

MAGNIFICAT



Dear Friends,

Here in Birmingham we're already moving from spring into summer. We've had days of heavy rain and days of clouds as well as lovely sunny days. At this point our high temps are in the upper 80s and on city concrete, probably in the 90s. Some of our recent mornings have been humid - a sign of things to come.

We've had a lot going on this spring, and we have many, many people to thank for their help and support. First and always, we thank everyone who shares financial support with us. You are essential to this work, and we get the pleasure of sharing your gifts with others. Thank you for your quiet help that makes everything possible.

We had a great spring retreat in early March, led by Anne and Terry Symens-Bucher. About 30 people gathered for a weekend of prayer and sharing about our world, our links to each other, and our community with all beings. Kevin Higgs provided great music (a first for us) and Avondale Samaritan Place graciously allowed us to use their space. We thank everyone who helped make it a deep and thoughtful time.

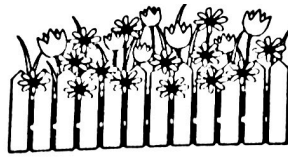
Not long after our retreat we welcomed John Dear to speak about his new book, *The Gospel of Peace*, an exploration of Jesus' teachings on nonviolence in the synoptic gospels. We were welcomed by the Baptist Church of the Covenant for a challenging evening led by John. If you haven't read his book, it's a good resource for reflection, drawing together insights from many sources on a basic Gospel teaching which is almost always ignored. (Orbis, 2024)



Our latest event was a work party which exceeded our expectations in the amount we accomplished in one day. Scott painted one of the big bedrooms, Lindsay scraped and repainted the claw-foot tub upstairs, Sophia and Lexi sorted and organized a mountain of linens, John did a pile of "minor" interior repairs, Lee and a crew (Estefania, Aaron, Anton) worked in the hot sun on controlling our bushes and vines, and Constantine helped me wash walls and woodwork, and then took down and cleaned most of our artwork. Jim did an incredible job of scrubbing the walls of our stairwell - turns out it doesn't need painting after all!!



THANK YOU ALL FOR ALL YOUR HELP!



The house is going well these days. We are settling into a new routine now that we don't have a live-in hospitaller. We meet regularly with our guests to check how things are going, any needs we can help with, and so on. Guests still save while staying with us, as they did before, and work on plans for finding their own housing in time. Of course, we are in and out of the house checking mail, having First Friday Mass, and doing chores, so we're available then. And if all else fails, my phone number is on the fridge! So far no one has needed to call. We are especially grateful to Jeff Bowman, "our" social worker, who helps our guests navigate the various systems to get help with food, housing, and health care. He's truly a gift to us all.

Every once in a while we hear something that affirms a choice we made, shows us that the work we do does in fact have healing results. Because our donations have no strings attached, we can do things that other places can't. Several years ago we had a guest who had an extremely painful mouth, missing and rotten teeth, and who was too embarrassed to smile at people who might think she had meth mouth. (As a matter of fact her very painful situation came mostly from malnutrition during pregnancy.) We debated about paying the several thousand dollars it would cost at the low-cost clinic to remove the rest of her teeth and provide her with implants. We decided to go ahead and do it. A few weeks ago Sarah Ball (now living in New York City) received an email from that guest, who is now in an apartment of her own. She says that she and her two boys are on the medication for ADHD that they need, she's working, and "this coming Friday I'll be getting a smile worth sharing." We're so happy that she'll be smiling!

I think it's been about a year and a half since we joined Lindsay Belcar in serving a Sunday meal at the Fountain at Five Points South. We are privileged to know some of the folks who make their home in that neighborhood, either unhoused or just making it. We're able (again, largely through your generosity) to offer a hot meal, a lunch for later, cold drinks in the summer, wipes, toiletries, and some clothing. Much of what's listed in our needs list is intended for the meal. We knew some of the folks already through our peace vigils, which also take place at the Fountain. We've been vigiling twice weekly since 2001, and some of the people we serve were already there then. It's a long time for a person to survive on the streets. If you have any doubt about the failures of our current systems,



come and serve with us for a couple of Sundays! We especially thank Lindsay for beginning the meal service, and for letting us join in.

Some people reading this newsletter will be new to our work, mainly through an article that appeared in the Diocesan magazine, the One Voice. We've had many gifts of snacks/treats/water/clothing through that article, and also some new people to join in the work. Thanks for that too!

Some of our thanks are tinged with sadness, because in the last twelve months we've lost some good friends, and good friends of the house.

Alan Harbert died last summer, while camping as he loved to do. Jim and I have known the Harbert family since we moved here in 1989, when they kindly stored our 30 boxes of books in their den until we found a home.

Fr Bob Crossmyer, CP, was pastor of Holy Family Church and a good friend of the house from the time he was introduced to us by his predecessor, Fr Joe Van Lieuwen. Bob frequently celebrated our Masses. He also donated liturgical books, and every Lent he would collect pocket change for Mary's House at the Stations of the Cross.

Elma and Jim Tuohy were also old friends of ours and supporters of the house. Jim died two years ago, and this spring Elma joined him. They were amazing people with an amazing story, and we are very blessed to have known them. You can read a bit of their story in Elma's obituary at al.com/obituary, Elma Hannon Tuohy.

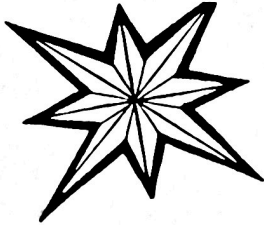
For all these people we give deep thanks, and we send love to their families as they mourn.

We give thanks also for all of you, our community, and for the work we're able to do because of you.

God's Place, Shelley D



You can contact us through our website, maryshousebham.org, by leaving a message at the house at 204 780 2020, by email at shelleymdouglass@gmail.com, or by phoning Shelley at 629 278 3124.



Lessons of War

We often start nonviolence training sessions by asking people to imagine the world they want to live in. After a short brain-storm exercise a picture always emerges of a world at peace, where everyone has what they need and no one lives under threat. In that world people act responsibly to end climate catastrophe, disarm nuclear weapons, and share the earth with each other and with all other beings. The question at the end of the exercise is always, "How can we act to help create this kind of world?" The group discipline for a nonviolent action is built on the answers to that question.

We are sharing in this newsletter an editorial on Gaza written by Patriarch Emeritus Michel Sabbah who was the archbishop and Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem from 1987 to 2008. His essay puts the current catastrophe in Gaza into historical context, and then answers the question for people living in Israel and Palestine.

What about people living here, in the United States? What can we do to help end the catastrophe in Gaza?

We can study history. As the patriarch points out, the horrible violence unleashed on October 7th grew out of decades of repression and occupation of Palestinian people, along with suppression of nonviolent protest. We can be aware of that history and of the part our own country plays in propping up and arming the occupying power. We can call for an end to our arming of Israel and for humanitarian aid instead.

We can understand the lesson of history, that violence only leads to more violence, not to that peaceful life we all want. We can magnify the voices speaking against more violence: Jewish and Palestinian activists working together, young Israelis refusing military service, parents on both sides who have lost children to the violence and want it to end. We can support the BDS movement, which in some US states is a form of civil disobedience. As with South African apartheid, economic pressure speaks loudly.

And we can recognize that our taxes fund not only arms to Israel but nuclear weapons that put the globe at risk, bases ringing the globe, and an entire industry built on death dealing. Interest in tax resistance has increased in response to the arming of Israel. What if they gave a war and nobody paid for it?

There are many ways to resist war taxes, from withholding a symbolic amount to earning less than a taxable income. You can find information at the website of the National War Tax Resistance Coordinating Committee (nwtrcc.org) or through the War Resisters League, (warresisters.org).

Two extremely good books with a different take on solutions to the battles in Palestine: *The Hundred Years War on Palestine*, Rashid Khalifi, MacMillan, 2020 and *The General's Son*, Miko Peled, Just World Books, 2016

Editorial 11

Reprinted from 'The Common Good' newsletter of the
Gaza – The only path to peace Christchurch CW
(New Zealand)

We have already seen six months of war in Gaza. Now, it seems that Israel is beginning its last phase of conquest, after ordering a million and a half people to take refuge in Rafah, a border town with Egypt. Soon, there may be almost no one left in the rest of Gaza.

There have been several wars in Gaza, but this time there are thousands of human victims, and ruins like never before, and peace does not seem to be near. More than suffering, more than the loss of men and women, children and babies, humanity is lost.

Why this new war? The immediate cause is the horrific Hamas attack on Oct. 7, 2023. But another direct cause is the permanent siege imposed upon all Gazan territory in 2007, when the Hamas political party became the governing authority of the enclave.

Since then, the entire territory—2.5 million people over an area of 141 square miles—has been under total military siege imposed by Israel and Egypt. And since Oct. 7, Israel's military operations have limited even the most necessary humanitarian aid for Gaza, to the point that it now stands on the cusp of famine.

The real cause of this war

The real cause is the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, begun in 1948, which no peace agreement has been able to end and which the international community seems to have neglected.

Under Israeli military occupation, Gaza — and all of Palestine — has suffered thousands of deaths, thousands more taken as political prisoners, demolished houses, military checkpoints on all roads that disrupt freedom of movement and daily life, and a paralysed, dependent Palestinian economy.

In short, we are in a permanent state of war. This is the root cause of all wars in Gaza, including the one following Oct. 7. And despite the useless, inhuman violence of the present war, more will come if a just and lasting peace is not reached between the two peoples.

The war must stop without further delay because it is no longer a war. It is a massacre.

Making peace

But what comes after the war? Israel, as the occupier of Gaza, must take responsibility for seeking a sustainable peace with equal justice for all. Otherwise, we will see an unnecessary defeat for all. It is time for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to be put back on the international agenda and for the global

community to take responsibility for building peace, which has seemed impossible until today.

Peace means the security of Israel and, at the same time, the security of the Palestinian people. In fact, the fundamental question that arises today is: Do the Palestinian people have the right to stay at home, on their own land, in their own towns and villages?

To this question, the current government in Israel has said no. Instead, Israel has been trying to forcibly displace the Palestinian people, making it virtually impossible for them to live a normal, humane life and raise their families on their own land. That cannot be a path to peace or security for anyone.

To achieve peace, we must simply admit that even in this conflict, human beings are equal. Israelis and Palestinians are equally created by God, in the image of God, and are capable of loving as opposed to killing.

On this holy land, there is room for both peoples to exercise the same political rights: two states, each at home, independent, free and capable of resisting a return to war. We have experienced war for decades; we now need a new way of thinking that brings about a lasting peace.

The peacemakers

Who is responsible for building this peace? First, the two peoples themselves, Israeli and Palestinian. Then, the international community, the friends of Israel and Palestine. The true friends of Israel are those who help Israel achieve peace. Making Israel militarily stronger, to win wars but remain insecure, is not friendship or true help to Israel.

One can ask the question: Are the two peoples capable of living in peace, each in their own state? Why not? There is much suffering and injustice in living memory, that is true.

But there is also the will to live and the fundamental goodness that God has placed in everyone. God created the human being capable of life rather than death, love rather than killing.

The surest path to peace is direct engagement with the enemy, especially when two enemies share the same land. A sustainable peace cannot be brokered by outside forces.

—Patriarch Emeritus Michel Sabbah served as the archbishop and Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem from 1987 to 2008, the first native Palestinian to hold the office for centuries.



Catholic Worker Roots

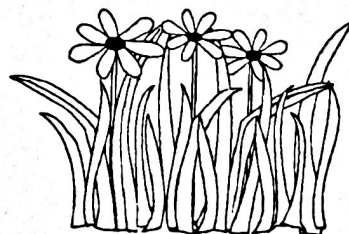
Since its founding the Catholic Worker has resisted war, all war. People of conscience within the movement have struggled to understand and live the teaching of Jesus: Love your enemy! At various times that has meant jail time for refusing the draft, an array of nonviolent resistance to war and preparations for war, and refusal to pay Federal taxes because they fund the world's largest military. There is currently an uptick in interest in tax resistance due especially to the United States' arming of the Israeli military in its devastation of Gaza. This excerpt from an article by Patrick Jordan recounts a classic CW story of Dorothy Day's refusal to pay taxes for war. (From *A Penny A Copy*, edited by Cornell, Ellsberg, and Forest, Orbis, 1995)

"In January, 1972, the Worker received notice from the Internal Revenue Service that it was being assessed nearly \$300,000 in fines and penalties for unpaid income tax during the previous six years. There was nothing to do but fight the case. (The Catholic Worker pays no wages, and all the money goes for the service of the poor and the publication of the paper.) But as in all life's important perils, the crux was how. Over the next six months, and with the expert advice of John Coster, our lawyer, and Ruth Collins, our faithful real estate advisor, and in countless discussions with the members of the CW household, Dorothy came to a sound and clarified position. As she wrote in the May, 1972, *Catholic Worker*: 'It is not only that we must follow our conscience in opposing the government in war. We believe that the government has no right to legislate as to who can or who are to perform the works of mercy.'

The case, of course, had its complications, and this is not the time to write of them. But for a while it looked as if everything would be confiscated, the work completely stopped. 'I beg the prayers of all our readers, whether or not they are sympathetic to us. I'm sure that many will think me a fool, indeed, for jeopardizing the work on behalf of the principle.' The daily press eventually picked up the story, and with a number of well-publicized editorials in several influential papers declaring the government to be senseless and obscurantist, both the IRS and the Justice Department, which were bringing the case, wanted to back out.

[At a meeting with government representatives Dorothy said] 'The point of the matter is this. We are paying for war if we pay the tax. It is so important for us to hold on to our stand even if you (the government) lower the boom. We have an absolute faith that we will keep going even if we lose everything. Our principle is what we are living for.'

The government backed out of the case the following month, acknowledging the religious principles and charitable work of the Catholic Worker."



We always have needs...

Mary's House is a community project, made possible only by your support. We don't ask for government money or apply for grants -we run the house on your gifts alone. Everything you send our way is used for the house, the guests, or our friends on the street. We need:

- Prayer! For our guests, for ourselves, for a better world.
- Money - to pay the bills and buy necessities.
- Time and energy - a couple of hours to help with a project would be great!
- Also, in-kind gifts are welcome: liquid laundry detergent, toilet tissue, Fabuloso, toilet cleaner, canned spaghetti sauce or diced tomatoes, lasagna noodles, packaged snacks like crackers with peanut butter, fruit cups, sweet treats, water, biodegradable paper plates, unscented baby wipes (preferably the packs of 50), bug repellent wipes. Also gently used T shirts, shoes, trousers, men's and women's sox and underwear (new), sunscreen, deodorant. Thank you thank you thank you thank you thank you thank you thank you!!

We also need your help in raising issues of peace and justice, to create a better world for people to thrive in:

Vigil for peace & justice: Wednesday from 7:30-8:30am, and Saturday from 5 to 6pm, both at the Fountain at Five Points South. We have signs or bring your own. We follow a nonviolent discipline.

Vigil against the death penalty, on the day of any scheduled execution. We vigil in front of the County Courthouse and the art museum at the corner of Arrington & Woods N. from 4:30 to 6 pm.

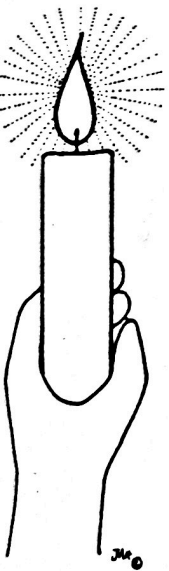
Sadly we announce three vigils to come:

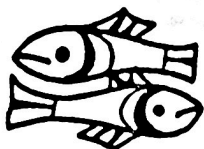
5/30/24, Jamie Mills is scheduled to be killed by lethal injection

7/18/24, Keith Edmund Gavin, scheduled to be killed by lethal injection

9/26/24, Alan Eugene Miller is scheduled to be suffocated by nitrogen.

For more information & actions you can take, go online to phadp.org.





JOIN US FOR PRAYER EACH MONTH

First Friday Mass at Mary's House, every First Friday at 6:30pm, followed by a potluck with good food and visiting. Bring a dish if you can, or just come. Kids are welcome!

Friday June 7, Fr Hugo Esparza CP, celebrant

Friday July 5, Fr Joe Culotta

Friday August 2, Fr Frank Muscolino

Friday September 6, Fr Hugo Esparza CP



We consider our vigils for peace and justice to be a form of prayer. We vigil for peace at the Fountain at Five Points South on Wednesdays from 7:30-8:30 am and on Saturdays from 5-6pm.

We vigil against the death penalty on any day when an execution is scheduled. See inside for dates and place.

We usually sponsor a retreat on the second weekend of Advent. We haven't got the next one planned yet, but keep an eye on our website (maryshousebham.org) or facebook page (maryshousebham) for developments. More info in the next newsletter.

Mary's House
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