

TROUBADOUR

A thread of the Good News we feel called to print

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

Christmas 2022

Armistice Day Witness, November 11, 2022

by Tim Lietzke

On a cold, drizzly Armistice Day afternoon, members of the St. Francis House residential and extended community gathered at the Soldiers and Sailors monument in downtown New London. We were there not only to celebrate the end of a particular war but to give witness to the long-hoped-for end of all war. The original Armistice Day celebrated the end of World War I as "the war to end of all wars". The cease-fire that ended that war occurred at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month of 1918. In 1954, the U.S. Congress changed the name Armistice Day to Veterans Day to remember living and deceased military veterans.

On this November 11, we read Mark Twain's *The War Prayer* written in 1905, but, in accordance with the request of family members, not published until after his death. It is a strong indictment of war graphically recounting the contagion of war fervor and the adulation of those going off to fight. It exposes the unspoken side of prayers for victory.

First the war fervor: "... nightly the packed mass meetings listening, panting, to patriot oratory which stirred the deepest deeps of their hearts,..."

Or again, "...the church was filled; the volunteers were there, their young faces alight with martial dreams..."

Then the adulation: "...With the volunteers sat their dear ones, proud, happy, and envied by the neighbors and friends who had no sons and brothers to send forth to the field of honor, there to win for the flag, or, failing, die the noblest of noble deaths."

And finally, the unspoken prayer: "...help us to tear their soldiers to bloody shreds with our shells; ...help us to lay waste their humble homes with a hurricane of fire; help us to wring the hearts of their unoffending widows with unavailing grief; help us to turn them out roofless with their little children to wander unfriended the wastes of their desolated land in rags and hunger and thirst..."

While this may seem melodramatic to most in our present world, war is still commonly accepted as sometimes necessary to counter aggression or address apparently irreconcilable conflict. It is applauded or justified by politicians and media, paid for, perhaps grudgingly or unthinkingly, by taxpayers, sought by greedy-for-profit war industries and energy producers, and enabled by the labors of employees. This nexus of people and institutions encompasses the vast majority and makes the end of war seem to be an illusory hope. Still, we hope in spite of appearances because we trust that the Spirit of love and truth is moving the world towards peace and justice and ultimately will not fail.

In the face of this wide-spread complicity, our small group went forth to the street to raise a flickering candle of hope. During the vigil we read the Twain prose poem, taking turns reading a short section. We faced the Bank Street intersection with State Street and received, if any response at all, positive responses -- honks and thumbs-up. Cal Robertson said that the witness was good, but he wished there had been 10,000 people there, not just our small group. Grace Panko felt that Janet Minella-Didier, a fellow peace activist who died earlier this year, was there with us in spirit. Len Raymond thinks that the more people celebrate life, kindness, joy, local and global community, the less we will need to celebrate the end of war since humanity will be less inclined to go to war.

Still, questions abound concerning our efforts to foster peace. What would be required to convert Electric Boat to an environmentally friendly enterprise? How could we promote a public conversation that would awaken us out of our collective lethargy? How do we break the circle of complicity, outlined above, and so make war less inevitable? We welcome your thoughts.

Tim Lietzke was a member of the Pershing Plowshares disarmament action in Orlando, FL on Easter morning, 1984, for which action he was imprisoned for more than two years. He was a co-founder of Freedom House, a soup kitchen and shelter in Richmond, VA, did prison ministry and anti-death penalty work for many years, and was a founding member of the Quaker Lake Friends Meeting in Farmville, VA. More recently he lived and worked on the Peter Maurin Catholic Worker farm in NY and subsequently lived in Monteverde, Costa Rica where he was clerk of the Monteverde Friends Meeting for three years, edited the "Seeds" journal, and helped start and participated in spiritual sharing groups.

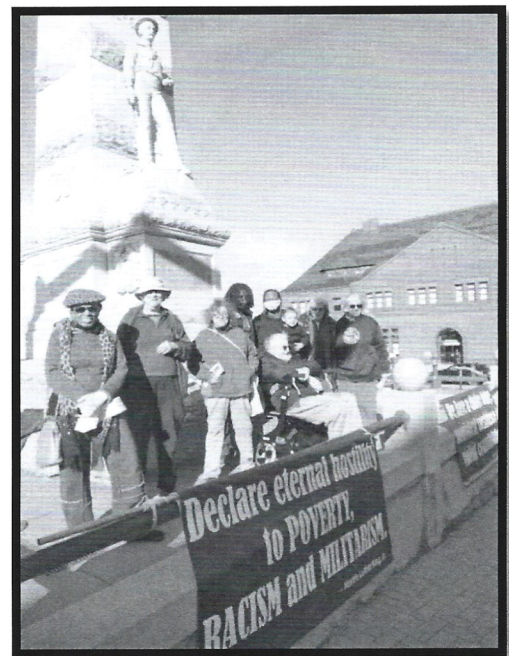
To read Mark Twain's *The War Prayer* in its entirety, go to:

<https://www.americanyawp.com/reader/19-american-empire/mark-twain-the-war-prayer-ca-1904-5/>

Note on *The War Prayer* from CBS News... "In 1904, disgusted by the aftermath of the Spanish-American War and the subsequent Philippine-American War, Mark Twain wrote a short anti-war prose poem called *The War Prayer*. His family begged him not to publish it, his friends advised him to bury it, and his publisher rejected it, thinking it too inflammatory for the times. Twain agreed, but instructed that it be published after his death, saying famously, 'None but the dead are permitted to tell the truth.'"

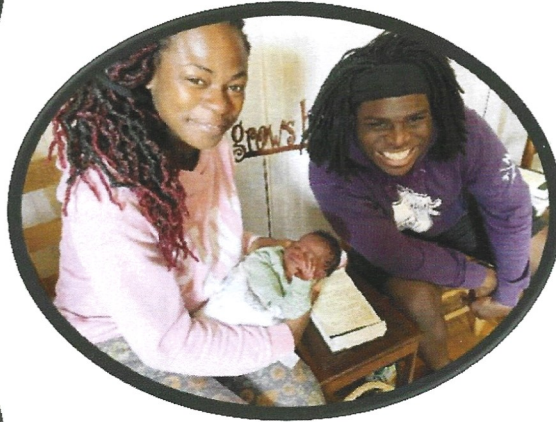


A Time for Witness



Top left: 11/11 Armistice Day 2022 and Middle Right: 11/11 Armistice Day 2021 Top right: 8/6 Witness in honor of Tom Clark
Middle left and bottom right: 8/9 Nagasaki Day Bottom left: SFH board witnessing with Cal – Janet Minella-Didier seated

A Time for Celebration and Thanksgiving



Above and left: SFH Residents Sharmaine Gregor & Ben Abraham at Morning Prayer with son Izaiah Above left: Grace Panko & Izaiah

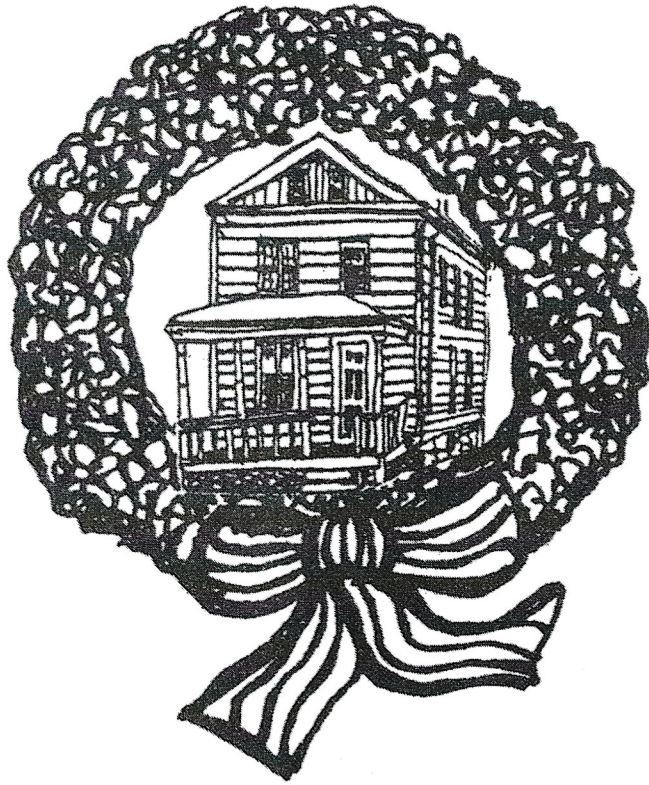
Top right: After a year in residence at SFH with her daughter Reona, Barbara Dyess celebrates her September birthday in her new apartment.

Right: Janet Minella-Didier helped catalogue and organize the St. Francis House library.



Above: A panoramic view of Morning Prayer at SFH in the spring of 2017. Both the Rev. Russ Gundlach (second from left) and Janet Minella-Didier (far right) served as leaders of Morning Prayer for many years. Janet died on May 26 and Russ on November 11. Tom Clark who was part of the organizing committee for the Resistance to the 2005 Mock Terror Attack on New London died on July 21. We held a vigil in his honor just before his memorial service at St. James on August 6.

+ May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed by the mercy of God, Rest in Peace +



May Joy thrive

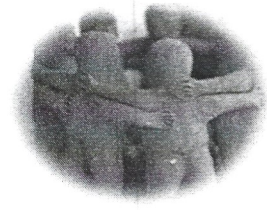
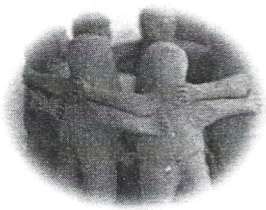
IN OUR HEARTS

IN THIS AND EVERY

SEASON

....Then the cloud passed, and the pool was empty.
Go, said the bird, for the leaves were full of children,
Hidden excitedly, containing laughter.
Go, go, go, said the bird: human kind
Cannot bear very much reality.
Time past and time future
What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present.

Four Quartets: Burnt Norton by T.S. Eliot



Reclaiming Responsibility: Sustaining Life

Bi-weekly Zoom on WEDNESDAY evenings starting with
6:45 pm Check In and Warm Up Question
7 - 8:30 pm Presentation and Discussion

September 21 - **Introduction with African Method of Bible Study** Presenter: **Ellen Adams**

October 5 - **Education** Presenters: **Reona Dyess and Ellen Adams**

October 19 - **Peace** Presenters: **Madeline Labriola and Frida Berrigan**

November 2 - **Overdose Deaths & Addictions: Community Mental Health**
Presenter: **Jeanne Milstein**

November 16 - **Truth-telling, reckoning, about land, bodies and wealth**
Presenter: **Byron Rushing**

November 30 - **Water** Presenter: **Ellen Adams**

December 14 - **Wrap Up: What have we learned?** Moderator: **Sharmaine Gregor**

ANNOUNCEMENT: Clarification of Thought Winter-Spring 2023

Save the dates: WEDNESDAY evenings on 2/15, 3/1, 3/15, 3/29, 4/12, 4/26, 5/10

In 2023 the St. Francis House board will begin leading an exploration to help develop "Succession Planning" and, for example, address such questions as, "St. Francis House 2030: Why, What, Who, How?" ***Broad St. Blues: A Reader in Radical Discipleship*** (2010) includes articles published in the *Troubadour* between 1999-2010. For this next CoFT series, we will draw on Emmett Jarrett's section on *The Franciscan Spirit*, the transcription of Ed Rodman's talk on *Building the Beloved Community*, the transcription of Chuck Matthei's *Living in Community* and Anne Scheibner's 2006 piece, "But what do you DO?" Reading (or rereading!) these articles is not necessary for attending the CoFT evenings, but we think we will all gain insight from reflecting on how the life and work of the residential and extended community of St. Francis House was expressed during those first ten years. If you do not have a copy of *Broad St. Blues*, let us know!

We will continue holding the series on Wednesday evenings. Let us know if you would like to be on our Eblast list. We do not know what the New Year will hold as far as in-person vs. zoom gatherings but we will hope to continue some form of hybrid for those of you who are not local.

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