

TROUBADOUR

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



Center Section: April 8 Opening of the SFH Library and Hermitage

Lent 2016

Vol. 18, No. 1

+++++

Renewal and Reflection

A New Chapter in the Life of the St. Francis House Library

by Janice Syedullah, TSSF

In this age when we are overwhelmed with information through various forms of technology, it is difficult to piece together what information is valuable and truthful. The media blasts us with perceptions of the news that aren't always in line with the teachings and principles of love of God and of our neighbor. That's why when I first went through the library collection at St. Francis House, I was excited and delighted to discover a treasure trove of books that do help to educate in those teachings and principles. Each book I picked up pointed me in the direction of learning how to become a better person. I was eager for this treasure to be shared with others, and I thought my training and experience as a librarian could help to make this possible. There are nearly 3,000 titles in the St. Francis House Library and now they are accessible through an on-line catalog which is a link on the St. Francis House web page. <http://stfrancishousewp1.whewitt.org/>

The story of my discovering the library began several years ago when I got a call from Paul Jakoboski asking if my husband Masud and I would consider being board members for St. Francis House. I was delighted to have been asked and felt quite humbled and honored. Of course we agreed and that started a long, rich relationship with the community. Emmett who died in October, 2010, was a devoted and active member of the Third Order, Society of St. Francis. Paul, Masud, and I are also members of that Order. Whenever Emmett led a workshop or retreat at our Regional Convocation, I felt as if I were sitting at the feet of a wisdom figure. He exuded peace, centeredness, and gentleness. There was a light that emanated from Emmett that made me respond with a kind of awe. I knew that this man had a deep relationship with God. I knew for a fact that he put into practice what he preached. Issues of peace and social justice were very real to him. So I was not surprised to discover the quality of the library he had amassed over the years. As a professional librarian, every time I visited St. Francis House I found myself in the library browsing the books on the shelves. It was a splendid collection, and my first reaction was that I would love to catalog it so that it could be more easily accessible. I offered my services to the St. Francis House community, and they accepted. Starting last year, I began to enter the book titles into an online database known as LibraryThing. With each book I added to the database I became more and more excited about the scope and depth of the collection. This was a treasure that I thought should be shared with many people. The idea of offering the library as a gift to the extended community of St. Francis House and to the wider community of New London and southeastern Connecticut as well as to visitors to St. Francis House was met with much support and enthusiasm.

It is hoped that this library will be of use to those seeking information and reading materials on topics such as social justice, racism, nonviolence, liberation theology, church and biblical studies, interfaith studies, feminist studies, Christian devotional literature and Franciscan studies as well as poetry, biography, and fiction. The poetry collection is outstanding. We are hoping that high school and college students, church members and clergy of various denominations, seminarians, and those drawn to the pursuit of peace and justice from various perspectives will become patrons.

The library will officially open on April 8. Although anyone can use the books on-site, borrowing privileges will be limited to residents of New London and the extended community of St. Francis House. The library will be a rich and rewarding resource for guests in the Hermitage including area theology students and clergy who come for sermon preparation, guests who are here on retreat or sabbatical or

those coming to get to know the House.

Emmett's lifelong vocation as a poet, student and teacher of literature as well as his membership in the Society of St. Francis, is on full display in the Hermitage collections. This is an opportunity to let the Spirit be your guide in spending time browsing through these unique collections. Both poetry and literature sections are arranged in alphabetical order by author. Also arranged in alphabetical order is the diverse collection of biographies located in Victory House. Biographies and autobiographies range from G.K. Chesterton's *Saint Thomas Aquinas "The Dumb Ox"* to Dorothy Day's *The Long Loneliness* to St. Therese of Lisieux's *The Story of a Soul*. Biographies of Thomas Merton, Desmond Tutu, W.E.B. DuBois, Walt Whitman and Ezra Pound illustrate both the range and focus of the collection. Again the thought was to break out these stories of lives to make for easy browsing. You don't have to know whom you are looking for; you can just browse.

The Hermitage also houses secondary source material including complete sets of the Anchor Bible, the Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Butler's Lives of the Saints, Sacra Pagina Series, Ancient Christian Commentary and The New Interpreter's Bible. These volumes were part of Emmett's personal reference library although the Theological Dictionary of the New Testament was his wedding gift to Anne who studied New Testament Greek at Union Theological Seminary in New York. You don't have to know Greek or Hebrew to find this an amazing study tool for biblical textual analysis.

Dr. Linda Powell Pruitt, TSSF, was a founding board member of St. Francis House and one of Anne's oldest friends and colleagues from their days in the 1970's in New York City. Linda's professional work after receiving her doctorate was in urban education reform. So we are actively seeking ways for the collection— including Linda's own writing-- to serve those concerned with school advocacy and reform. Anne's books on African-American and feminist/womanist studies will also be housed in Victory House as part of the Linda Powell Pruitt Collection. That collection includes *Sermons Seldom Heard*, edited by Annie Lally Milhaven, with the section on race and the concept of inclusivity which Anne and Linda wrote together as well as Linda's essay in Barbara Smith's *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*. The collection also includes an extensive selection of English author Sara Maitland's work in both theology and fiction. The Emmett Jarrett Collection of Social Justice and Theology is housed in his former study and office for doing spiritual direction at 30 Broad Street. Anne's collection of Sara Maitland's work stems from her friendship with Sara; likewise Emmett was a student of Ken Leech's in London in the 1970's. The collection of Ken's extensive writings in racial and social justice and spiritual-

ity are particularly appropriate since Ken was a regular visitor to St. Francis House during our first 10 years.

Emmett died in 2010, Linda in 2013 and Ken in 2015. This renewal of the St. Francis House library is a way to honor their memory and keep the spirit of their lives and work aflame within our community life as well as to acknowledge the power of reflection and the printed word even in the digital age. Come explore with us!

Janice Syedullah, TSSF, is a (not so!) retired librarian. Presently, she serves as an Assistant Formation Director for the Third Order of the Society of St. Francis. She and her husband Masud live in Hyde Park, NY.

Clarification of Thought Schedule

Winter-Spring



2016

Seek Peace and Pursue It

(Psalm 38:14)

Feb. 19: *Before You March, Meditate*
Ellen Adams*

March 4: *Witnessing for Peace*
Cal Robertson and Mike Hatt

March 18: *Expanding Truth & Reconciliation*
Len Raymond

April 1: *Shared Security*
Buddhist Peace Pagoda
Walk for a New Spring

April 15: *Gandhian Non-violent Social Change*
Frida Berrigan and Joanne Sheehan

April 29: *Learning from Metamorphosis*
Hannah Gant

May 13: *Reflections and Wrap Up*

5:30 Evening Prayer and Bible Study

6:00 Vegetarian soup and salad

7:00 - 8:30 Topic presented and discussed

* **Note:** In Ellen Adams' reflection on "The Principles Underlying This Series" (page 3), she highlights seven of the ten principles of St. Francis House. All ten principles can be found in the *Troubadour*, Vol. 16, No. 3, on our website www.stfrancishousewpl.whewitt.org/troubadour/

The Principles underlying our series *Seek Peace and Pursue It*

by Ellen Adams

"A pebble dropped into the energy of the planet, sends out ripples of energy that slowly spread, further and further from their source. Who knows how far energy will flow and what positive changes, great and small, will take place in our world because of this seemingly minor contribution and prayer of our peace pilgrims." Community member Janet Minella-Didier used these words to describe the 2006 Peace Pilgrimage. I believe it also describes the work that all of our Clarification of Thought speakers will discuss this Spring. All are committed to peace and all work for peace in a variety of ways. All of them have dedicated their pasts and their futures to be the change they wish to see happen.

I talked about the importance of meditating on peace at the first session. Although it was entitled, *Before You March, Meditate*, I went away from the evening believing that although each of our speakers may define peace in different ways and pursue peace in a variety of ways, what we have in common is a dedication to the St. Francis House Principles. Particularly:

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."

Nonpossession "The root of war and violence is possessiveness. While human being 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."

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."

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."

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."

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.'"

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."

"....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."

Ellen Adams is an Episcopal deacon and member of the SFH Anchor Team. She is working on Faith Behind Bars with the Episcopal Church in Connecticut.

2016 St. Francis House Annual Community Retreat

Saturday, April 9

Ahimsa Lodge, Voluntown Peace Trust

9AM Coffee & tea

9:30AM Opening Prayer and
African Method of Bible Study

3:30PM Closing

Focus themes for the day: *The New Monasticism* and Interspirituality (book available), Vocation/Formation for all of us and exploring concept of Anchoring Time

Call 860-437-8890 to let us know you can come and to get directions to the Lodge or to car pool.

St. Francis House Library Collections



The works of several hundred poets—some well known others less so but all known and valued by Emmett in his life as a poet and as a high school and college teacher. The authors range from Helen Adam to Denise Levertov, Ernesto Cardenal to Pablo Neruda, Gary Snyder to R.S. Thomas and Robert Lax to Thomas Merton. Fiction authors run from Graham Greene to Nikos Kazantzakis and Willa Cather to the Brothers Grimm.



Through the vision and dedicated work of SFH board member Janice Syedullah (right), the St. Francis House Library is taking on a new life. The SFH community wishes to express our appreciation to Janice and her array of helpers. Conversion of life and formation are key parts of the life of the House and the library is now a renewed part of that life. Thank you, Janice!



Now, through LibraryThing anyone with access to the internet will be able to view the holdings in the St. Francis House Library. You need only go to the Web page at <http://stfranchishousewp1.whewitt.org/> and click on library. This is a new ministry of St. Francis House and we are excited about offering it to the New London community.

The library will officially open on April 8. Although anyone can use the books on-site, borrowing privileges will be limited to residents of New London and the extended community of St. Francis House.

When you visit the library, the librarian, Janet Minella-Didier (shown left arranging the Emmett Jarrett Social Justice and Theology Collection) will be able to register you as a user with proper identification. Some books are only available for use in the library. The librarian will let you know which books are not for loan.

You are invited to come to the Open House which will be held on Friday, April 8, from 4:00 pm to 6:00 p.m. There will be tours available and an opportunity to browse the collections. Light refreshments will be served. Register with us and become a patron of the library. Help us to celebrate the launching of this exciting new venture!



Mike Hatt and Cal Robertson in the Hermitage sitting room. Poetry collection is in the book case behind them and half of the biblical reference resources can be seen through the doorway to the right.



Anne Scheibner sorts through some of the books in the Linda Powell Pruitt Feminist/Womanist, African American and Educational Change Collection. Behind her is the biography collection in the bookcase donated by Gladys Rodman.



Inspired by the work on the St. Francis House libraries, the **Voluntown Peace Trust** is working to get its collections on LibraryThing. If you are looking for specific peace movement resources for your retreat or sabbatical, check out the resources at VPT. If your visit includes more than a day, VPT has overnight/retreat accommodations in Chuck's Cabin, the yurt (photo below) or Ahimsa Lodge at its historic rural home in Voluntown, CT, a 40-minute drive from New London. Spend contemplative time walking the labyrinth dedicated to Fr. Emmett, sitting in the Cal Robertson garden and exploring the woods. For more information: www.voluntownpeacetrust.org.

There are three libraries at the Voluntown Peace Trust, an educational resource and support center dedicated to nonviolent social change and sustainable living.

The AJ Muste Center Library contains books that were read by the peace and justice activists of the Community for Nonviolent Action who lived there during the sixties, who were involved in antiwar, civil rights and the environmental movement. It also includes books written by and about them – including AJ Muste, Barbara Deming, Bob and Marjorie Swann - along with more recent books on nonviolent social change.

The Gandhi Reading Room, located on the first floor of the Farmhouse (photo above) features Chuck Matthei's extensive collection of books by and about Gandhi. This library was dedicated in 2012 on the 10th anniversary of Chuck's death. Many of the books and pamphlets were printed in India and are not easily found in the U.S.

VPT is currently organizing a **collection of resources on the Vietnam War**. This includes materials brought back by pacifists who visited Vietnam during the war, archives of anti-war activities and books written over the decades about the war.



SPARK MAKERSPACE ENTERS NEW PHASE IN DOWNTOWN NEW LONDON



Much continues to happen in the life of Spark Makerspace, the community-run workshop and learning center that Victory House resident Hannah Gant has been dedicating herself to over the last year and a half. These photos from the Spark website and the update below from Hannah give an idea of recent developments:

The woodshop on the first floor is now functional with nearly all donated equipment valued at over \$30,000. Working Members are now signing up to contribute \$30 / month as well as time to develop all of these shared workstations throughout the 11,000 square feet of space in two adjacent locations in downtown New London.

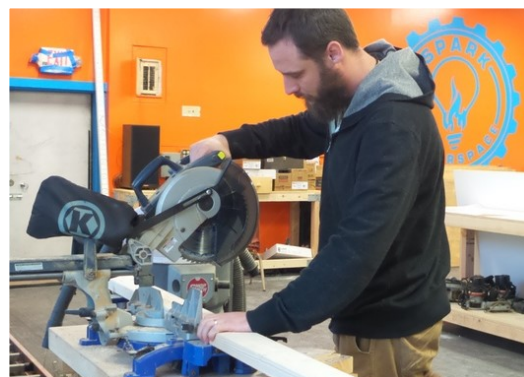
Last month Spark expanded into the second floor of the old El N Gee building at 86 Golden Street to create an artspace area. This space will house screenprinting, print making, small metals, painting, sewing machines, etc. The downstairs space includes a full commercial kitchen as well as an electronics area with 3D printers, Arduino, soldering, and computers. Outside is being developed for welding. The space at 13 Golden Street is being developed for shared office, meeting, classroom, and conference space as well as retail.

The economics of Spark are different from a regular business in that many of the activities will be member-led. The paid staff is on hand to coordinate Working Members and ensure smooth operations. This will keep costs down relative to other similar makerspace entities. Nonetheless, there will still be normal overhead expenses.



Longtime St. Francis House extended community member Marlies Parent (to the right in the above photo) has been involved in the ReInspire project which up-cycles used materials.

For further information about this cooperative “experiment with the truth” attempting to unlock a generative economic context of sharing skills with one another and growing civic muscle to take care of place, visit their website at www.spark.coop



Hannah checks out a vintage Singer sewing machine. She will be reflecting on new ways of understanding both economics and peace-making in her April 29 presentation at Clarification of Thought entitled “*Learning from Metamorphosis.*”

Street 9

Restorative practices in the New London street scene

by Len Raymond

Street 9 is a newly formed, not yet incorporated business that I have created for facilitating various restorative circles. A restorative circle consists of a group sitting in a circle taking turns answering questions that are designed to elicit both thoughts and feelings. The facilitator does not do therapy or reconciliation — merely manages the flow. Street 9 is in the business of “street circles,” with “9” in the name stemming from 9’s symbolism of completion and fulfillment. The street circles are a type of restorative circle I designed for engaging with those who are homeless. This is about those street circles. To learn more about restorative practices, see www.iirp.edu.

Currently, I am facilitating five circles, having started with one three years ago. To build an appreciation of these circles as micro-communities, I often ask, “What is the smartest thing in the room?” Someone usually gets it — “All of us together.” These circles provide a place for engaging with others in a peaceful way.

This work began as one street circle to serve those in a housing program managed by the Homeless Hospitality Center, a program for those with frequent episodes of homelessness and incarceration. Street 9 was formed to expand beyond this — to offer circles to any who are homeless or formerly homeless.

It was a surprising success when 34 showed up for a circle that had been averaging 5! This 34 has become two additional circles. The circles have a subset of up to 4 people as caseworkers and community supporters. Community supporters are colleagues, friends or anyone not struggling at the fringes of society.

When giving an overview I say, “This is about supporting a person to grow from street life to community life, where street life is about protecting yourself and community life is about having satisfaction.” I add, “You’re pretty much smart enough to protect yourself, but you’re likely not smart enough to find satisfaction — community is the best at that.” I point out that I have a satisfying life and it comes from engaging with my community of professionals, mentors and friends.

To foster each of these five on-going circles as vibrant micro-communities — as places of satisfaction and wisdom — my approach is:

1. To provide incentives
2. To strive for full transparency
3. To push gently for mutual responsibility

The \$10 gift card and free pizza, as incentives, add an air of hospitality and make it easy for a participant to invite a friend. Secondly, I work at transparency, never expecting to achieve it fully. Transparency builds

trust and encourages openness. Thirdly, I tenaciously go for mutual responsibility even though it can take a long time. I find responsibility to be inherently satisfying, although easily entangled with crippling connotations. My intent is for others eventually to take charge of a street circle, creating a balanced, mutual sharing of responsibilities between the facilitator (myself) and the participants.

The street circles of Street 9 have four segments:

First, three questions are asked as a poll for the sake of measuring well-being, asking on a scale of zero to nine:

- Are you pulling back from angers to see the big picture?
- Are you determined about pushing through anxieties or fears?
- Are you relaxed when dealing with the small pains of life?

Second, two or three questions are composed, sometimes focusing on what the poll says we are best at, sometimes the worst at, or at other times just a topic of general interest. We then do a go-around on each question. At a recent circle, the questions were, “What gets you angry?” and then, “What are you thinking at that time?”

Third, when time allows and someone is interested, we have a support session for that person. It is a specific structure that creates a safe space for him or her to hear brainstorming ideas without the worry of others being in one’s face — sharing ideas in a peaceful manner.

Fourth, we have social time with pizza and a smoke break for those who want it.

While sharing pizza at another recent circle, the woman next to me said, “This is good.” I wondered if she meant the pizza — which *was* surprisingly good — or the whole event. With a small sweep of her hand, she spoke, “The whole thing.” She wasn’t directly thanking me, just realizing this “micro-community” had value for her. This was her first street circle, and she apparently hadn’t expected much, except, of course, the \$10 gift card and free pizza. It was a moment of quiet, mutual celebration.

Among many things these street circles are, such as places for courage or compassion, they can also be places of peace — the small peace of feeling safe to open up to others. In this spirit, I have begun to wonder if such peace and willingness to open up, can be scaled up. This August, I will be exploring big-scale at the World Social Forum in Montreal. I see opportunities for growing peace through a mix of restorative practices, measurement of well-being, and mutual responsibility.

Len Raymond lives and works at St. Francis House. He works part-time at the Homeless Hospitality Center, and continues his interest in promoting restorative practices.

Saint Francis House
P.O. Box 2171
New London, CT 06320-2171

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Telephone: (860) 437-8890

Email: stfrancishouseNL@att.net

Website: www.stfrancishouseNL.org

**NONPROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U. S. Postage Paid
Permit # 122
New London, CT**

IN THIS ISSUE:

Janice Syedullah, TSSF, “Renewal and Reflection: A New Chapter in the Life of the St. Francis House Library”

Clarification of Thought Schedule Winter /Spring 2016 —
“*Seek Peace and Pursue It*”

Ellen Adams, “The Principles underlying our series:
“*Seek Peace and Pursue It*”

Hannah Gant, Spark Makerspace Update

Len Raymond, “Street 9 — Restorative Practices in the New London Street Scene”

Center Section: The St. Francis House Library and newly organized collections in memory of the Rev. Emmett Jarrett, TSSF and Dr. Linda Powell Pruitt, TSSF



Come celebrate the newly organized

St. Francis House Library

**Friday, April 8
4-6 p.m.**

**Tours and refreshments
Dedication at 5 p.m.**