

TROUBADOUR

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



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FAITH IN TIME OF WAR

by Emmett Jarrett, TSSF

SEPTEMBER 11, 2001, IS ONE OF THOSE DAYS that everybody remembers. Like the day President Kennedy was shot, or Martin Luther King, Jr., was martyred, you always remember where you were, who you were with, what you were doing. Karen Johnson, of New Haven, was late for her spiritual direction appointment with me that day, because of the terrorist attacks in New York City. Fr. Russ Kennedy, a Roman Catholic priest from Norwich, had come for lunch and conversation about a broad-based community organizing effort we are working on together. Anne and Nate and Sarah and I watched a lot more television that day than we usually do. Ed Rodman telephoned from Boston to make sure we were okay. A lot of people telephoned friends and relatives that day. We knew that something important had happened, and that life would be different for us from that day on. We didn't understand yet just how different.

October 7, 2001, is the other day I won't forget. We had finished the St. Francis House fall board meeting the day before. Dick Marks stayed over to go to church with us on Sunday and be present to accept seven beautiful quilts that women at St. James Episcopal Church, New London, had made for us. We got home from church on that sunny autumn Sunday and learned that US bombing of Afghanistan had begun. Our sabbath peace was broken by news of the bombing raids. The "war on terrorism" had begun in earnest, and its end seems distant even today. It's important to speak of October 7 as well as September 11. The terrorist attack and the US military response are aspects of the one world of war we have all begun to live in.

This issue of the TROUBADOUR has two purposes: first, to communicate to our friends and supporters our response as Christian peacemakers to the war, and second, to outline our plans for expansion of our ministry in the light of recent events. A Christian cannot live in a world of abstractions. Our ministry is our response to God's call to us to live faithfully in this world, not another, different or better one. Our life at St. Francis House is an "experiment with the truth," so our efforts to be faithful are experiential. We share what we have prayed and thought and said and done with you, and invite your responses. We are seeking clarity not giving answers. We can only grow from our engagement with the Word of God in the world, and with our friends.

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RESPONSE TO WAR

THE ST. FRANCIS HOUSE BOARD approved a "six point plan" to expand the ministry and share our experience with the wider world. We made that decision with the events of September 11 in mind, anticipating that some form of US military response would soon begin. It seems important to go ahead with these plans. We act, not in spite of world events, terror and war, but because our life and ministry is, we hope, a response in faith to injustice and war in the world. The Word of God calls us "to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God" (Micah 6:8). Indeed, the bleaker the picture for life, justice, peace, and human dignity, the louder and clearer God's call sounds.

We were already involved with global economic justice issues. Partly as a result of what we learned from the Episcopal Urban Caucus assembly last February, as well as Anne's deep commitment to renewal of local use of the land, we have been thinking for some time about the movement to resist global corporate control of the world economy. I had planned to go to Washington at the end of September to join the religious community's witness at the World Bank and International Monetary Fund meetings.

After September 11, both the meetings and the protests were cancelled. In response to national religious working group efforts, we issued a local "call to prayer and fasting for planetary community," and fasted for five days during the week of September 26-October 2. It seemed clear to us that "the World Trade Center and the Pentagon are symbols of prosperity and security to many Americans [but] seem tragically to be symbols of poverty and want, of insecurity and anxiety, to many others."

On September 14, Rabbi Aaron Rosenberg, Imam Mahmoud Mansour, and I led a memorial service for those who died in the terrorist attacks. Harkness Chapel at Connecticut College was packed and the simple service was dramatic because of the

shared experience of people from all three Abrahamic faiths. The same day Anne and I joined the Islamic Center of New London for worship in the aftermath of telephoned death threats to our Muslim friends.

The beginning of the bombing of Afghanistan on October 7 intensified our resolve to resist war fever and practice Jesus' commandment to "love our enemies" (Matthew 5:44). Not long afterward, PaxChristiUSA issued a call for Friday fasting "for the duration," and we decided to join that effort as well.

On October 14 our friend Stephen Kobasa, of New Haven, sent us a copy of the **Statement of Conviction regarding the "War on Terrorism"** published by Christian Peacemaking Teams. CPT is an initiative among Mennonite and Church of the Brethren congregations and Friends Meetings that supports nonviolent work around the world. The Statement calls for "weekly community Truth Forums from now until Christmas," and we have been sponsoring such forums at St. Francis House since October 26. New people have been coming to St. Francis House for these events, including Quakers, people of no religious affiliation, and other Christians with questions about war and peace.

My involvement with members of the Muslim community in New London, and my friendship with Imam Mahmoud Mansour, led us to share memorial services for the dead in the terrorist attacks with them. We have also been able to support local efforts for understanding among Muslims, Jews, Christians and others. The danger to civil liberties in the US for Muslim citizens and Middle Eastern immigrants, among others, makes these actions crucial in time of war. Our new intern, Barbara Barrett, came to work with us as a direct result of these efforts.

We have probably lost some friends, if not indeed made some "enemies" in our attempt to hold up Jesus' injunction to "love your enemies," but this is not our first experience with rejection and won't be the last. Holding "truth forums" about our country's war-making seems the least a

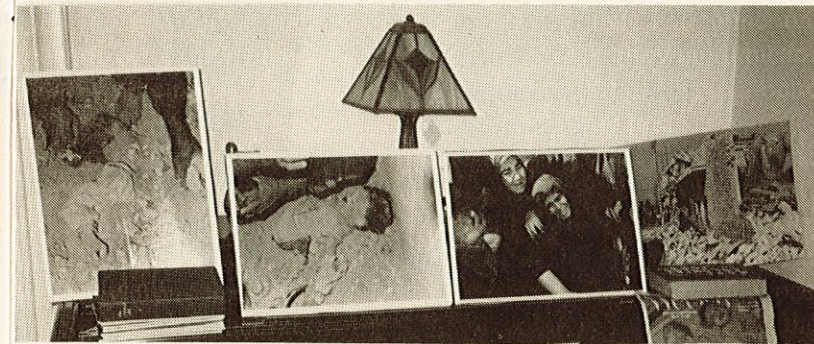
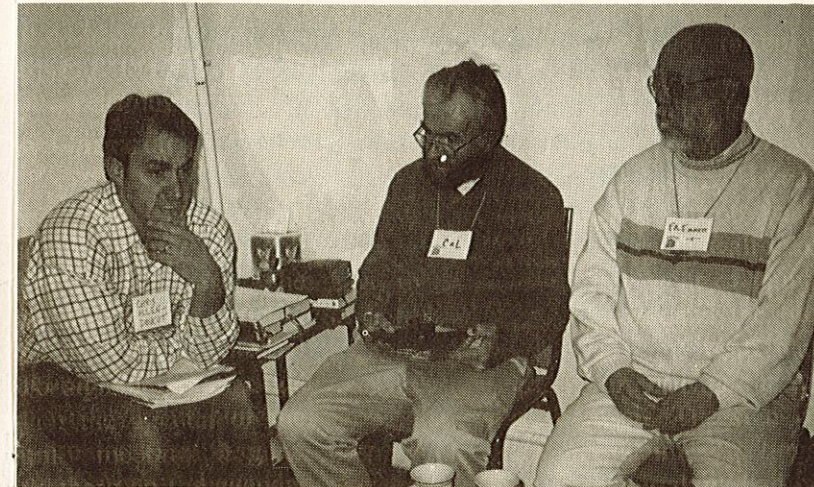
community committed to life as "an experiment with truth" can do. This work is on-going. We're in it for the duration.

SYNDICATE ST. FRANCIS HOUSE

The St. Francis House Board's October 5-6 conversation about expanding our ministry, and raising lots of money to do it, began with a tour of the house next door at 32 Broad Street. When we own this building, we can have offices on the first floor for ourselves, the Episcopal Urban Caucus, and whatever other community projects we are involved in. The second and third floors will provide small apartments for people who desire to join the community and share in our ministry. There is also the possibility of a greenhouse above parking spaces and the beginnings of an urban gardening project in the shared backyard between 30 and 32 Broad Street. Nate and Sarah would like to install a basketball hoop as well!

The more we talked about this project, the clearer it became that the house next door is only the beginning of a major expansion of our work. These are the "six points" we committed to.

1. We need to expand our facilities in order for the community to grow. This means buying the house at 32 Broad Street and renovating it for the community.
2. We want to make a serious commitment to agriculture. This will involve making some of our own land available for urban gardening but also working with others in New London County to develop farming skills among young and old residents and creating the climate to change from dependence on agribusiness to regional self-sufficiency.
3. Anne is the one who carries the vision of New England farmland in our community. She grew up here and remembers the farms and the farmers. Peter Maurin's original plan for the Catholic Worker included **agronomic universities**, "where workers could study and students could learn to work." Our son Nate tells us that if we only



TRUTH FORUM Vietnam Veteran Cal Robertson (top center) holds pieces of shrapnel and a cluster bomb which tore the arm off a young boy. Chris Allen-Doucot (top left) of St. Martin de Porres Hartford Catholic Worker House led November 23 discussion. 5,000 Iraqi children continue to die each month as a result of sanctions and conditions created by the Gulf War bombings. Chris urged us to educate our friends and to write or phone our congress people to end the sanctions. Further information available from *Voices in the Wilderness* (www.nonviolence.org/vitw), the *Education for Peace in Iraq Center* (www.saveageneration.org) and many different church organizations.

Cont'd...

talk about this we're not serious. Unless we get involved with farming we will never move beyond "talk" about the land, so we need to make a commitment to farming.

4. The apartment in the rear of 30 Broad Street was originally intended as a "hermitage," so people can come for retreat in an urban contemplative setting. When Chrissy joined us, that was the only space we had for "transitional housing." We need to reclaim the Hermitage for its original purpose, and renovate the second apartment for Chrissy and future residents. This will help us share our experience with others who want to live an experiment with truth. In the meantime, we have renovated the two-room suite on the second floor of the main house and it is now ready to accommodate new partners in our work.

5. Ed Rodman reminded us that all of our activities are about sustainable community for all, not simply "helping others." We must be faithful to our commitment to "move from charity to justice." As Gandhi said, we must "be the change we wish to see in the world." Part of what we are leaning from 9/11 and 10/7 is that it is in fact Islam that is being attacked because Islam is one of the few remaining forces in the world rooted in traditional social and religious life. Religion in Western Europe and the US has mainly been relegated to the sphere of private interests and so offers no threat to the forces of global corporate capitalism. Solidarity for us means reclaiming the Christian (and Jewish) vision of a life lived in wholeness before God.

6. And finally, Charlie Palmgren, TSSF, pointed out that if we want people to give us money for our work, we must "syndicate St. Francis House," and show others how to live according to a Gospel model. Especially in light of the war and global economic injustice, we must make available to others a pattern for living in community, in what James Agee called "honeycombs of resistance." We have to develop our publications as well as a website to help share the good news of St. Francis House.



Our Board approved this "six point plan" and committed themselves to help raise the money to implement it. We are serious about all this, although development of the details will come over the next several months. As a first step we have committed ourselves to buy 32 Broad Street and entered into a purchase agreement with its owners.

Here is a proposed budget for a capital expansion of St. Francis House ministries.

BUDGET

Complete work on	
30 Broad St.	\$ 50,000
Purchase 32 Broad St.	140,000
Community supported	
agriculture fund	50,000
Renovate 32 Broad St.	150,000-200,000
Purchase farm	100,000-300,000
Farm start-up	100,000-150,000
Publications & website	50,000
TOTAL	\$ 640,000-940,000

Now, take a deep breath. This is a lot of money! Can we raise it? I believe it is what we're called to, and we're prepared to make the effort. We need your help! First, by responding to our thinking. What do you think? You are a part of our "experiment with truth." We want to hear from you.

Second, we are now "advertising" for new members of St. Francis House. We need people to join the community who have vision, passion, and skills. We need a bookkeeper. We need people who can work with their hands, people who can help organize in the community. We need people who know something about farming and people who want to learn how. But most of all, we need people who believe in the Gospel of justice and peace and want to put their lives on the line with us for our faith.

JEREMIAH, BUY THE FARM!

A couple of weeks after we took the first step and agreed on a price for the house at

32 Broad Street, I was praying in our chapel in the early morning as usual. During the time of meditation, gradually the light begins to shine in the windows, which look out onto Broad Street. Our prayer space is open to the city of New London, as our lives are open to its people. As I was praying, I remembered the story of the prophet Jeremiah in the year 587 B.C. Jeremiah was kept in prison by the king, Zedekiah, because the government didn't like his denunciation of its war efforts. Nebuchadnezzar and the Assyrian armies were besieging Jerusalem. In a matter of months, they would break down the walls, burn the city and the Temple, and take the king and his leading citizens away into captivity in Babylon. The situation could not have been more bleak. It reminded me a lot of our situation as we move more deeply into war. It seemed, and it seems, hopeless.

Yet it was at this bleak moment that God sent his Word to Jeremiah. This land, God promised, which is now occupied by enemy forces, will once again be a place where people live in peace, where vineyards produce grapes for wine and olive orchards produce their fruit. People will once again farm on land that has been burned by enemy armies in a "scorched earth" occupation.

At that moment, Jeremiah's cousin Hanamel came to him and asked him to buy his uncle's farm in Anathoth. It was Jeremiah's right to redeem the land under the Jubilee legislation of Leviticus 25. (Let those who say the jubilee was never practiced in ancient Israel take note!) What a time to buy a farm! But Jeremiah bought the farm because the Lord had promised him that "houses and fields and vineyards shall again be bought in this land" (Jer. 32:15). Jeremiah trusted God's promises, and so do we. I invite you to join us in this act of faith. The times are hard. But the sweetness of God's mercy and peace is stronger than war or death or despair. God bless you.



WAR AND PEACE

Barbarians and Civilized
We call barbarians
people living
on the other side of the border.
We call civilized
people living
on this side of the border.
We civilized,
living on this side of the border,
are not ashamed
to arm ourselves to the teeth
so as to protect ourselves
against the barbarians
living on the other side.
And when the barbarians
born on the other side of the border
invade us,
we do not hesitate
to kill them.
So we civilized
exterminate barbarians
without civilizing them.
And we persist
in calling ourselves civilized.

Peter Maurin, Easy Essays

CHRISTIANITY UNTRIED

Chesterton says:
"The Christian ideal
has not been tried
and found wanting.
It has been found difficult
and left untried."
Christianity has not been tried
because people thought
it was impractical.
And men have tried everything
except Christianity.
And everything
that men have tried
has failed.

Peter Maurin, Easy Essays

ST. FRANCIS HOUSE - HELP WANTED - VOCATIONS CALLED FOR

St. Francis House is entering a new phase of its life and ministry. Our life is rooted in daily prayer and regular Bible study, the ministry of hospitality and action for social justice. We offer work opportunities to those who may be at a new phase of their own lives and ministries:

- * Are you interested in becoming part of this intentional Christian community for a 9-month to 2 year period to help St. Francis House develop? (see lead article and 6-point program outline)
- * Are you recently graduated from school or seminary and interested in trying a community-based form of urban ministry in a non-traditional setting?
- * Do you have continuing education or sabbatical time available in which you would like to do a specific project in the context of community Bible study and spiritual direction?

We need many different skills and interests: We welcome both local non-resident volunteers and those who are interested in living at St. Francis House:

- * Manager for physical rehab: coordinate volunteers including halfway house participants and rehab and alternative energy specialists to develop community living and work space. We need people with various rehab skills. Let us know what you can do!
- * Gardener: plan and develop meditation garden.
- * Urban Gardening: develop plans and oversee building of urban greenhouse at St. Francis House and develop connections with schools and community organizations.
- * Fund raising: develop local Friends of St. Francis House base and national effort. We welcome work on conversion of traditional stock holdings to community-based annuities. Bookkeeping: we need someone to develop a basic system for the House.
- * Community Supported Agriculture: person(s) interested in developing urban-rural links between southeastern Connecticut farms and the city especially to neighborhood co-operatives, restaurants, church-based food pantries, soup kitchens and low-income residents.
- * Other opportunities: If you have interest/experience in urban education, housing, healthcare or other areas, talk to us. We are especially aware of the needs for housing (e.g. there are homeless vets across the street from St. Francis House who have unexercised GI bill mortgage rights; would a community land trust organization here in New London be helpful?) Persons who are either already bi-lingual or willing to commit time to becoming bilingual in Spanish are especially welcome.

Because we are experimenting with a non-professional model for urban ministry, we do not have salaries based on status and experience. Each of us contributes financially, spiritually and with our work to the good of the ministry. The Rule and Observances of St. Francis House as well as more information on issues such as health care are available on request. Inquiries welcome.



REFLECTIONS

by Chrissy Guarnieri

*How pleasant it is, at the end of the day,
No follies to have to repent;
But reflect on the past, and be able to say,
That my time has been properly spent.
(Jane Taylor 1783-1827)*

I thought I knew what I was doing with my life, what was important and where I was headed. I had plans and goals like most people. During my first year at Saint Francis House I have learned that no matter how well we make plans, there are detours that are in our best interest. Saint Francis House should be a required stop on anyone's journey. I came to SFH by the grace of God working through Reverend Mark Robinson. I remain at SFH because of the grace of God working through the paradigm that Emmett and Anne have established in the New London community *'representing a place of prayer, a house of hospitality, and a base for justice ministry grounded in Franciscan life'* and are committed to living.

Often during my first year I was filled with trepidation and questions. How long can I stay? Am I an imposition? Does anyone like what I cook? Is it okay to allow others to see my vulnerability? What do I have to offer anyone? How can I ever repay the kindness and support of strangers? I found answers to these and many other questions that used to keep me wide awake nights.

I found out, in a relatively short period of time, that I was among intelligent, loving human beings and now they are my family, friends, and cheerleaders. What I do, what I think, what I feel, what I believe matters, to someone other than myself. That is important to me. I am not currently the sole or soul caregiver that I was for thirty-four years. I am nourished daily by members of SFH and all those that enter in, regularly or only once. Like a bulb that needs time to rest deep within the soil before blooming, I have been given a place to rest my heart and head. Before SFH, the concept of being refreshed in order to help others and the notion of being refreshed just for myself was inviting albeit alien in practice for me. Before

SFH I had existed in an environment that was primarily tit-for-tat.

Now, a year later, midst redefined terrorism and renewed world conflict that is in our backyard, I understand that I am an integral part of SFH. The things that I contribute are recognized and encouraged as important talents. Things that I 'just do' are skills that others need. SFH taps into my creative side and my fledgling computer savvy to help our commitment to community life move forward. The emergence of new self-confidence has been an added blessing.

I no longer feel fretful of the decisions I make about my life. I know what my part is in God's wonderful plan, 'answered the Lord saying, "I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted,"' (Job 42:2). I confidently and consciously select those opportunities that help me fulfill the purpose that God is revealing to me. I thank SFH with all its elements: Anne, Emmett, Nat, Sarah, Aunt Dorrie, the board members and Father Mark and the friends from Calvary Church who continue to give me loving support so I am able to finish my BA (Interdisciplinary Media Writing and Production for the Deaf and Hearing-Impaired) at Eastern Connecticut State University. Also, for their encouragement during the process of finding a graduate program suited to my goals.

The atmosphere at SFH heartens me to create a life in which I fulfill a divine purpose. I may discover the mission of my lifetime (while I'm here) or one that is just for today -perhaps to be an artist, a teacher, a peacemaker, or a problem solver. Together, God and I are a team. SFH allows me to practice my beliefs and stay focused on what is truly important. I believe the earnest desire to understand spiritual things will open the way and revelation within and without will follow. In Daniel 10:12 it is written: *"Fear not, Daniel; for from the first day that thou didst set thy heart to understand, and to humble thyself before thy God, thy words were heard: and I am come for thy words'sake."*

This reflection stems from an earlier piece entitled "Faith in the Bigger Plan," Vol. 2, No. 4.

"I CAME TO CAST FIRE ON THE EARTH"

A Sermon by Deacon Fran Bedell

HAVE YOU EVER resisted something because you didn't want to believe it to be true? Well, if so, then you'll understand my struggle with today's lessons. I liked my image of God as love, mercy, compassion and forgiveness. I didn't want to change that image but I had to. It seems providential or coincidental that my turn on the preaching rota coincided with today's theme, which is about divine judgment.

The fire of testing and the fire of judgment are continual Biblical themes, whether I like it or not. So I had to re-visit certain passages. I opened the Bible to find some support for my image. My random selections were:

Psalms 111 – "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

John 3:36 – "He who does not obey the Son of Man shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

Jesus – "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Unless you repent, you will all perish."

Martin Luther calls God's wrath "the underside of his love."

Jeremiah (23:23-29) makes it very clear that there is a stern side to God. The passage from Hebrews (12:1-16) is probably one of the Bible's clearest discussions of God's sterner side. Discipline is inherent in sonship. We are reminded that God is treating us as children – and all children are disciplined by their parents. Parental love apart from discipline is shallow pampering. We are also reminded that discipline, while unpleasant at the time, yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Do not lightly regard the discipline of the Lord, we are told, or lose heart when you are punished by Him, for the Lord disciplines those whom He loves.

God's sacrificial system demands death: "for the wages of sin is death." Someone must pay the price. Someone did.

The Son of God was lifted upon a pole, the cross of crucifixion.

Our response to God for what Jesus has done is to offer ourselves to His discipleship and discipline. Jeremiah (23:23-29) makes the distinction between the husks and the corn, the shell and the kernel, by telling us that within the worshipping community, there should be a personal relationship to God on the part of every worshipper. Just as the corn starts from a seed and grows into husks that produce corn, so do we grow. From that initial relationship to God, we grow to new heights, we have the opportunity to become new people – and it all begins with a seed. That seed is repentance.

Now repentance is not a word we like to hear. Most mainline churches, including the Episcopal Church, downplay its importance. We don't want to upset anyone, to make life difficult. We try to sugarcoat religion so as not to offend. Well, I wonder how Jesus felt as He hung on that cross! Did He think the way was easy? I think not.

The way is not easy. We journey daily under the judgment of God. If we treat that journey lightly, we do so at our own peril. But we have been shown the way. Jesus said, "I am the way." Our Lord's words about eternal life are inevitably accompanied by warnings not to take salvation lightly. He taught that the cost of following Him is high.

So what does it mean to be a Christian, a disciple of God, under His discipline? One thing I realized while preparing for this sermon is the depth of that question. It isn't the mere fact of Jesus having died for our sins, or that sinners acknowledge this by some modicum of intellectual assent, or that we are assured of eternal security. All these things do provide us with promises of false peace.

To be a Christian means to be one of God's family. That is the root of salvation – and it begins with repentance.

So let's look at that scary word more closely. Repentance, as Jesus uses the word, means a repudiation of the old life and

a turning to God for salvation. It is a purposeful decision to pursue righteousness.

There are three parts to repentance: intellect, emotion, and volition. First, intellectually it is the recognition of sin and that sin is an affront to God. We are responsible for our own sins.

Second, emotionally it is a genuine repentance accompanied by a sense of sorrow. It is important to remember that sorrow, in and of itself, is not repentance. One can be sorry or ashamed without being repentant. Judas, for example, was sorrowful but not repentant. The rich young ruler went away sorrowful, but not repentant. It is the deep sense of anguish at having sinned against God.

And third, volitionally it is the change of direction, a transformation of our will. It is willingness, or more aptly a determination, to abandon stubborn disobedience and to surrender our will to God.

These three steps of repentance will inevitably result in a change of behavior. This behavioral change is not in itself repentance, but is the fruit repentance will certainly bear. Where there is no observable difference in conduct, there can be no confidence that repentance has taken place.

Real repentance alters the character of each one of us. It means we acknowledge we are guilty sinners, that we could very well deserve the wrath of God. It means we long to get rid of our sinful ways and turn our backs to them. It means denying ourselves and taking up the cross to follow Jesus. It means our nearest and dearest family and friends, even the world, may call us a fool or say we are religious fanatics. We may even suffer financially. But none of that should make a difference. That is what repentance really means.

Repentance is not a one-time act. It is a life-long process. It begins internally with an acknowledgement that we are not who we should be, which becomes a cleansing that manifests itself in attitudes and actions.

Repentance is the first step in discipleship.

Repentance is the first step in unity with God.

Repentance is the first step in becoming a member of God's family.

Remember, God judges our intent more than our actions. For if our intent is right, so will our actions be. Our task then is:

to place our hope in God,
to attribute whatever good one sees in us to God, not to ourselves,
to fear the Day of Judgment, to dread Hell (which is really God's dis-favor),
and to desire eternal life with God.

To do that, we risk placing our whole desire for life in God's hands – hands we cannot control. Do we dare take such a risk? Do we dare not take such a risk?

This whole subject of judgment is not the easiest of topics on a hot summer day. But this is the season of Pentecost, and Pentecost is the season given to us, for use by us, in our formation process.

Jesus asks us, "Are you willing to share my Body and Blood? Are you willing to share my fate?" Judgment and repentance will help us with our answers.

Amen.

Deacon Fran preached this sermon at St. James Episcopal Church, New London, on August 19, 2001. Its challenge seems clearer, though not easier, now than it did on that August Sunday.



Deacon Fran presents SFH Board Member Richard Marks with the seven beautiful quilts made for SFH by the St. James Quilters. Emmett participated in the blessing of the gift.

TO SIGN OR NOT TO SIGN

by Chrissy Guarnieri

'It's a sign of the time'; Petula Clark sang in the 1960's. Shakespeare wrote in King Henry V... 'He dies and makes no sign'. The Book of Common Prayer says, 'An outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace'. The words 'To sign or not to sign' spent nearly a year on the agenda of the weekly SFH community meeting. It grew warm and comfortable there on the agenda, taken out from time to time and tossed about, figuratively speaking that is. In one camp were those 'pro sign' ... in the other 'no sign'. But I had the best spot of all; I sat at the sidelines asking questions and giving my personal opinion, as we do at community meetings. I watched that proposed sign be drug out when Father Ken Leech visited with us from England, Father Julius from Uganda, and Father Emsley from Scotland and Jep Streit, Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, Boston. We discussed the meaning of the wished-for sign and how it would change SFH, its occupants and our neighborhood. Would people start beating down the door when we went forward with a big sign? Would SFH have to rethink its purpose to address the situation the sign might cause? What statement were we trying to make with a sign? And what kind of a sign were we talking about. When it was agreed upon that we would indeed put up a sign the dialogue changed into negotiations. These seemed at times a cross between table tennis and an offside call for Monday Night Football.

Still, I just needed to go ahead. I thought about the sign. It would be made of a hard wood, forty-eight inches in length, six inches high, with a beveled edge and hand painted. The wood was purchased and given to me, now there was no turning back. Once the edges were beveled I got to sand the surfaces. The time I spent gliding the sand block back and forth so the wood could be primed was precious. It was the board and me. I primed and sanded until it was smooth

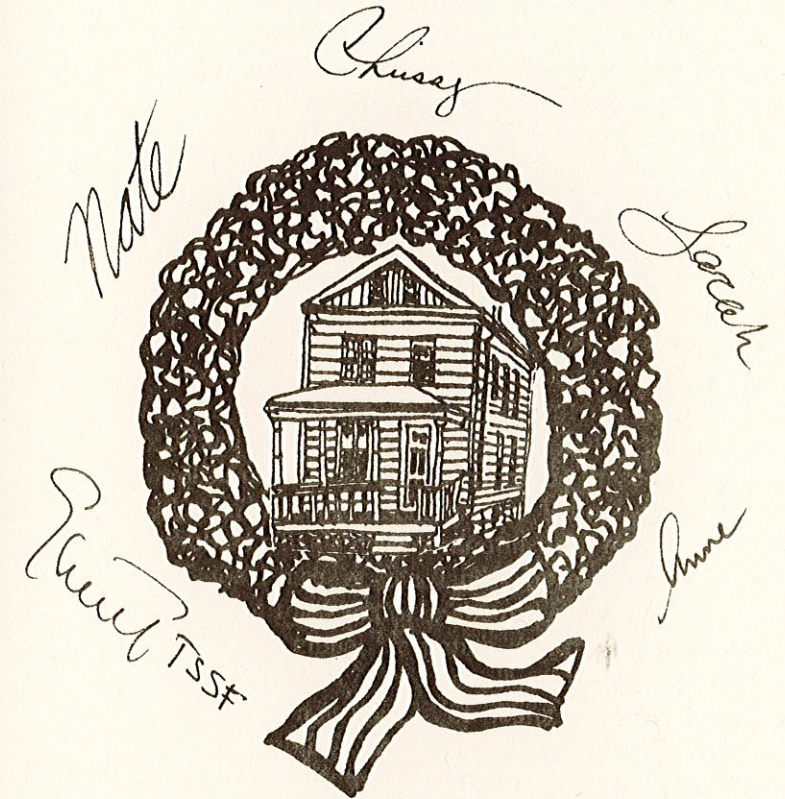
and ready for colour. At that point the board wasn't noticeable. The negotiations continued and I gave the sign its first coat of blue paint. It was nearly time for the biannual SFH board meeting and where was the sign? It sat propped up against my bedroom wall taking on meaning with each new coat of paint. It was no longer just a board and the time I spent working on it gave me a satisfying peace. With a forthright turn of hand the white lettering almost wrote itself. The sign was finished and ready to exclaim greetings to all; for me the undertaking had become spiritual. Once up, I saw the answers to some of the questions that had gone unresolved about what the sign would mean. The last verse of Five Man Electric Band's 'Sign' seems to sum it up best:

"Sign sign everywhere a sign
And the sign said everybody welcome
Come in kneel down and pray
And they passed around the plate
At the end of it all
I didn't have a penny to pay
So I got me a pen and a paper
And I made up my own little sign
I said thank you Lord for thinking about me
I'm alive and doing fine".



SIGNING IN THE HOUSE Chrissy (left) uses her American Sign Language skills during a poetry reading at SFH.

*Hear us, Shepherd of your people,
you who commanded us to love our
neighbours
with our whole hearts:
forgive us our sins
and make us whole in body and soul;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*



ABOVE: Neighbor Marie Soler points to the new St. Francis House sign. Behind her is the house we're proposing to buy at 32 Broad St.

BELOW: "Aunt Dorrie" (Dorothy Paulsen) grooms Amber while Otis keeps watch.



Christmas Pot Luck December 28

5:30 p.m. Evening Prayer
6:00 p.m. Feast followed by Revelry

Bring a Poem, a Song, an Instrument....

CLARIFICATION OF THOUGHT

Meetings resume on **January 18**

Focus: **Living in Community**

Mark your bi-weekly calendars:

1/18, 2/1, 2/15, 3/1, 3/15, 3/29, 4/12,
4/26, 5/10, 5/24, 6/7

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Photos and layout by Anne Scheibner



LOS ANGELES ASSEMBLY

FEBRUARY 6-9, 2002

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