

# TROUBADOUR

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



Spring 2003

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## REPENTANCE: A LENTEN REFLECTION IN 2003

Anne P. Scheibner

LAST FALL CHRIS HEDGES WAS BEING interviewed on NPR's *Talk of the Nation* about his book *War is a Force Which Gives Us Meaning*. As a former war correspondent he talked about his personal experience of war as an addictive narcotic. Emmett and I were in different cars on different daily routines, but we each hung on to hear the end of the interview. "So what do you think this means for us now? What should we be doing?" asked the interviewer. "Repentance," replied Hedges. We each screeched to a halt and headed for the nearest bookstore.

Repentance is an expected part of Lenten life, but this year feels different. I was on my usual quarterly retreat at the Mercy Center on the Connecticut coast on March 17 when Mr. Bush delivered his ultimatum and 48 hour eviction notice. Usually when I arrive and go to walk on the beach I am seized with the beauty and peace of the place and the rhythm of the waves. But this time the pounding refrain in my heart was, "I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry." Sorry for what? Not just dread of finding out what Christians in Germany must have felt as their nation's troops crossed into Czechoslovakia, into Poland, into France. Not just recoiling at the horror of the killing of thousands. Our tax dollars at work. Not just fear of the future of the fish in the sea and the gulls circling overhead if the Millstone (aptly named) Nuclear Power Plant just a few miles down the coast is a target in this war. Not just fear for my own children and all the world's children.

No, this was a refrain which called me to look more deeply at my own life. How was it that I as a privileged white upper middle class American born in 1947 in the shadow of Hiroshima and Nagasaki had gotten to this point in my life and was feeling blindsided? How did I miss the emergence of this permanent warfare state with dehumanized racialized enemies? As Herod says in W. H. Auden's *For the Time Being*, "I've worked like a slave. Ask anyone you like. I read all the official dispatches without skipping. I've taken elocution lessons. . . . I've tried to be good. I brush my teeth every night. . . ." And yet. And yet. This sense of dis-ease goes deeper.

The underlying reality is that I have become a creature dependent not on God but on agribusiness for food, on complex systems of transportation and institutions for money and validation. (How many e-mails did I get today?) And yet I and 99% of us **cont'd**



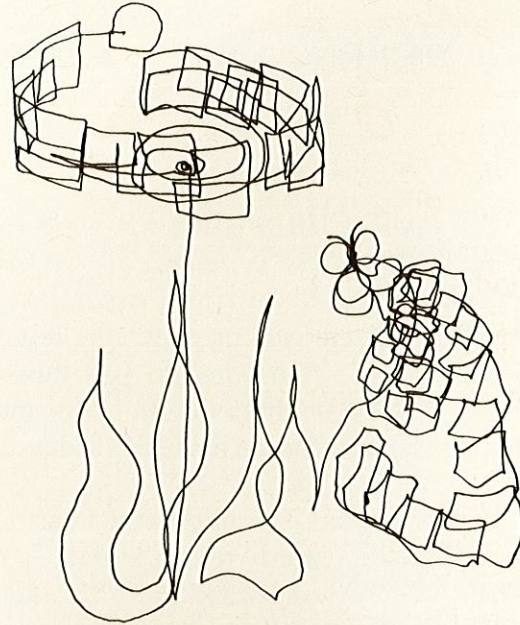
*Continued from page 1*

in this country are within three generations of a family-farm. The skills I have with bureaucratic life and that our children have with computers, VCR's and videogames will not do any of us much good if we really want independence, democracy or survival. Hedges helps: "The enduring attraction of war is this: Even with its destruction and carnage it can give us what we long for in life. It can give us purpose, meaning, a reason for living. Only when we are in the midst of conflict does the shallowness and vapidness of much of our lives become apparent." Even those of us in the peace movement experience this rush.

And now with the coming of this pre-emptive strike, I can see more clearly the call to discipleship. It is the same call that has always been there, but like the rich young man I have up to this point gone away sorrowing because I had other more pressing commitments. Now with the fear and death-wish of the old order revealed, nothing seems more important than loving God and neighbor. Selling all that one has and giving to the poor of the new order (not the wanna-be lottery winners of the old) seems clearly to be the right thing to do.

Jesus announced the signs of the Reign of God in Jubilee terms - release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, the year of God's favor when everyone goes "home." Ched Myers in his book *Who Will Roll Away the Stone?: Discipleship Queries for First World Christians* talks about recovering ancestral memories - both conquerer and conquered - from his own family history in California and realizing that he was called "home" to "fight for what was

left" after 300 years of destruction by "development." That same instinct has impelled me to return here to southeastern Connecticut. How and if we can redeem the traditional notions of community, of the commons and sustainable agriculture remains to be seen.



Peter Maurin's dictum that we should "eat what we grow and grow what we eat" seems more and more relevant in a world where land - from the Connecticut River valley to the Fertile Crescent - is being rendered unfit for cultivation by weapons of mass destruction which include urban sprawl and every sort of bombing. The fact that certain corporations stand ready to profit from the bombing - including with "tactical nuclear weapons" - and the destruction of local economies and plant life, does not change the direction of my "turning around." Indeed, it reinforces my instinct to look for what the early tribal residents of southeastern Connecticut understood as a bio-region. I invite you to become our neighbors in this ongoing journey of repentance and conversion.

Note: The meditation drawing (opposite page) is from Anne Scheibner's notebook. These and other "meditation drawings" which have appeared in recent issues of the *Troubadour* are all done blind, i.e. they are drawn while focusing on a particular object or in this case idea or theme but *not looking at the paper while drawing*. Each drawing is one continuous line. Anne comments: "I am continually amazed at the balance that emerges in these drawings. I start each one by quieting down and letting myself focus on 'seeing' whatever it is that I'm trying to engage with that day. I hold the notebook so that my pen is on the right-hand page and the left cover becomes the shield so that its easier not to look while the drawing is taking place. After the drawing is completed, I spend time looking at it and letting it "speak back" to me. I write those notes on the opposite left-hand page." The notes on the drawing on page 2 were as follows:

2/9/03 - FROM THE RISING OF THE SUN - I STARTED MY JOURNEY IN A YEARLY CYCLE - TRAVELING IN A MORE OR LESS STRAIGHT LINE THROUGH BOXES OF MY OWN CREATION - AND REALIZING DIMLY HOW ENCLOSED I'VE BECOME I PLUNGE OUT OF THE CYCLE THROUGH PRAYER AND FASTING AND EMERGE INTO A NATURAL WORLD OF PLANT FORMS (AND FLAMES?) WHERE THE ONLY BOXES ARE THOSE CREATED BY BEES AND BUTTERFLIES AS HOLDERS FOR THE FLOWING HONEY. IS THE HONEYCOMB BREAKING APART? PERHAPS, BUT IT IS STILL PART OF THE ORDER NATURAL - EISENHOWER WARNED US OF THE POWER OF THE MILITARY-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX - WHY HAVE I NOT BELIEVED IT?

Right: Marlies Parent is an active Episcopalian and Friday night participant at St. Francis House. Her article on last October 26's Peace Rally in Washington appeared in the Winter, 2002 issue.

## Ask the Old People

You might think  
War is not quite so bad  
As long as it happens  
Somewhere else.  
You watch it on television:  
A twenty-four hour special  
A marathon sport  
With lots of extra innings.  
War has benefits, some say -  
The economy profits  
And it brings people closer  
Even to church.  
Yet this is the first  
And last truth about war:  
IT KILLS.  
Not only human flesh dies  
But the spirit of those  
Who do the killing  
And our fragile earth breaks  
Down with terminal disease.  
What good is a  
Thriving economy on  
A DEAD PLANET?  
Make no mistake about war:  
The worst you can imagine  
Is not enough -  
Ask the old people  
Those who lived through it  
Who've seen their homes  
And dreams crumble  
Who watched their children  
Burn beyond recognition  
Who felt their hearts  
And minds betrayed. . . .  
Ask the old people  
In institutions  
Who hold their hands clasped  
Tight over their ears  
In fear of the sound of sirens  
ALWAYS ALWAYS  
Until they die too  
And haven't they already  
A thousand times?

Marlies Parent





## WAR IS A FAILURE OF IMAGINATION

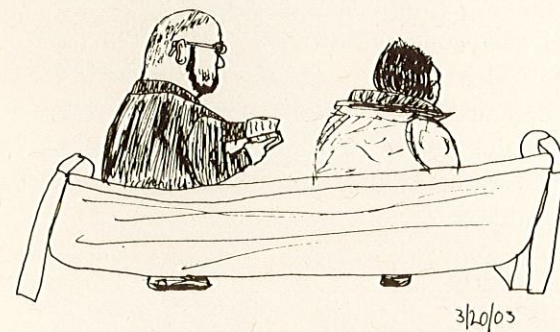
*This statement was made to the Superior Court, City of Hartford, on March 20, 2003 by Fr. Emmett Jarrett, TSSF, on his own behalf, and on behalf of the 13 others who committed acts of civil resistance in Hartford on Tuesday, March 18, 2003.*

My name is Emmett Jarrett. I live at 30 Broad Street, New London, CT. I am an Episcopal priest, a Franciscan, a married man and the father of two children. Most important, I am a Christian. I speak as a follower of Jesus who taught his disciples to love their enemies, and resisted the social, political, and economic forces that drive people to war. Jesus taught that the way of nonviolent resistance in solidarity with others is God's way for justice and peace. War is always wrong, a breaking of the divine commandment not to kill. War is always a failure of imagination.

As an American Christian living at the dawn of the twenty-first century, I look back over my lifetime and see three major struggles for freedom: the movement for the independence of India, led by Gandhi; the Civil Rights movement in the United States; and the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. All of these were nonviolent resistance movements. State violence was used against people in these instances, but the people's faith and commitment to nonviolence led finally to freedom.

The U. S. war against Iraq violates the United Nations Charter, to which our country is an original signatory. The war against Iraq violates the United States Constitution, which assigns the authority to declare war to the Congress, not the President. It also violates the good sense of our people who understand that this is not a just war, and in going to war now we are isolating our country from the rest of the world. War is always a failure of imagination.

For all these reasons, I cannot consent to war. My actions of nonviolent civil resistance in solidarity with the people – Iraqi, American, and others – who will die in this war, may violate specific laws in Hartford, but they are acts of obedience to God's higher law, and to the call of my Lord to love my enemies and be a peacemaker.



"Die In" and "Papa's Day in Court" by Sarah Jarrett. Above left: Kneeling figures (left to right) are Brian Kavanaugh (Hartford Catholic Worker), Emmett Jarrett, Cal Robertson (Viet Nam veteran, SFH regular and long-time witness for peace).

## IN CONVERSATION WITH CHUCK MATTHEI CONTINUED

**Note:** This is part 2 of the tape we made on February 1, 2002 when Chuck was leadoff speaker for our Clarification of Thought series "Living in Community." He died in October. For Part 1 and Emmett's lead article on Chuck's life and work see the *Troubadour*, Winter 2002.



The Catholic Worker farm that I lived at was in Tivoli, New York, about 80 acres. It was a collection of old, rather large buildings. It started off as one of the old Hudson River estates. The upper class of that day built these grand estates and this one was on a bluff overlooking the river; it was quite a stunning property. When it was abandoned by the upper class, it became variously an orphanage, an Italian resort and a variety of other things. The carriage house was cut up into a number of little rooms and there were dormitories; the old mansion was basically just a shell of a building.

When I lived there we had on average about 75-80 people living there including some young folk who came because they'd heard of the Catholic Worker's vision, some people who'd come to retire or spend their last years there and quite a number who came because they had nowhere else to go. Many of them had substance abuse or mental health problems. Most were impoverished and had no family or no one to turn to and if the police within 50 miles ran into someone they considered was vagrant, they would just drop them off in the front yard and drive away. There was even one man who came with the property. He had just been there forever and if you bought it, you got him.

There was another man who was slightly retarded and had lived with his mother and when she died in her 80's, he was in his 50's. He had never lived anywhere else except in town. The town selectmen came to us and said, "He can't live on his own. He's not able to care for himself reliably. But we hate the thought of his having to be institutionalized. He wanders around town. He knows everyone in town. Can he live with you?"

So we had 75-80 people of varying capacities and needs. And it worked pretty well for quite a while. But one of the things that happened in the late 60's, early 70's is that there was a kind of generational change underway. Of course, nobody analyzed this or thought about it or organized it. But the fact of the matter is that the way the Catholic Worker had worked was that it was a kind of anarchistic community in which there were no roles. Dorothy, as I've said, was- especially by that time in her life- the unquestioned authority; she was the foundress. She had an acknowledged authority and people acceded to it.

That was not true in the early days. There's a marvelous book which I found in a bin of used book discards one day called *House of Hospitality* which was Dorothy's first published work after the founding of the Catholic Worker. Of course, I jealously kept this book guarded it for years after I'd found it for 35 cents in this bin until one day about 5 years ago one of my friends at the Catholic Worker said, "Could I borrow it?" And I looked at him with steely eyes and said, "Not on your life! I'd never get it back!" "Oh, no," he said. "I promise. You'll get it back." So I lent it to him and of course, he lost it - got



*Continued....*

down to that house and disappeared, never to be found again. So finally I abandoned my commitment to voluntary poverty and called a used bookstore and had a search done and I replaced my 35 cent book for \$35!

That book is really a delight to read. It's drawn from Dorothy's journals of those first few years. And it's a young woman who was not "the foundress", not "the saint", not the "acknowledged authority." but a young woman who was caught as a much more equal participant in the day to day struggles and conflicts of a Catholic Worker house.

By the time I was at the Worker, Dorothy was a fountainhead of authority and she used to appoint a house manager. So Marge Hughes in those years was in charge of the farm and she carried that designated authority. Well, there came a time when Marge decided that she was going to move to West Virginia; she didn't want to run the farm anymore. And none of the younger people had the age, the experience, the confidence or the conviction to take over that role.

This was the late 60's, early 70's and consensual, participatory democracy was the buzzword of the day. So with that kind of philosophical construct, we would have no formal leader. But what was really going on was that no one person was able or willing to step in and take the bull by the horns. So what happened was that life went on pretty well - *pretty well* - but life became gradually less manageable because when push came to shove and Dorothy put her foot down on one of her visits, no one really had the ability "to make it happen."

What was particularly frustrating was the presence of a handful of relatively young, relatively sane and

physically able people who were deadwood - a bunch of poetic deadbeats who wouldn't do any work. You didn't mind if it was someone who really had a meaningful disability, but that wasn't the problem. This was a group of people who wanted to sit around and pontificate over tea all day while a handful of folk had to do all the work. *That* was frustrating.

The house physically was old and needed a lot of work and we didn't have the money. We didn't have the kind of organization and structure and authority which would have made it easier to make it happen. So there came a point where the people who were more responsible said to Dorothy, "This place is too much to handle. It needs major renovations. It's falling down around us. We have neither the money nor the capacity to do this. And it's too much to manage all these folk."

So using the physical decline as a pretext, that property was sold. And a similar, more physically fit, more manageable property was purchased. All the older folk and people who really had needs moved to the new place. Because since the new place wasn't big enough for such a large group, it was a convenient way of leaving all the deadwood behind. They were quite capable of going off and finding someone else to sponge off of. So the move was made and it's worked pretty well. That farm continues to operate to this day.



# THE URBAN NETWORKER

Spring 2003

## CAUCUS MEETS IN CHICAGO

THE EPISCOPAL URBAN CAUCUS MET IN CHICAGO February 26 —March 1, 2003 to consider the role of the Church in the upcoming war, the strategies of evangelism presented by "20/20" as well as progressive perspectives, to plan for the upcoming Minneapolis General Convention, and to enjoy the company of Bishop Paul Moore and other fathers and mothers of the movement for justice in the Episcopal Church. And we had a blast!

The high point of the Assembly by all reports was Paul Moore's dramatic address at the banquet on Friday night. Moore looked back over a long life of service to Christ and his Church. On the brink of a new foreign war, Bishop Moore recalled the suffering of soldiers in his company at Guadalcanal during World War II. He spoke of his work as a priest in Jersey City, Indianapolis, Washington, DC, and New York City as priest and bishop. Moore told of walking with Martin Luther King, Jr., and other leaders in the Civil Rights Movement, and being tear-gassed in Saigon as a leader in the resistance to the Vietnam War. At the Assembly which endorsed "Claiming the Blessing" for gay and lesbian Episcopalians, Moore recalled his ordination of the first openly lesbian priest in the 1970's. The retired Bishop of New York was honored with a standing ovation at the end of his speech by an audience of urban activists who recognized him as "one on whose shoulders they stood."

Byron Rushing preached a mighty word at the Assembly Eucharist, held at St. James Cathedral in Chicago, and the Cathedral's choir led awesome music for congregational praise. Ian Douglas, professor of world mission at the Episcopal Divinity School, led the keynote discussion on "church growth vs. discipleship," which stimulated a lively discussion among the members. Brian Grieves from the Episcopal Church Center in New York brought members up to date on Church anti-racism work, and Ed Rodman told the story behind the story of the anti-racist struggle in the Church over the past 30 years.

Workshops at the Assembly included "The New Majority," with Black, Latino, Asian and Native American presenters led by Butch Gamarra, and Radical Discipleship led by Bill Wylie Kellermann and Br. John George Robertson, SSF. There were separate workshop tracks on economic justice issues, as well as a double workshop on nonviolence led by EUC President R. P. M. Bowden and Janet Chisholm of EPF and the Fellowship of Reconciliation. The Episcopal Peace Fellowship luncheon speaker was Jeff Guntzell, co-founder of "Voices in the Wilderness," a Chicago-based group that has visited Iraq regularly since 1996 and told the story of the suffering Iraqi people.

Youth were once again present at this Assembly but did not have enough input into the planning process. Next year in Baltimore there will be youth members on the planning team, and the Caucus Board now has two youth members. At the Board meeting after the Assembly Bob Graham of Washington, DC, was elected Vice President, to replace the retiring Margaret Rose. More than 175 people attended the Assembly, which has been inching up in attendance numbers for the past four years.

Assembly evaluations may be seen elsewhere in this issue. All Caucus members are invited to submit reflection articles on urban ministry in our times and places for future issues of the *Networker*.



## SUMMARY OF ASSEMBLY EVALUATIONS

Twice as many members of the Assembly - 54 this year vs. 26 last year - took the time to give feedback. This is a good sign of how positive and energizing an experience the Assembly was. Many were enthusiastic about the opportunity to interact with active members of our host diocese during the orientation session. One suggestion for next year was having Baltimore youth be part of the host team. Increasing youth and young adult participation overall was a recurring theme. Increasing interaction among participants by having panels and round-tables was suggested. Being mindful of the need of new members to share their interests and find new friends in ministry was also stressed.

Even criticisms were given in the spirit of how to help next year's Assembly in Baltimore benefit from this year. For example, we will try to have a better match between the size of the workshop and the size of the room and better microphone capacity! We will also explore different ways of designing the site visits so that people can get a better sense of the locale as well as of the work and get back on time!

One thing we will not be able to duplicate is the experience people had of Bishop Moore as our banquet speaker. The comments ranged from, "His presence was a major gift", "Awesome, a real blessing" to "Paul Moore rocks!" For a major portion of our respondents, Bishop Moore's talk represented "the best part" of their Assembly experience. As one person said, "Just to be part of the event was an honor."

Specific thoughts about next year included the following:

- \* Since we're going to be in Baltimore, isn't this an opportunity to do some serious lobbying in Washington?

- \* How can low-income people find out about and attend the Assembly?

- \* Explore different ways in which worship can infuse the life of the Assembly; e.g. Gospel-based discipleship groups to meet over meals or do morning or evening prayer together.

- \* Possible workshops: Urban Native American ministries; How various justice issues affect parishes. Possible Baltimore opportunities: Jonah House; crab cakes.

Interesting ideas surfaced both under ideas for next year and for the future of urban ministry. For example:

- \* Summer school for seminarians focused on Justice and Fighting Racism both inside and outside the church;

- \* Economic justice as a part of urban school curriculum;

- \* "Small church" dynamics as a key part of the future of urban ministry;

- \* Lutherans are developing a national urban ministry strategy; what about us?

- \* Asthma an epidemic in inner city schools; need focus on environmental racism;

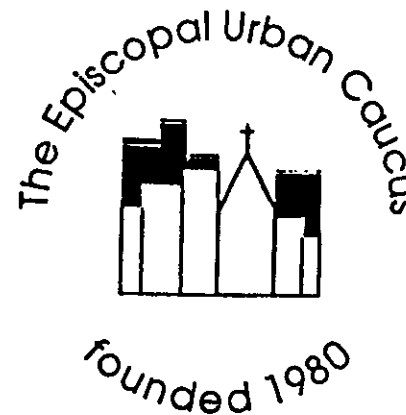
- \* Justice issues - similar for more rural areas in today's world;

- \* Ongoing communication among parishes/groups on such topics as anti-racism work needed on ongoing basis not just at Assemblies;

- \* How are we going to develop this theme of "Radical Discipleship"?

Of course, one way to work on communication between Assemblies is to send us material to post on the website or contribute to *The Urban Networker*. So write to us!

The Episcopal Urban Caucus, P.O. Box 2247, New London, CT 06320 860-437-8890 or e-mail [stfrancishouse@mindspring.com](mailto:stfrancishouse@mindspring.com).



## OPPOSE THE PRISON-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX

by Rima Vesely & Ethan Flad

More than two million people, the majority of whom are Black and Brown, are incarcerated at any one time in the U. S. For the past two decades, prisons have been used as a growth industry for small, predominantly white towns whose manufacturing sites have closed. This has resulted in a rapidly expanding prison-industrial complex that is built upon the denial of human freedom for profit — the same pattern of racist economy that underscored slavery. Two-thirds of offenders are nonviolent and incarcerated for drug offenses under minimum sentence laws such as the New York Rockefeller Drug laws. They serve long sentences, thus providing cheap labor for states and corporations. Thus rather than assisting in the development of Black and Brown communities and funding help-oriented programs for drug offenders, the state denies Black and Brown people their full humanity and uses them to provide employment as well as cheap labor.

Devastating sentences are handed down to offenders who pose no threat to anyone, yet because of the punitive approach that many judges and lawmakers adopt, nonviolent offenders continue to break laws and be given lengthy terms. In New York State, a female heroin addict was given an extremely harsh sentence of twenty years to life for stealing a purse with several credit cards. She had five prior felony convictions, was on parole at the time, and was charged with eight counts of Grand Larceny in the fourth degree. The judge who sentenced her told her: "I don't think there is anything that the State of New York or anyone can do to rehabilitate you . . . there comes a time when enough is enough."

This is precisely the mentality that supports the development of the profit-oriented prison industry. It results in states spending extraordinary amounts of money

on prisons while education, health care, and other social services are defunded. In 2002, New York State spent more money on prisons than on kindergarten through university education combined. The State of California spends \$5.6 million on incarceration and \$4.3 million on higher education. California has the highest incarceration rate in the world.

If as Christians we strive to see Christ in every person, the low-income communities that continue to suffer the ravages of slavery, Jim Crow segregation, and institutional racism are an urgent priority that we must fully commit to. One clear way to address the insidious racism and corresponding dehumanizing of Black and Brown people is to join the movement against the prison-industrial complex: to organize, to pressure legislators and to publicize the hidden development of industry behind prison bars.

## Resolution 8 Opposition to the Prison-Industrial Complex

Resolved, that the Episcopal Urban Caucus opposes racist minimum sentence drug laws and calls for alternatives to incarceration for nonviolent offenders, and be it further Resolved, that the EUC opposes prison building as an economic growth industry and calls for public funds currently directed towards prison building to be redirected towards public education and rehabilitation programs for those who are incarcerated.

[Submitted by Ethan Flad, Diocese of California, and Rima Vesely, Diocese of Los Angeles, and adopted unanimously.]

## HELPFUL RESOURCES

Prison Moratorium Project —

[www.nomoreprisons.org](http://www.nomoreprisons.org).

Prison Activist Resource Center —

[www.prisonactivist.org](http://www.prisonactivist.org).

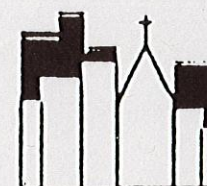
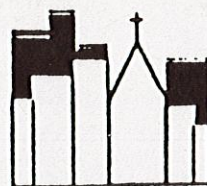
Critical Resistance — [www.criticalresistance.org](http://www.criticalresistance.org).



## RESOLUTIONS OF THE 23<sup>RD</sup> ASSEMBLY IN CHICAGO

The following Resolutions were adopted by the 23<sup>rd</sup> Assembly of the Episcopal Urban Caucus meeting in Chicago on March 1, 2003. The full text of the resolutions is available now on our website, [www.episcopalurbancaucus.org](http://www.episcopalurbancaucus.org).

1. **Words of Boldness.** Commends the Presiding Bishop for his witness to the President of the US regarding war with Iraq, HIV/AIDS crisis in Africa, and advocacy for the Palestinian people.
2. **Refugees at Home in Every Parish.** Urges every Episcopal parish to welcome refugees and their families and commends the work of Episcopal Migration Ministries.
3. **Congratulations to EUC Vice President** the Rev. Margaret Rose on her appointment as Director of Women's Ministries at the Episcopal Church Center.
4. **Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride.** Supports IWFR as a way of educating members about immigration law reform.
5. **The Working Poor.** Urges national legislation to raise the minimum wage to at least \$8.70 per hour, supports living wage campaigns in cities and counties, and affirms the right of all workers to organize unions.
6. **Thanks to Sonia Francis** for her years of commitment to mission and ministry on her retirement.
7. **Support for Claiming the Blessing.** Supports equal rights and equal rites in the Episcopal Church



and the development of a rite for the blessing of committed relationships between two adults not eligible for marriage for inclusion in the *Book of Occasional Services*.

8. **Opposition to the Prison-Industrial Complex.** See the article in this issue by Rima Vesely and Ethan Flad.
9. **Separation of Powers.** Supports a resolution at General Convention to ensure that the distinct roles of the Presiding Bishop and Executive Council are upheld and decisions of Executive Council are not ignored or overturned by the PB or staff.
10. **Thanks to Bishop Persell and Diocese of Chicago** for their graciousness as hosts of the 23<sup>rd</sup> assembly of the EUC in Chicago.
11. **Thanks to Bishop Paul Moore**, our banquet speaker this year, for his life of witness to the Gospel and ministry of justice, peace, and advocacy.

The Assembly also adopted the **Purpose Statement** for the Caucus, which was recommended by the Board. The new Purpose Statement is:

**The Purpose of the Episcopal Urban Caucus is to be an instrument of the Gospel exercising radical discipleship in church and society, and to hold the feet of the Episcopal Church to the fire of social justice.**

Two By-Law amendments were passed. These provide for staggered terms for Board members, and for the Secretary and Treasurer of the Board to be *ex officio* members with voice and vote.

## Saint Francis House: The Constructive Program

Dorothy Day, the founder of the Catholic Worker, described how the ministry "just happened" at the end of her autobiographical work, *The Long Loneliness*. "We were just sitting there talking when . . . Peter Maurin came in, . . . lines of people began to form, saying, 'We need bread,' . . . people moved in on us, . . . and someone said, 'Let's all go live on a farm. . . .'" Some would say things "just happened." We see the work of the Holy Spirit.

Since September 2002, the resident community, our extended community, the Board, and the "Friends of St. Francis House" have been praying for guidance about the "constructive program" of St. Francis House. We have fasted and prayed, consulted widely with other intentional Christian communities around the country and with people whose spiritual integrity and counsel we trust and respect, studied the experience of others, and focused a series of meetings for clarification of thought on this subject. As of March, 2003, this is what we have discerned.

When we began in the fall of 1999, we said that *St. Francis House is a place of prayer, a house of hospitality, and a center for justice ministry*. People kept asking us, "but what do you *do*?" We realized the importance of Gandhi's example. You don't just "proclaim *swaraj* and liberate India," you have to establish a "constructive program" which people can understand and participate in at many different levels. For Gandhi, "home rule for India" involved the transformation of individuals and the nation through personal disciplines of prayer and fasting, spinning, economic development of the poorest communities, abolition of untouchability, Hindu-Muslim unity, education and sanitation reform, agriculture, changing the status of women in society and a host of other things. So the three aspects of our ministry will be worked out in specific activities whose particulars will



change over time but be guided by the initial vision.

### I. St. Francis House is a place of prayer.

*First of all, we are a community. Sometimes the community is as small as the Scheibner-Jarrett family. Sometimes it includes people in transition, neighbors, students, seminarians, volunteers who come seeking training and experience. Sometimes it includes people on retreat seeking to discern God's call for their future life. We hope it will include others who want to share their lives with us for the long haul. As anyone who has tried to live in community knows, it's hard work. The first work of a community is, to live in community. We are an intentional Christian community. We understand our life together as part of an ever deepening conversion. We began with our felt need to live differently from the ways we had lived in the world before. The example of Francis of Assisi is important to us and we have learned from Francis that conversion is an on-going, life-long process. Toward the end of his life he said to his brothers: "Up to now we have done nothing. Let us make a beginning." We live at St. Francis House to make a beginning of being women and men who follow Jesus.*

(1). As a place of prayer, St. Francis House is grounded in the daily prayer of the community. We meet each morning to **celebrate the Daily Office** together. In addition, each adult member of the community spends an hour each day in **contemplative prayer**, in whatever way is appropriate for the individual. Members of the community also worship at a local church every Sunday. Our weekly community meetings begin with Bible study according to the "African Method," and we make community decisions by consensus and guided, we hope, by the Spirit in Scripture and prayer.

(2) The ministry of **spiritual direction** is part of the work of the House and a way in which we are able to reach out to the wider world. Fr. Emmett has training and 25 years



of experience in direction, and regularly sees individuals who come for discernment and guidance in the life of prayer.

(3) **The Calvary Hermitage** is an apartment attached to the House which is set aside for **retreats and sabbatical time** for people seeking God's guidance for their lives. Individuals may stay in the Hermitage, which was furnished from the estate of Dorothea Gould, of Calvary Church, Stonington, CT, for up to two months. The ministry of discernment and the Spiritual Exercises are available to retreatants.

## II. St. Francis House is a house of hospitality.

*Our life at St. Francis House began with a vision of hospitality. Dorothy Day's Catholic Worker saw its ministry as "establishing houses of hospitality to practice the works of mercy." We see hospitality as the essence of the nature of the Triune God. Just as the love of Father, Son and Holy Spirit overflows into the creation and human life, so the return of love to God by human beings takes the form of hospitality. We love one another because God first loved us. While praying before the Rublev icon of the Holy Trinity, we saw that we were called to welcome others because Christ had welcomed us. We take this call quite literally, as well as in an extended sense. We seek to share the life of our neighbors as well as share our life with them.*

(1) **Friendship with neighbors** takes many forms. Even before we moved into the house, we became friends with Melvin. Our society categorized him as a mentally ill drug addict. We were able to see him as a human being and help him find a home and gain admission to a treatment program. Some of our neighbors are downtown business and professional people; some are residents of senior and disabled housing projects; some are homeless and unemployed. Each morning as we pray, we see them gathering in the parking lot across the street waiting for day labor. The society



provides them with an ever-dwindling set of "programs." We seek to be their friends.

(2) **Every other Friday evening** we gather at 5:30 for evening prayer and Bible study. Then we serve a meal of bread, soup and salad, and share table fellowship. The evening concludes with an hour and a half of conversation on some particular topic for what Peter Maurin called "**clarification of thought.**" These meetings nourish the "extended community" of St. Francis House, and help us understand our neighborhood and its needs as well as the ministry we are invited to share with our neighbors. After September 11, 2001, we held "**truth forums**" so that we and others could understand what is happening in the world in the light of the Gospel.

(3) Hospitality would not be genuine if it did not involve **people living together**. In the three years since we began, we have shared our living space with a priest doing Hispanic ministry in New London, another priest visiting from Uganda, a woman who was homeless and stayed with us for two years, and a woman just released from York Prison in Niantic. We have bought the house next door and are renovating it for community members housing, office and meeting space. And we intend to create at least one apartment as "**transitional housing.**" Our intention is that most of the people who live here do so because they want to be part of St. Francis House, not primarily because they need a place to stay. But we see that need also as genuine and feel called from time to time to meet it if we can.

(4) Hospitality also includes hosting meetings that are directly related to our ministry in the community. We have provided a "safe place" for neighbors to meet to talk about local concerns on occasion. A weekly Bible study of Ched Myers' reading of Mark is meeting here. At present, the Southeast Connecticut Peace and Justice Network meets here twice a

month to coordinate regional peace and justice activities.

## III. St. Francis House is a center for justice ministry.

*Anne and Emmett have been involved in justice ministry in the Church and society in general for all of their adult lives. It is not surprising that St. Francis House will have such ministry at the heart of its life. But "doing justice" in Church and society has too often been a matter of privileged people sharing "their" resources with those who have less. The Gospel vision that has captivated us – as it did Francis and Dorothy Day before us – is one of living a life that rejects privilege and shares the life of the poor in joyful abandon, relying on God's generosity for all our needs. This is the practical living out of "conversion." As Alyosha said in Dostoyevski's *The Brothers Karamazov*, "I can't give two rubles instead of 'all,' and only go to mass instead of following Him."*

(1) **Teaching and practicing nonviolence** as a way of life is at the heart of the justice ministry of St. Francis House. Jesus thought it was possible and practiced it all his life. When Martin Luther King, Jr., led the Civil Rights movement in the U. S. to get justice for African Americans, he had to go to India and Gandhi for the example of practical nonviolence. The genuine liberation movements of the twentieth century were all nonviolent movements. Living in the heart of the post-Cold War American Empire, we seek to live nonviolent lives and to share our experience with others by peace witness and community example. It is very appropriate, therefore, that we are founding members of the Southeast Connecticut Peace and Justice Network, as well as the regional organizing efforts of United Action of Southeastern Connecticut, an affiliate of the Gamaliel Foundation.

(2) **Urban education** is close to our hearts because our children attend public schools in New London, and **the work of anti-racism** goes to the heart of the matter. The racism



of our society can be seen both in who goes to public school today, and the quality of education our children receive in a selfish society. We seek to engage in community education and in support of reform efforts in the school system. A system designed to provide industrial workers is failing to educate our children for a post-industrial global society. The schools look like prisons because they produce both prisoners and guards for a society that does not want either creative work or creative thinking.

(3) St. Francis House serves as the national headquarters for the **Episcopal Urban Caucus**, a 23-year old, 800-member network of urban activists in the Episcopal Church in the USA. Anne and Emmett have been members of the Caucus since its beginning in 1980 and now serve as its coordinators. This work gives national focus to the ministry of St. Francis House and a national scope for experiments with the truth of justice ministry in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

(4) Our quarterly newsletter **The Troubadour**, which incorporates the Urban Caucus publication, **The Urban Networker**, is also a part of St. Francis House justice ministry. *The Troubadour* is an instrument of our "experiment with truth," informing our extended community of our work and seeking their responses so we can correct our vision in light of experience and critical feedback.

(5) The cutting edge of justice ministry is how our society treats its land as well as its people. Dorothy Day taught us that our task is "to make it a little easier for people to feed, clothe and shelter themselves as God intended." We seek to encourage **community-supported agriculture** in southeastern Connecticut, and **\$50,000 of our capital fund project** is earmarked for a Community-Supported Agriculture Fund. We have begun to grow some of our own food with others in local **community gardening** plots and will be making "St. Francis House Tomato Sauce" for sale this



coming summer. The alienation of people from the land and food-production is a trend that needs to be reversed and we hope to be part of that transformation.

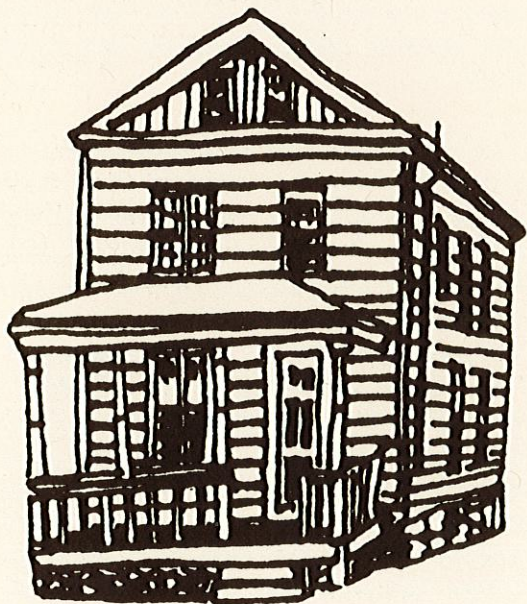
We came to New London and established St. Francis House as an intentional Christian community because God has been generous to us and we want to be hospitable to others in gratitude for all we have received. As Dorothy Day said, "the final word is love." Not our love for others so much as God's love for us, which makes it possible for us to love others and ourselves. Love is what we have to share. The last words in Dorothy's book *The Long Loneliness* are the last words for our "constructive program."

*We cannot love God unless we love each other, and to love we must know each other. We know Him in the breaking of bread, and we know each other in the breaking of bread, and we are not alone any more. Heaven is a banquet and life is a banquet, too, even with a crust, where there is companionship.*

*We have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes with community.*

*It all happened while we sat there talking, and it is still going on.*

April 2003



Arthur Lerner, Emmett Jarrett and Anne Scheibner gather on the steps of City Hall with City Councilor Peg Curtin (left) and others to pray for peace. Photo by Suzanne Oullette - Courtesy of *The Day*, March 14, 2003, page B1.

## The Construction Program

*By Arthur Lerner*

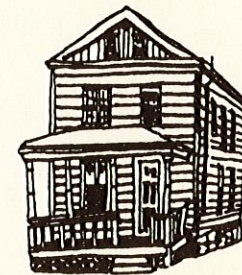
Hello Troubador readers! My family and I recently moved to Southeastern Connecticut. My wife Emily grew up on the shoreline and we are presently raising our one year old daughter, Ellanora, in Emily's grandmother's house on Becket Hill in Lyme. We try to live simply and take lots of time to enjoy our family, friends, and the wonders of creation.

I am a carpenter by trade and a gardener by vocation. My past experience includes volunteer work on an urban agricultural center in Holyoke Massachusetts as well as professional carpentry from framing to finish. Since January I have been working for Saint Francis House (SFH) as "Construction Supervisor" on the various building projects that are in the works at 30 and 32 Broad Street. It was as a gardener, however, that I first came in contact with SFH.

A little over one year ago, Emily and I were living in Western Massachusetts and considering making a move to Connecticut. While scouting out this area we heard about a group in New London that was interested in urban gardening. This group turned out to be SFH. Gardening projects excite me because they are able to address a whole range of critical issues in America today. Some people simply do not get enough food; others get too much of the wrong food. A gardening project that is rooted in the community which it is to serve can address both of these types of malnourishment and also feed the soul. In a garden we find fresh nutritious food and a connection to the grandeur of creation. Emily and I are both very interested in any kind of innovative agricultural enterprises, urban or rural. By the end of our first encounter with Emmett and Anne, we were also both very interested in SFH.

Our introduction to SFH included a discussion of what is now called the "Constructive Program" of SFH. I remember being impressed by the commitment to non-violence paired with a commitment to anti-racism. I resonated immediately with the spirit of faith-based activism. I approach my work as supervisor of the "Construction Program" from within the context of the "Constructive Program".

Thus far in my work I have been focused on the renovations at 32 Broad St. I have worked with contractors (to remove asbestos from the basement) and a great crew from the Alternative Incarceration Center (AIC) to do a general clean-up of the house. Phase Two is now underway as we prepare to sign



contracts to have extensive electrical and plumbing work done. This will include a new gas fired heating and hot water system.

It is exciting to watch this project slowly develop into the future of SFH. Where presently there are piles of tiles, toilets and lots of sheetrock to finish, there will soon (God willing) be energetic activists living, praying and working. Although our progress is slower than on most commercial jobs, we are working phase by phase towards clear goals. We plan to have the second and the third floors of 32 Broad St. done by mid-summer and the remainder of the building done by the fall.

We pray daily for peace in our country and our world. We yearn for a change of heart amongst our leaders and an end to this military adventure in the Middle East. And we are so thankful for the safety and abundance in which we daily live. Still, there are some things we need to make the "Construction Program" of SFH a success. I will end this article with the first installment of what will be an ongoing wish list.

One wish that I have is for an apprentice carpenter. I am thinking of someone who is young (at heart at least), who wants to make a significant contribution to SFH while learning some basic carpentry. If this sounds like you or someone you know please let us know. Other things we need are:

- Gift or loan of step ladders, construction staging and work lights
- Volunteers to finish (sand) sheetrock and to paint
- A good idea of what to do with two 50 gallon electric hot water heaters that are in excellent condition



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and *Meditation Drawing*

Marlies Parent, "Ask the Old People"

Emmett Jarrett, "War is a Failure  
of Imagination"

"Die In" and "Papa's Day in Court"  
by Sarah Jarrett

*Conversation with Chuck Matthei - Part II*

*St. Francis House - The Constructive Program*

Arthur Lerner, "The Construction Program"

**The Urban Networker** with news, resolutions  
from the Chicago Assembly and focus piece:  
"Oppose the Prison-Industrial Complex"

## SAINT FRANCIS PEACE PRAYER

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace;  
where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
and where there is sadness, joy.  
O Divine Master, grant that I may not so  
much seek to be consoled, as to console,  
to be understood as to understand;  
to be loved as to love.  
For it is in giving that we receive,  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal  
life.

*This enormously popular prayer can only be  
traced back to the nineteenth century. While not  
written by St. Francis, it is thought by many,  
including us, to express his spirit well.*



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