also to reject “speciesism” and the attitude that all of “nature” is available for human domination and destruction.
- 8. Respect for all religions.** St. Francis House is an intentional Christian community, and our corporate worship is normally Christian but we do not therefore disrespect other religious traditions. We have learned from many traditions, and incorporated much of our learning into our community life. Like others, we are – and always will be – seekers.
- 9. Fearlessness.** We commit to support each other and our neighbors in courageous witness to the truth as we are given to see it and practice it, realizing that there will be practical consequences to our witness as we resist unjust social and economic structures. But living differently is dangerous. We seek to be free from fear always and everywhere, because we trust Martin Luther King, Jr.’s faith that “the universe bends towards justice.”
- 10. Community.** All of us were raised in an individualistic culture that values competition over cooperation and greed more than generosity. To overcome this training, we commit ourselves to community. We desire to be accountable to one another for our actions and practices. We pledge to support each other in our personal growth, but we recognize that genuine spiritual growth is never merely individual. The practice of community, so lacking in our culture, is essential for our growth in nonviolence and our quest for the truth. Consensus decision-making is more than finding common ground among ourselves. It is discerning the mind of Christ.

The living of these principles, values, or vows, can only be achieved by the practice of spiritual disciplines designed to open our lives, as individuals and as a community, to the power that Christians call the Holy Spirit. We are committed, therefore, to forms of common prayer, personal meditation and contemplation, study and work to achieve the goals of community and be a model for our friends and neighbors in New London and the wider world.

Reflection on the Ten Principles

by Ellen Adams

In 2009 on the occasion of the 10th Anniversary of St. Francis House, Emmett Jarrett wrote in the introduction to the draft of our Ten Principles:

We adopt these principles, and promise to follow them—with the help of God—because we believe they offer genuine happiness in our lives and we wish to share that happiness. We know that we can only change the world as we ourselves are changed. We seek to be the change we wish to make in the world. We choose to live by these principles also in order to invite others in our country and in the world to live similarly.

The principles were published in *Broad Street Blues* and modified somewhat at a board meeting in 2012. The main change was to substitute “right relationship” for “chastity” and a more positive understanding of “work” as primarily “creative” rather than “boring and burdensome” in a “class-ridden society.” At that time, the Community at St. Francis House was thought of as residents only and the principles were therefore discussed among the people living in the House at that time. Over the last year, we have been expanding the definition of who is a member of the Community at St. Francis House to include non-residents as well and so we felt it was important to revisit the principles in the light of our new way of being.

We are discussing the principles on Monday nights at 5 p.m. followed by dinner for anyone able to stay. About 8 people, evenly divided between residents and non-residents, have gathered around the dining room table for these discussions starting with fearlessness, truth and respect for all religions. We use the same format of African Method of Bible Study that we use for Clarification of Thought and in Bible Study on Tuesday evenings: The first time the principle is read we listen for a word or phrase that stands out to each of us; the second time we take 5 minutes in silence reflecting on what the principle means to us personally; the third time we spend 5 minutes reflecting on what the principle means for St. Francis House. We then share our reflections as an exercise in listening assuming that God may speak to us through what another hears. These evenings have given us a new appreciation for each other and for the community that has brought us together.

The principles were designed “to open our lives, as individuals and as a community, to the power that Christians call the Holy Spirit.” Although we don’t all like the way the principles are worded, everyone agrees on the importance of their intent. One of the gifts St. Francis House offers is a place to reflect on how and why we live the way we do.

Ellen Adams is Secretary of the St. Francis House board and member of the Anchor Team.

St. Francis House WISH LIST

Over the years we have used the pages of the *Troubadour* to share needs that we have that we hope our readers can help meet. Since this issue marks our 15th birthday, it is sort of a birthday party list as well. Many thanks!

For the Hermitage and guest room:
Guest linens—full-size bed sheets and towels and matched singles

For the kitchen:
Dish towels
10 matching soup bowls—medium size

For the dining room table:
44”x102” table clothes that do not have to be ironed !

For the tool shed:
2 or 3 leaf rakes in good condition

For the gardens: wood chips to put the front and side gardens to bed for the winter

Library: More people to help our board member and retired librarian Janice Syedullah with the cataloguing project to make our holdings more accessible

Help with installing new book cases in the Hermitage as we expand the library

Person(s) who would like to help coordinate our Community Garden space on Cottage Street for the 2015 growing season both to publicize its availability to our neighbors and to coordinate care and water use during the summer



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**COME to the Annual St. Francis House
Christmas Party**

IN THIS ISSUE:

Mike Hatt, "Keeping Our Eyes on the Prize":
A Call to Action and Witness for Peace

Anne Scheibner, "Broad Street Blues"

2014 Annual Appeal— Anchor Team and Cal's Team

St. Francis House -Ten Principles
Ellen Adams, Reflection on the Ten Principles

St. Francis House Wish List

Center Section:

Our 15th Anniversary Celebration and Fiesta



SATURDAY, DECEMBER 27

5:30 Evening Prayer

6:00 Festive Buffet -*Bring a favorite food to share*

7 *Bring a favorite song, poem, story...*