

via pacis

The voice of the Des Moines Catholic Worker Community

July, 2010

www.desmoinescatholicworker.org

Volume 34, No. 2

Bridging the Gap: No Easy Answers to Building Resilient Communities

By David Goodner

Whether a drug dealer
baking his soda,
or a revolutionary soldier,
We're here for you, 'Hova.

The evening mist is thick in the Riverbend neighborhood on the near north side of Des Moines, Iowa, and outside of the Bishop Dingman Catholic Worker house, a pimp is selling two women for crack. To the right, at the intersection of Seventh Street and Indiana Avenue, under the light of McDonald's fool's-golden arches, a group of men are sitting on a stoop drinking malt liquor. They've been there all day, and they will still be there in the morning, after the full moon sets and the rosy-fingered dawn begins to rise.

Further down Indiana Avenue, east towards Sixth Street, between QuickTrip and a vacant lot, a fight breaks out underneath the canopy of an abandoned building. The cops come and throw another black man through the revolving doors of the prison system. Down at the camps, homeless men try to stay dry, huddled in their hooches from the rain. It's been two months since someone broke into our house and stole our TV.

hundred percent interest rate, and add to the forty million dollars they rob from our communities and take out of the state with them every year.

Wellmark Blue Cross/Blue Shield will announce another premium rate increase and then deny coverage to another long-term customer.

At the federal building, congressional staffers will write letters to their constituents justifying the spending of billions of dollars on the wars in Afghanistan, Colombia, Iraq, Pakistan, Palestine, Somalia, and Yemen.

At the state capital, politicians will slash social services, close parks, and fire teachers, blame the public employee unions, and demand austerity measures for everyone but the rich. Policies to close tax loopholes and make the multinational corporations pay their fair share will be off the table.

In the newsroom, greenwashing journalists will write stories about how ethanol, "clean coal", nuclear power, offshore drilling and anaerobic digesters can save the planet from the environmental problems that are caused by the same consumer lifestyle and reliance on technology they promote.

volunteers, guests, individual donors, faith-based institutions, and church groups, a community that, for more than thirty years, has strived to ameliorate the social problems of consumer capitalism through voluntary poverty, mutual aid, service to the poor, and resistance to injustice.

We are a small-scale, neighborhood model of what one alternative to the crisis we are living in could look like. Because we are human, we do it badly, but on a good day the spark of the Holy Spirit that is inside all living things shines through to those who know where to look for it.

I moved here almost exactly one year ago, drawn to the vision of radical egalitarianism and the unfulfilled promise for a better world that the Des Moines Catholic Workers said was possible.

When I came here I wasn't disappointed. I found a Christian commune located in the core of the inner-city, rooted in the day to day struggles of the people the system left out. A community that, to the extent possible, is one step removed from life in the rotting core of the American mainstream. A place where hope and hospitality is served up hot one dish at a time, where resistance leads to federal prison and the very belly of the beast.

Inside these pages you will read meditations by the Des Moines Catholic Worker staff about where we are today, where we've been, and where we are going.

We chose the theme "weaving together the tapestry of community" because we thought it was an appropriate metaphor for the never-ending process of creation and renewal that is necessary to create a more just and democratic society and to realize the vision of heaven on earth that we all want to see.

In our current incarnation,



Catholic Worker Boot Camp 2009: An Immersion Experience

we've recently begun a conversation about how to continue to diversify our service and resistance projects, and proposals to incorporate community gardening and cottage industries into our day to day operations are beginning to take shape.

Imagine a revitalized Riverbend, where undocumented immigrants and homeless veterans break ground together, turn a vacant lot into a community garden, and set up stands adjacent to one another at a new neighborhood farmers' market or worker-owned restaurant.

Imagine a Riverbend where community organizing and urban agriculture turn a food desert into a food oasis.

Imagine a Des Moines Catholic Worker community with four houses off the grid, little to no carbon footprint, running solely on solar and wind power; where collaborative projects centered around Sabbath economics and a local solidarity economy contribute to a new national

model of sustainable urban renewal; where a new social contract is written and a truly "resilient community" is forged, capable of weathering the coming storm of catastrophic climate change and social collapse; where resistance to Empire takes many shapes; where "it is easier to do good" in an increasingly turbulent world.

Realizing that vision will be impossible without you, the larger Des Moines Catholic Worker community, whose generous support makes all of this possible. The individual donors and funders who financially contribute to our work, the church groups and volunteers that prepare and serve meals, the everyday people who bring us in-kind donations of food and labor, and the guests who bless our home with their presence.

To you, we say "thank you", and invite you to double-down your commitment to our work as we weave our way out of the wilderness, together.

Resilient community: a self-sufficient and sustainable community with the adaptability and diversity to survive systemic shocks caused by a prolonged disconnect from the global grid by providing for its own energy, food, health, security, and transportation.

In the morning, the real criminals will come out to play. Wells Fargo Financial will kick another hardworking family out of their home and then award themselves a lavish bonus with taxpayer money.

Ace Cash Express will trap another single mother in a never-ending cycle of payday loan debt, with a four

In the countryside, Iowa's topsoil will continue washing into the Mississippi River along with toxic pollutants like roundup pesticides and hog manure. Oil clogs the Gulf of Mexico. The arctic ice and jungle rainforests continue to disappear.

In the middle of it all is the Des Moines Catholic Worker, a community of staff,

via pacis

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Unless noted (or we goofed), all photos and art are produced by the Des Moines Catholic Worker community.

The Des Moines Catholic Worker Community

The Des Moines Catholic Worker Community, founded in 1976, is a response to the Gospel call to compassionate action as summarized by the Catholic Worker tradition. We are committed to a simple, nonviolent lifestyle as we live and work among the poor. We directly serve others by opening the Dingman House as a drop-in center for those in need of food, clothing, toiletries, use of a phone, toilet, a shower or just a cup of coffee and conversation. We also engage in activities that advocate social justice. We trust you understand that we are one Catholic Worker in a trust with four houses.

Becoming a Des Moines Catholic Worker

We are usually open to considering new community members. For information about joining our mission, contact any community member or visit our web site.

Mailing Address

PO Box 4551
Des Moines IA 50305

Bishop Dingman House (Hospitality Center and Business Phone)

1310 7th St.
Des Moines, IA 50314
515-243-0765

Residents: Ed Bloomer, Megan Felt, David Goodner, Greg and Elizabeth Schmick

Phil Berrigan House

713 Indiana Ave.
Des Moines, IA 50314
515-282-4781 Residents: Frank Cordaro

Viola Liuzzo House

1301 8th St.
Des Moines, IA 50314
515-401-4197
Residents: Renee Espeland, Dan Hughes, Frankie Hughes, Reetzi Hughes, Norman Searah

Lazarus House

1317 8th St.
Des Moines, IA 50314
515-326-4832
Residents: Ashley Megan, Sean Megan, Wrigley Megan, Mona Shaw

Weekly Lectionary Bible Study

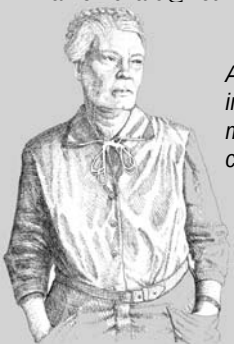
Mondays, 7pm. Berrigan House
Call to confirm.

Weekly Mass or Spiritual Renewal Service

Fridays, 7:30pm, Dingman House
4th Friday is a Community Round Table
All are welcome!

The Chiapas Project

Chiapas, Mexico
Richard Flamer
flamerrichard@hotmail.com



As for ourselves, we must be meek, bear injustice, malice, and rash judgment. We must turn the other cheek, give up our cloak, go a second mile.

-Dorothy Day

Just a Closer Walk With Thee

by Ed Bloomer

My mom, Mary Alice Bloomer, was born on January 18, 1927 as Mary Alice Cook in Litchville, Kentucky, about 90 miles southwest of Louisville.

Hers was a family of hard working folks and poor as church mice because of the Great Depression. Her Mom would take in washing and do housekeeping as a way to make ends meet, and her father would plant a big truck garden and would hunt and trap and collect herbs to sell. My mom had three brothers, one who passed way around age seven, when she herself was only five years old. Her other two brothers went on to CCC camps and later the military. Her only sister graduated from high school and then went to Louisville to work in an aluminum factory making propellers during the war.

When Mom was 16, she came to Louisville, Kentucky for work. She found a job during the war at a whiskey distillery where she met my father, Edward Bloomer Jr. Mom and Dad married in August of 1945 when Mom was 18, and raised four kids- Robin, Marilyn, David Allen, and me. Sadly, sister Marilyn died at three years old from cystic fibrosis. Mom raised us up and David and Robin



Mary Alice Bloomer, mother of Ed Bloomer

have families of their own now.

Mom was a nurse aid for years and decided to become a nurse, so she worked at General Electric Factory to earn money for tuition. She completed her nurse training in 1975 and became a head nurse at a nursing home, and finally retired in 1991 at age 63.

Mom enjoyed cooking, raising flowers, and was a devout Seventh Day Adventist and took brother Jesus' words to heart. She passed away peacefully about three weeks ago, the 9th of June, at 10:30 pm with me and Robin at her side. She was buried next to Dad who preceded her in death in 1995.



Helen J. Tichy, 99, died Monday, June 28, 2010 at Bishop Drumm Care Center. She was born March 3, 1911 in Omaha, Nebraska to Josephine and James Sullivan.

Helen taught with Des Moines Public Schools from 1945 until retirement in 1976. After retirement she was active with the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Catholic Peace Ministry and the Des Moines Catholic Worker. In 1996, she received the first Bishop Dingman Peace award in recognition of her commitment to peace and social justice.

We are planning on having a "Celebration of Life" memorial service for Helen sometime in August. We'll keep you posted. For all of you who knew Helen and her

Tea Time!

Over the last few weeks, many conversations at the DMCW have centered around Peter and Dorothy's idea of "green revolution" and the creation of "a better life on the land." As an outgrowth of these conversations, we have decided to develop a vermiculture (worm) cottage industry using available sources of green waste.

We are starting small with a couple pounds of red wigglers currently in one tub. The worms work together to convert green waste from our food preparation each week into high value castings. These castings can be used as a soil amendment and a living natural fertilizer for both indoor and out door plants and gardens.

Our current vision for the castings is to package them

good spirit - hold her up to the 'light', start to recall some of the stories of her wonderful life, and prepare to share some of them come her "Celebration of Life" memorial. Those who did not know Helen, hold her good spirit to the "light" also and if you can make it to the "Celebration of



into large tea-bags. These bags can steep during the day or overnight in a watering can. This "tea" is then used to water plants as it is a potent natural fertilizer and pesticide. We hope to be selling the tea-bags soon because they will be easy to ship and make great gifts year-round.

So, be watching the *Via Pacis* and the website for updates on how this cottage industry is growing, and how we are working to build "a better life on the land" through our new Catholic Worker worm farm. Read more about it on page four!

Life" memorial, come prepared to get a sense of a great and holy woman, through the memories and heart-felt testimonies of her friends and loved ones....

We will include these stories and more in our next edition of the *Via Pacis*.

Nunc Dimittis: Liturgy as the Work of the People

by Renee Espeland

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace : according to thy word. For mine eyes have seen : thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared : before the face of all people; To be a light to lighten the Gentiles : and to be the glory of thy people Israel. Luke 2: 29-32

Here at the Des Moines Catholic Worker, we have been reevaluating and wrestling with the question: Who are we?

Since the disorderly approach was not working so well, we have attempted to set ourselves up with enough order that we can enjoy ensuing freedoms. Therefore, we start at the beginning. I believe that this is what Maya Angelou refers to when she says, “A bird doesn’t sing because it has an answer, it sings because it has a song.” We are practicing the art of singing. It is a big job. It is making us hungry. We are just as hungry as the threshing crews that my grandma cooked for; we are working up a real appetite for a life of better questions. Perhaps you know how it goes—give

up French fries and, slowly, fruits and whole grains taste better and better—they satisfy. Give up tightness and shallow breathing and grace/mercy convert our gritty rollerblade lives. We are becoming new, like clean greased bearings and it is so incredibly fun to get some traction!

We are working together. We were the recipients of several of the works of mercy when a group of facilitators helped point us in a new direction. We are working to discern how best to do this and to discern what specific orientation best suits the current community. The relationship between work and faith are the liturgy that we live, the awkward prayer that we pray with our feet, so to speak—even when we do not know the words to the prayer, we are singing our song with gusto.

Rich Mullins alludes to this relationship in his song lyric...

Well there's a difference you know / B'tween having faith and playing make believe / One will make you grow / The other one just make you sleep / Talk about

it / but I really think you oughtta / Take a leap off of the ship / Before you claim to walk on water / ... Faith comes from God / And every work that God breaths / God lets you take it to your heart / So you can give it hands and feet / It's gotta be active if it's gonna be alive / You gotta put it into practice / Otherwise...

It's about as useless as a screen door / On a submarine / Faith without works, baby / It's just ain't happenin' / One is your right hand / One is your left / It's your light, your guide / Your life and your breath / Faith without works is like a song you can't sing / It's about as useless as screen door / On a submarine...

The cardinal virtues: prudence, fortitude, temperance, and justice, are the “hinge” virtues (*cardo*) on which all the other moral virtues hang and depend. Richard Rohr writes that “each require an ongoing broadening, discerning, balancing, and discovery of God’s will and God’s ways. They are never virtues that one can fully possess or have, but they are always dependent on time, discernment, prayer, and listening to



others beyond one’s self. They demand gradual discovery and humility, and they refuse to be ‘had’. There is never anyone who can say she or he is perfectly prudent, always courageous and persistent, consistently moderate and balanced, or equally just in regard to others’ rights. So we instead prefer virtues that allow our egos an immediate sense of superiority and settledness.

We focus on issues that close down any necessity for ongoing prayer, struggle, or ambiguity (read:faith.) Most people would actually prefer ‘satisfying untruth’ to ‘unsatisfying truth’. The real vices are well hidden; the real virtues are largely not sought. The ego is formed by contraction. The soul is formed by expansion. The

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Norman’s Whereabouts

by Norman Searah

Hello there! I’m sitting in my room after seeing the foot doctor on a gray sky looking day.

Earlier I was listening to Pete Seeger, then I watched some TV, but the most VIP thing I did was to clean my room. It still needs cleaning like our Earth. I’m sorry for our mess in the gulf that’s spread all over. Like my room, it’s a mess all over with wars, pollution, money problems, and immigration and weather problems.

If Mark Twain were alive he would have a field day, along with JRR Tolkien, John Muir and others that thought about this Earth of ours.

Have you forgotten that you own this Earth along with others in other parts of the world, along with the animals, some who are killed to feed us along with the plants that feed us?

We may feel that this world is ours and we can do anything to it. It’ll repair itself, it’ll clean itself up, it will hide it, why, we can even put it in the wa-

ter. We can trash it at any length. Who cares? If we care even for our children’s future, not just their wealth because some children don’t have that luck, but for the world that we’re leaving for them we will care.

That is, if we care! After all, those in the past tried their best, even though they had wars too.

We need to put away our wars for good and deal with our sick, hurt home. Even now it’s crying out in many voices, even if we may not hear them but we can see them in our world, dying, not just in wars, but covered in oil.

I wonder about the sea bottom and the future. Do you?

I wonder about all the things we have done to this Earth. Do you throw your paper cup down after you were done drinking or that cigarette?

I wonder if God, the Creator of our home, has ever paid a visit to it recently. I know I would like to go wherever He is and to hear what He has learned of our time and how much we have

changed. I would listen like a child listens to a parent, a parent who is the landlord of this world.

That other landlord, if you may, is the Devil. He might have things to say. After all, we all have a voice in this world of ours, even the animals, the plant life. They give of themselves and share of their fruit.

I know I must sound foolish. Our world needs us, even the poor.

But then, who cares. My room is still a mess. Maybe I’ll let it go. There must be someone to clean it up. Maybe I will write a story about cleaning it, as I clean it.

Speaking of cleaning my room and caring for the Earth, along with stopping wars, I am a diabetic, who had a stroke along with breaking two bones. Wondering what is next. I watch what I eat. I take lots of walks along with doing other things to lose weight. Over time I noticed our guests have gotten overweight. I often think about whether or not I should care about what they eat and how much. If I’m my brother’s and sis-

ter’s keeper then I should care, like our own do or did.

I realize that most of all the food is given to us by people that care. I don’t know how to ask them to bring healthy foods like some schools do, even snack foods. Because I guess that I’ve seen the students over the years becoming overweight. So the schools had the pops and the snacks changed. But that is just an idea.

Another idea that I had for some time, a few of us at the Catholic Worker went to Harlan, Iowa for a farm foreclosure. Some tried to stop the sale of the farm. Since I didn’t get arrested for stopping it, I had a chance to take a ride and see the farmer’s farm. With his daughter we drove around the farm. Both of them pointed out all of their neighbors, even those that once lived in these run down ruins of a farm, even the children that lived on them. I took it as a good lesson in life because how many know our neighbors as well as us knowing our guests? I have lived here for thirty years and I only know a few if I am lucky.

As for my dream, I believe we all have dreams, young and old, no matter who we are. I’m learning to be a writer. I’m writing short stories from the heart as I was taught. I’m learning as I go. I often think that there are dreams in the Worker Movement. I often hear about people who want to write for their newsletter and can’t, just as many people in other countries don’t have a voice. I figure I need a few more stories to write for this workshop thing in Providence, Mass. so I can learn more about writing, so I can write a book.

I plan, if I do write a book, I plan to share the money with others, also the Catholic Worker in England because I plan on going to England, my mother’s country, work at the Catholic Worker while I look around. I have never been there, but that’s a dream.

Thank you for your time.
Norman

St. Theresa Partners with Catholic Worker Saturday Free Food Store

by Anita Holub, St. Theresa Social Concerns

Last year, St. Theresa Church started a food pantry to be able to respond to the growing number of people who come to the church office asking for help. Becoming an approved agency by the Food Bank of Iowa gave us the ability to stock ample amounts of nutritious food at a very nominal cost.

With these resources in place, our Parish Administrative Assistant Amanda Vande and I wanted to expand St. Theresa's abilities to reach out to the hungry in our community. I learned about the Catholic Worker Saturday Free Food Store through a donation I made, and asked if they would allow St. Theresa

to be a partner in this weekly outreach.

At first, we only signed up to help once a month. But it wasn't long before we saw that what we had to offer was needed weekly. By seeing the people willing to stand in line for an hour in sub-zero weather to get a few vegetables and a couple of canned goods, our hearts were on fire to increase our commitment. We knew that with the cruel winter conditions, anyone who stood in line for that long in the harsh elements was truly hungry and needed food for his or her family. We were humbled by how much we had to give and how little we were giving by limiting our involvement to once a month. We concentrate on bringing protein items that comple-



ment the vegetables and fruit the Catholic Worker provides. Most of the people served by food pantries do not get enough protein in their diet and have to depend on a high carbohydrate diet to feed themselves and their families. That is why you

might see people who are overweight standing in line at food pantries. Myself, I know that simple carbohydrates make me gain weight, so I limit them in my diet. But when you have to eat whatever you can get, simple carbohydrates are cheap and

filling. So, the best items to donate to food pantries are high protein/complex carbohydrate items (canned meat, peanut butter, beans, nuts). Better yet, cash donations are used to purchase fresh meat and milk.

Our Catholic Worker partners continually try to thank us for our involvement, but it is we who thank them. Thank you, Des Moines Catholic Worker, for offering this Free Food Store every week to the hungry in our community. And, for giving St. Theresa the opportunity to be a small part of this commitment to bridge the gaps created by so many social injustices in our world that require people to stand in line in all kinds of weather just to provide food for their family's table.

A Catholic Worker Education

by Colyn Burbank

Since graduating college this May, I have been reflecting on my life now and how I got to be where I am at. While I have many thanks to the many people who have helped to shape me into who I am, I can say with all sincerity that living at the Des Moines Catholic Worker has been the most transformative experience of my life. I first started coming to the house my sophomore year of college with good intentions to serve the poor and experience a different side of life. At the time, I did not realize what I was getting myself into. The result of time spent with the community members, guests, and volunteers have radically changed my life. My political beliefs began to put their foremost concern for the poor, and my religious beliefs began to see a Savior who is most merciful, most compassionate, and most concerned for the poor. "The poor" was no longer an abstract image in my mind and the stories I have read about of people working relentlessly for peace and justice were all of a sudden my friends.

I started to become more and more involved once I became familiar with the Des Moines Catholic Worker. I began to live at the Bishop Dingman house during my summers off and was able to learn more about the Catholic Worker movement. I started to digest the writings of Dorothy Day, the history of the Worker, the aims and means of the movement, and other popular writers respected in the house. The hospitality coupled with similar books and the scriptures encour-



aged me to make this my life. Everything in scripture became so much more real and active to me. This way of life became my main focus for the rest of my college years. Every research paper I wrote had a foundation of peace, justice, and concern for the poor. I wanted everything, academic wise, to have some sort of benefit for what I now stood for.

I cannot share every single thing I have learned since coming here, for it is much too long, but I can mention one of the most profound things I have learned. I mentioned earlier, I came into the Worker with very good intentions, but the focus on 'how can I bless this person?' I came to realize that if I only look at how I can bless someone or serve someone, I am missing out on a very important opportunity to be blessed or to be served. Our guests are some of the greatest people I have ever met and have incredibly wonderful life-giving things to share.

"I can say with all sincerity that living at the Des Moines Catholic Worker has been the most transformative experience of my life."

When I put the burden on me to be the one serving, I was taking away from the relationship. If I claim to see Jesus in the eyes of the poor then why wouldn't I take the time to listen and accept blessings from them? It is a wonderful thing to accept a blessing from a guest or to ask a homeless person to pray for you. I encourage us all to see God's greatest outpouring on the lowly and the humble.

I am so grateful to have had this opportunity in a very crucial time in my life. I cannot begin to say how much I appreciate the people I have gotten to know in Des Moines, IA and the Catholic Worker Farm in Maloy, IA. I thank all of you who continue to support the Des Moines Catholic Worker and the Workers all over the world. I am confident that with your support you will not only contribute to the needs of the poor, but will also change the lives of many people who stumble in with good intentions. I am a living testament to the fruit one Worker House has sown. Much love, much thanks, and much peace to you all.

Mustard Seed

by Nicholas Leete, Farm Cooperative Member

In 2010, a Catholic Worker Farm in Ames, Iowa will complete its third year. Called the Mustard Seed Community Farm, we are located at 366 W Ave, Ames, IA. We try to sustainably grow and locally distribute delicious, healthy, and affordable food in order to foster simple living, love of our neighbor, and an ethical, egalitarian, and environmentally responsible community.



In 2009, we grew \$15,000 worth of food, 2/3 given to farm workers and those in need. The other third was sold to provide money for seeds, trees, bees, and farm infrastructure.

Our current major infrastructure project is...
Continued on page 5

Des Moines Catholic Worker Worm Farm

Growing Living Natural Fertilizer for Soils, Gardens and House Plants

Worm Castings:

Castings are living organic containers made and released by red worms digestion.

Castings contain a multitude of beneficial micro-organisms, and are power-packed with essential plant nutrients. Worm casting contain:

- 5 times more available Nitrogen than compost.
- 7 times more available Potassium than compost.
- 1.5 times more Calcium, Magnesium, & Phosphorous than compost

Another point in favor of earthworm castings is the high concentration of beneficial bacteria and microbes added to them by the worms in their digestive process. These beneficial microscopic creatures out-compete and repel pathogens, increase plant nutrient absorption and provide growth hormones for increased plant growth.

These nutrient packages are perfectly balanced and will not burn plants or new seedlings.

Worm Casting Tea Bags

Using these mess-free tea bags is a simple way for you to reap the benefits of Living Worm Castings. Simply drop a tea bag into water, let it steep for 12-24 hours, then apply the "tea" directly to plant leaves and soil.

This brew is a potent fertilizer when sprayed directly onto the leaves of your plants. Casting tea has properties that naturally repel insects and diseases.

1 bag makes approximately one gallon of Worm Castings Tea.

I am God's Mule!

by Dan Hughes

You have heard the saying, "you can't teach an old dog new tricks." It's not true! An old dog who didn't want to make the effort to learn something new or leave his comfort zone probably coined that phrase.

I just turned 57. I become an older dog every day. I am like the proverbial farmer's mule that would not budge unless the farmer got his attention, and then he worked well. Getting his attention meant popping that mule between the eyes with a two-by-four. Often in life, I have required assistance to regain focus. As strange as it seems, this mule actually likes to pay attention, and though sometimes woefully unaware, does not wish to be. This mule sees the benefit of an occasional pop between my eyes and is grateful for its lessons. This mule so much does not want to be blind to the inconsistent ways of the world around me or in me.

In the last year and a half I have been popped between the eyes several times, (pop, pop, POPPOPOP... "you in there?") and once again I'm jolted to attention. I say once again because I have been popped before and gained clarity about what really matters. It always hurts, and always helps. Unfortunately, like the Israelites wandering in the desert, who, after seeing signs and wonders, forgot; I get self-centered and wander aimlessly. Fortunately, by the grace of God, life gives me a reality check and I am forced to wake up and pay attention, to learn a well-needed lesson, again.

A year ago December, I was diagnosed as having severe congestive heart failure, acquired quite suddenly it is suspected, from a flu-like viral attack. Accustomed to being healthy, I get the flu and found myself in the emergency room, unable to breathe. In the hospital a doctor says, "Your heart is functioning at 25 percent of normal capacity; go on disability if you want to see your grandchildren graduate." I find myself wearing a vest day and night designed to shock my heart if I go into "V fib." If, as in my case, the way one earns a living comes from physical labor, and the body fails, and one can't earn a living, it feels precarious. It gets one's attention! So does losing health insurance and easy access to health care for not having a thousand dollars a month for an insurance policy that didn't pay



enough anyway. Monthly payments made faithfully for years mean nothing if you can't pay next month's payment. There was even a point in time where I envisioned my girls being without a home. Life is surely unpredictable to say the least. Not according to any plan I had made. Still, I consider this a very good year, one of the best and I am grateful.

The experiences I have had are the same many share; in fact, I've had it easy, and still it was difficult. I have taken responsibility, taken steps to improve my health naturally, and it is working. I am feeling better physically, but that's not the important thing. I am spiritually, emotionally healthier. I have taken my toe out of water and dove in. I am fully engaged and excited to be a member of the Des Moines Catholic Worker community. I have learned from our guests, these are my people and they feed my spirit. I am learning in broader ways how an economic system that makes some rich at the expense of the poor works against all of us. I learn "humility" as I watch our staff do their work. I am grateful to all of our outside supporters, young and not as young, individuals, the groups and organizations who have made the choice to volunteer their time and bring in donations, food, and money to support the work being done here.

Folks, we are all very much alike, we are all born and we will all eventually die. Not a thing we can do will change that. We'll all stumble and fall and make mistakes. It is in our way of living that we can choose to make a difference. That's the important stuff. The book of James tells us true religion takes action. Des Moines Catholic Workers strive to take responsibility for our actions, in community, in the service of others. I have chosen, with intention, to live in this community where all have a voice, where all care what the others needs and ideas are, and are willing to put forth the effort to live together peacefully. After all,

Blessings to Our Sister and Friend

by Tracy Robson



After a year and a half, I have decided to move out of the Des Moines Catholic Worker. The Bishop Dingman House seems to have had a lot of traffic in and out during my time there, because at the moment I left, I was the resident (out of 7) who had lived there the longest.

The decision to leave was not an easy decision to make. Why did I finally decide to leave? "Moving on to other things," I suppose is the saying. I received an AmeriCorps job for the summer working with youth, a job I didn't really apply for, and I discerned that it was from Someone who had a little better idea of what I should be doing than me. I moved in with a couple of very good friends of mine in a cute little house in Beaverdale. The surroundings are a shock to my system. We have air conditioning, carpet, and a washer and dryer in the house! And a dishwasher! However, the skills I learned about keeping a kitchen clean and the ability to clean an entire bathroom and shower in under 10 minutes are priceless parts of what I gained while at the Worker. The neighborhood also doesn't quite yet feel like home to me. I miss my DMCW community members. I miss see-



how can we claim peacemaker status to the world if we aren't at home. It is incredible how wonderful it has been being part of this active community, working and growing together over the last few months. I am getting a clearer vision of how good things could be; I am living large in a life worth living.

ing our guests on the street. I miss knowing everyone around. Also, I just miss being so close to the "action," downtown, Drake, the hospitals.

However, the friends I moved in with are more than just "friends." We're a community of people as well, and while we don't do the hospitality and outreach that are so integral to the Catholic Worker lifestyle, it was my time there that helped me realize that living in community is definitely the way to go. Let alone the sharing of resources, it's the sharing of lives and the sharing of food at the table that make life in community such a wonderful and life-giving experience. I don't think I will ever flee too far from community life, even after I get married or have a family, if either of those goals ever come to fruition.

My AmeriCorps job is a mere 10 weeks long, and I'll likely be finished with it by the time our faithful readers have this issue of the VP in their hands. After that position ended, I really had no idea what I'd be doing with "my life." It seems as though it's only the adults in my life, those adults being the ones that are indoctrinated into thinking that our economic system is the way it should be, that ask me that question. Well, them and my parents :). My answer was a solid and shameless, "I don't know." Why did I need to know? I can survive financially for quite a while. I'll still be volunteering at the Worker, and I have friends and family who care about me. Why do I need to choose a career and stick to it? However, those questions did set a little spark off in me...what would I do with all of my time, since I wouldn't be doing 30 hours a week of community work at the Des Moines Catholic Worker?

My answer came in the form of a phone call from a woman I'd never met, asking me to interview for a job I'd never applied for. The job was teaching Spanish at two different Catholic schools, St. Pius X in Urbandale, and St. Augustin in Des Moines. I decided to go to the interview, and immediately felt connected with the interview-

ers in the room. They said they liked me because of the "social justice" aspect I could bring to their classrooms, based primarily in my work with the Des Moines Catholic Worker. A mere 24 hours later I accepted the position.

So, I guess this is what I've been called to for now. I'll be teaching Spanish for grades kindergarten through eighth at both schools. It promises to be a challenging job, but I'm excited about it. Once again, Someone else makes my decision for me, and I follow where that Someone is leading. And it feels so very good.

I hope to help the kids see "outside of themselves." Now, I'm not assuming that they can't or don't right now, but I hope to help them get some experiences with people unlike themselves, and Spanish class is a great place to do that. Plus, it's one of the reasons they hired me!

Therefore, it's somewhat comforting to know that I won't be fleeing too far from the Catholic Worker or Catholicism anytime soon. And, as much as I tried in my early days to escape from the activist and social justice aspect of the Catholic Worker (and do only hospitality), I think I'm called to it to stay. I know very well that simply giving people food is putting a Band-Aid onto a huge, blistering, pussing wound. The wound is getting no better until we do something to heal it. That healing is working towards fixing the unjust systems that cause the wound in the first place, and the Catholic Worker is the place that helps me to remember that. And I feel blessed knowing that, while I'm no longer involved in the day-to-day operations of the Worker, I still get to stop by, be involved, and share my life with the staff, supporters, and guests who walk through that door four days a week. I still get to have good conversations, learn about what's "really" going on in the world, and ask questions that are challenging and life-changing.

And I only live a few miles away.

Mustard Seed from page 4

structure projects are a house, a septic system, a renovated well. These projects would greatly increase our ability to serve the greater community, but they are quite expensive, costing several thousand dollars each. Beyond money, we would greatly encourage

visitors who want to learn, work, or share skills. For more information, our website is mustardseedfarm.org, and we can be contacted at mustardseebee@gmail.com. We publish the twice-annual Midwest Catholic Worker Newsletter, which you can subscribe to: *just ask Alice*; 515-520-9691.

Experience, Strength, & Hope!

by Greg & Elizabeth Schmick

If you go to Google and type into the search box, "Des Moines Catholic" the second link returned in the search is the Des Moines Catholic Worker home-page. We know, because that's just what we did last year when we were getting ready to move from Portland,

attend a peace vigil...every week...even in the heat and humidity...even in the icy winds of winter? Did they really meet for Mass in the living room? And fight for healthcare for all?

We couldn't imagine that this could really be the case, but if it was, we knew we wanted to be involved and to

help them live out this mission, so when we arrived last July amidst the fireflies and heat lightening and rolling tides of corn, we decided to give them a call. And the call turned into a visit, and the visit into an ongoing experience, an experience through which God is graciously giving to us all things, especially strength and hope!

Did they really open their home in an effort to give food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty...?

Here's what our experience has been:

Hospitality has been the cornerstone of our experience at the DMCW. It is our daily bread as Christ manifests himself to us through the homeless and hungry. At 3:00 pm when the doors of Dingman open, guests arrive. Some sign up for a shower, others grab a plate of food, still others relax on the couch to watch TV or gather round the cribbage board for a spirited game of cards.



Bishop Dingman House

Oregon to Iowa last Spring. New and somewhat sheltered Catholics, we had not yet heard of the Catholic Worker Movement.

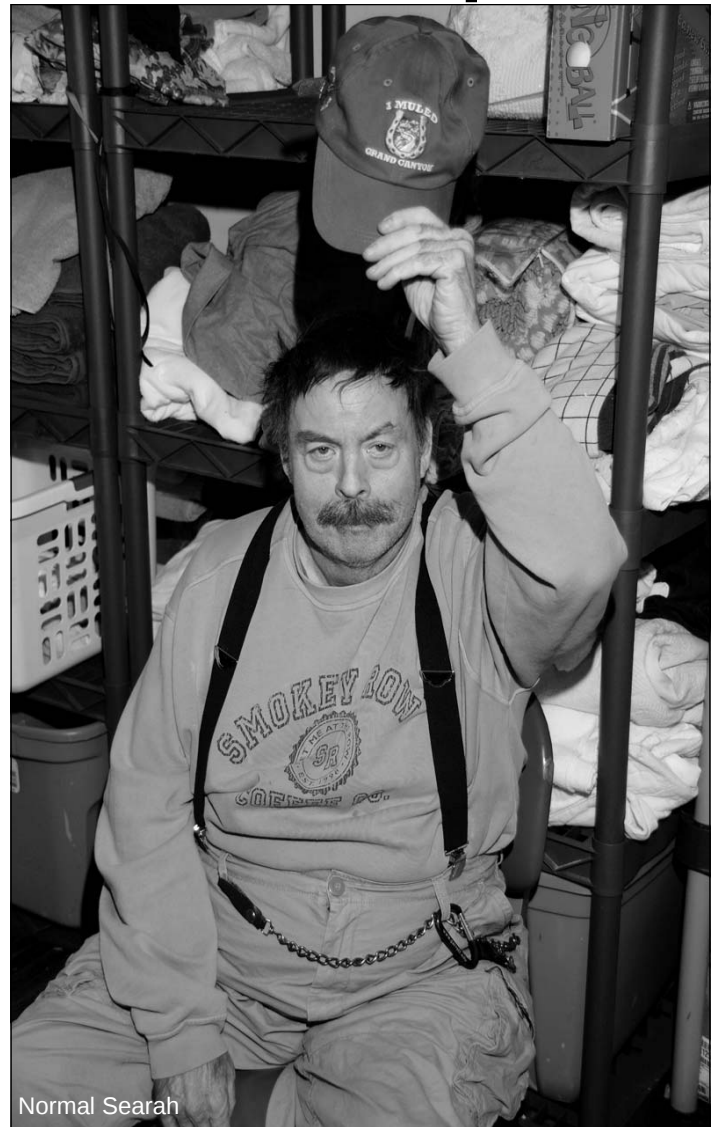
As we began to read about these workers and their work, we began to wonder, could this group really live up to what its website professed? Did they really open their own home in an effort to give food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, rest and shelter and friendship to the weary? Did they actually



Weekly Vigils



Supper time in the Dingman House Kitchen!



Normal Searah

From 3 to 5, guests can visit with Norman at the pantry. Norman organizes and distributes all the many donations the DMCW receives—razors, soaps, shampoos, canned food, blankets, coats, shoes, and wide variety of personal items. It is a monumental job and one that Norman does with kindness, love, and devotion. Because there are many donations, and because the needs of our guests are great, this can be an overwhelming task, nonetheless, Norman is there—day in and day out, an inspiration to us all.

During Open House, guests can also make local phone calls or check to see if

they have received any mail. On any one day, a couple dozen guests make phone calls, at least 10 take showers, 50 to 100 share in our snack and supper, and many with no other address receive mail. If we pause for a moment, and consider that this typical day occurs four times a week, fifty weeks a year, that means each year the DMCW and its volunteers and supporters provide an unbelievable amount of meals, showers, cups of coffee, games, phone calls, and mail each year.

While some of these acts of mercy are measureable, so many of them are not. In

At the DMCW it is not really about the numbers, but relationships; about understanding needs and doing the best they can to love and serve one's neighbor without demanding anything in return.



Relationships!

"The mystery of poverty is that by sharing in it, making ourselves poor in giving to others, we increase our knowledge and belief in love."
Dorothy Day



Blanket stored at the worker house

fact, more often it's the unnamable, non-measurable acts of mercy that matter the most, like a smile or a hug, or providing a guest a safe, dry place to store his blankets during the day, or delivering food to a shut in. So pause, and think again: at the DMCW it is not really about numbers, but relationships, about understanding needs and doing the best they can to love and serve one's neighbor without demanding anything in return.

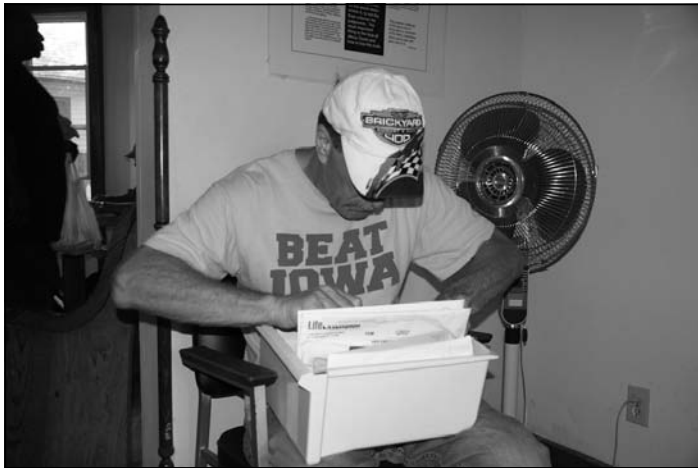


Showers for everyone

On Saturdays, the house is not open for hospitality, but the workers, through generous donations from Capital City Fruit in Norwalk and St. Theresa Food Pantry in Des Moines, are able to provide fresh fruits, vegetables, beans, meat, dairy items, and other perishable food to at least 60 families each week. By working with both organizations simultaneously and Trinity United Methodist Church, the DMCW is able to provide a well balanced se-



Frankie and Reetzi Hughes wash all the towels!



Going through the mailbox

they are: beloved children of God.

In addition to hospitality, another pillar of the DMCW we have experienced is direct action and peaceful vigils



Cribbage game during hospitality hours at Dingman.

lection of food to hungry families.

When we consider the hospitality that DMCW provides, what strikes us as the truly amazing part of these works of mercy are their basis in unconditional love and unlimited forgiveness. At the DMCW no one demands that a guest fill out paperwork or provide a social security number or an address. Guests are not required to participate in "programs," they are simply loved and accepted for who

against unjust structures which oppress people. On Thursdays from 11:30 to 12:30, the workers join with others to protest healthcare inequities and the war in Afghanistan and Iraq at Nollen Plaza in downtown Des Moines. At the conclusion of this lunch hour vigil, the workers make a visit to the offices of Iowa Senators Grassley and Harkin.

Along with the weekly vigil, they cooperate and support the efforts of other like-minded organizations to raise



Saturday Food Market

What strikes us as the truly amazing part of these works of mercy are their basis in unconditional love and unlimited forgiveness.

awareness about the injustices perpetuated within society. This often takes the form of rallies, parades, and protests.

Woven into these direct actions and works of mercy each week is the opportunity to grow spiritually through a study of the non-violent and compassionate actions of Christ and his early followers as recorded in the Christian Scriptures. There is also the chance to meet together for Mass, the sharing of Christ's Body and Blood, and roundtable discussions.

Along with all these activities, as new members in the community, we have had the chance to participate in meetings and shared decision



"The Boss" enjoying snack!



Charles delivering food to a neighbor

making. We have learned about consensus decision making, discernment, meditation, shared responsibility, the balance of intellectual pursuits with manual labor, the importance of listening and asking questions, and many creative ways to encourage opportunities for all voices to be heard. This has been incredibly important because it demonstrates to us that the DMCW is a group of people that tries to embody the ideas of Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin and strives to live as an egalitarian community, a community operating from the bottom up rather than a community imitating the unjust hierarchies so prevalent in the world at large.

By loving us unconditionally, forgiving us unlimitedly, and welcoming us to participate in all these experiences, the DMCW has changed who we are. We are now seeing more and more fully the injustices in the world around us and have the chance to live together and join in the common cause of creating a society in which "the good of each person is bound to the good of the whole in the service of God."



Rally at Nollen Plaza



Getting ready for a march in downtown Des Moines

Dying to End the Wars by Chris Gaunt

Dying-In, I should say.
Dying in the Federal Building in Des Moines, Iowa, 7th floor.

Dying in the offices of Senators Grassley & Harkin.
Dying to stay until my Senator starts voting NO on continuing to fund these wars.

Staying dead past 5 pm closing time? ... YES.

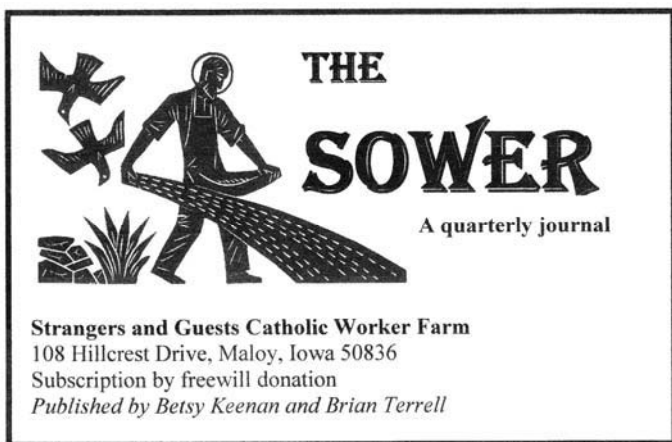
Return to die again the next Wednesday.
Get to know the office staff before you die.
Let them get to know who you are and what you want.

Come in a spirit of resistance.
Nonviolent resistance.
Arm yourself only with LOVE.

Care to join me?
Dare to raise your voice by using your body.
Speak loudly in the dead silence.

Come, die-in with me to end these damn wars.
Pick your day.
Choose your own way to simply say:

NO MORE \$\$\$ FOR WAR



ACQUITTAL in Our Nation's Capitol

by Chris Gaunt

Peace activists often go to court to speak truth to power. This time 24 activists won in court for actions taken inside and outside the Capitol on January 21. On June 14, when our motion for acquittal was granted, I felt the long arc of the universe bend toward JUSTICE.

I have participated in Witness Against Torture campaigns to demand an end to torture and illegal detentions at Guantanamo for the past four years. We took our grievances straight to the Capitol in January because President Obama's one year deadline for closing Guantanamo was expiring. Many members of Congress at that time, including our own Senator Grassley, instead of working to close this facility and call for an end to torture and indefinite detention, continued to use the media to promote fear mongering by saying that the prison at Guantanamo was still holding the "worst of the worst." It made me feel ashamed that our elected officials were not listening to or acting on the facts.

Our prayerful, sorrowful message about the men who have died and who still languish in Guantanamo was delivered peacefully with a memorial service inside the Rotunda for three men apparently murdered by being tortured to death in Guantanamo in 2006. Our govern-

ment lied at the time about the deaths of Salah, Mani, and Yasser and called them suicides and "acts of asymmetrical warfare." On the outside of the Capitol we stood wearing orange jumpsuits and hoods, displaying our message in banners: BROKEN PROMISES, BROKEN LAWS, BROKEN LIVES, and eventually reading the names of those illegally detained there. For doing this we were arrested and charged with unlawful assembly, loud and boisterous.

How ironic that in March when Tea Partiers gathered outside the Capitol to express their grievances about health care, they were loud and boisterous to the point that Capitol Police had to escort elected officials into the building, even as they were spit on. But there were no arrests that day. Were we arrested on January 21 simply because of our message? Are our elected officials willing to hear a message opposing health care reform, but closed to hearing the somber truth about Guantanamo?

All 24 defendants went pro se, choosing to represent ourselves, and to bring the names and stories of Guantanamo detainees into the court as much as possible. Bill Quigley, one of our attorney advisors, joined us on Monday to argue our motions for necessity defense and international law defense. Bill is one of the finest, most

humble and most compassionate attorneys in the country. He explained to the court that we did no illegal activities on January 21, that all of our activities were in fact deeply protected First Amendment activities. The world has recognized that continuing unlawful detention is grievous and that it decreases our national safety and security. He explained that we had a legal right to remain even if we were ordered by the police to leave. The question is whether the officers had a legal right to ask us to leave. Our motion for use of necessity and international law defenses was turned down at the beginning of the day, but at the end of the first day when the government rested, our motion for acquittal was granted.

Even though 180 men still languish in Guantanamo, we can be hopeful that we did the RIGHT THING by resisting torture and illegal detention as a policy of our government, that we chose the RIGHT TIME, when President Obama's promise to close Guantanamo within one year of taking office was broken, and the RIGHT PLACE, Congress, and that we did it for the RIGHT REASONS, taking on the moral responsibility to seek redress of grievances when our government officials fail to act.

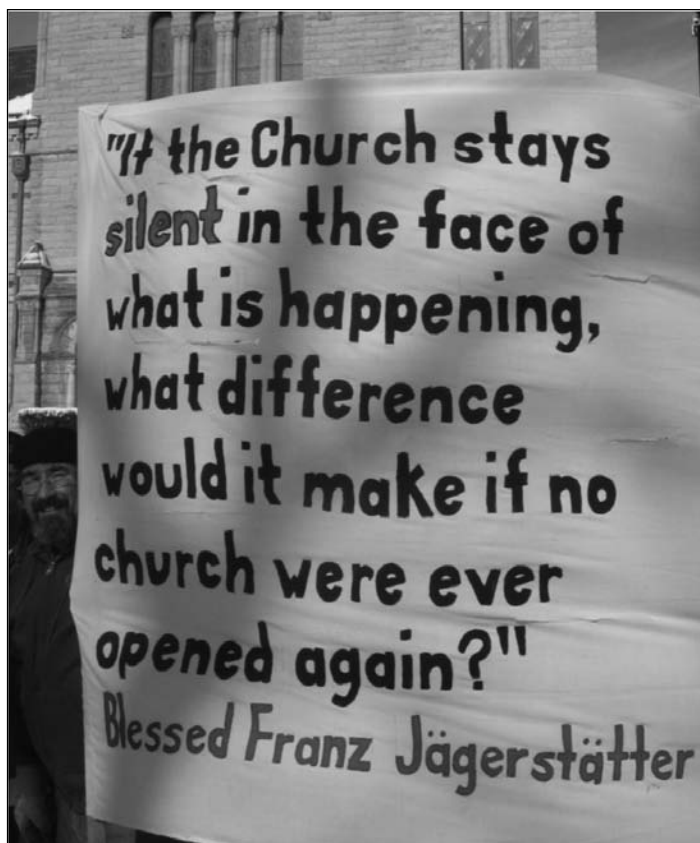
A Covenant to Speak Out and Utter Our Condemnation of Our Nation's Aggression In Such A Way That Never A Doubt, Never A Single Doubt Can Arise In The Heart Of Even The Simplest Person.

by Brian Terrell

"The political polarization of our society has now reached a new and dangerous level. Honest disagreements over policy issues have turned into a growing vitriolic rage against political opponents, and even threats of violence against lawmakers. Political debate, even vigorous debate, is a healthy thing for a democracy; but to question the integrity, patriotism, and even faith of those with whom we disagree is destructive to democratic discourse, and to threat or even imply the possibility of violence toward those whose politics or worldview differs from ours is a sign of moral danger, and indeed a sign of democracy's unraveling."—Jim Wallis
www.civilitycovenant.org

Sojothers magazine has issued an invitation to "Church leaders from across the political and theological spectrum" to sign a "Covenant for Civility." They offer this covenant to counter the "polarization" that they perceive as "reflecting a degeneration of public debate in our national culture." Certainly, civility and charity towards those with whom we disagree is a virtue to be encouraged especially in extreme times. *Sojothers* is fundamentally mistaken, though, in their reading of our times. At this horrible juncture in history when crimes against humanity are committed daily by our government and in our names, it is not a lack of civility but the absence of outrage on the part of Christians and the Church that "is a sign of moral danger" to our nation.

"The political polarization of our society has now reached a new and dangerous level," says *Sojothers'* president and CEO Jim Wallis. This fear of polarization



serves as a smokescreen to our real problems. Not only is there no political polarization in our society, there are no poles. Far from suffering from polarization, in our nation there is not even a dialogue. In the political sphere there is

only one operant position and that position is pro-war and pro-corporate, even as it is offered as two opposites, liberal and conservative, Democratic or Republican. Differences that in are reality negligible are presented as

being so disparate, so far to opposite extremes that our nation is in danger of tearing apart. This illusion serves to bolster those in power and to stifle dissent. When Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was accused of polarizing the racial issues of his day by intemperate words and actions, he responded in a letter from the Birmingham Jail that "too long has our beloved Southland been bogged down in the tragic attempt to live in monologue rather than dialogue." King saw the "need for having nonviolent gadflies to create the tension in society," tension that is required before any real dialogue could happen. Rather than "fan the flames of discontent," as King and the IWW commended, *Sojothers'* covenant seems to seek to diffuse the tension in our nation today.

Discussions over the use of torture, of suspension of habeas corpus, extra-judicial executions, military aid to Israel, wars of aggression in Iraq, Afghanistan and Paki-

Continued on page 10

Sabbatical ...

(from Latin *sabbaticus*, from Greek *sabbatikos*, from Hebrew *shabbat*, literally a “ceasing”) is a rest from work.

Let the Sun Shine In

We starve, look at one another, short of breath

Walking proudly in our winter coats

Wearing smells from laboratories

Facing a dying nation of moving paper fantasy.-from Hair

Forty years ago this past spring, I was on a planning committee with my best friends Tom, Michael, and Stephen to take our college freshman theater class to see *Hair* in Chicago. We had just organized an anti-war demonstration triggered by Nixon's bombing escalation in Cambodia.

Tom had been released from the V.A. hospital, after being gravely wounded as a Marine in Vietnam. His right forearm still had a huge purple gash, and his right hand was still paralyzed from shrapnel. He was uncommonly handsome and exuded confidence and charisma, except for those times when he dove and then trembled under a table or bench when a car back-fired or fireworks sounded and sucked him back into a jungle in South-east Asia.

"There's got to be a better way," he whispered to a room one night, while fiddling with the fringe on my handmade patchwork poncho.

The quickening intimacy between us surprised everyone, including me. The white-trash girl from the poorest neighborhood and the golden boy from the richest in town would not have sat at the same lunch table in high school. But our amalgamation made perfect sense to him, and he demanded it. I felt his constant stares soon after his arrival at junior college. He wouldn't have been at this school had he not "patriotically" chosen to enlist in the Marines despite his parents' protestation. He was biding time until he transferred to Lawrence the following fall. I avoided him and scurried away each time he tried to speak with me. I'd been burned enough as some rich kid's do-gooder project; he could adopt someone else. Oh, yes he affected me, terrified me really. I didn't admit this then, but I feared that allowing him close would leave too huge a mark, and I didn't want it. One day in class his eyes burned holes into my belly as I gave an interpretive reading from Nevil Shute's *On the Beach*. I had to sprint from class that day to keep him at bay. However, he found me at a party that night and begged me to go outside and talk for just five minutes.

"I only came here to see you," he said, "I need you."

"What for?" I answered feeling swallowed by his intensity.

"You have to help me end the war," he answered patently.

"Really?" I said sarcastically, "Vietnam or the war on the poor or the war on Black folk or just any ole war that might come along?"

"They're all the same war," he said. "and you know it."

The only response I could give, of course, was "Okay."

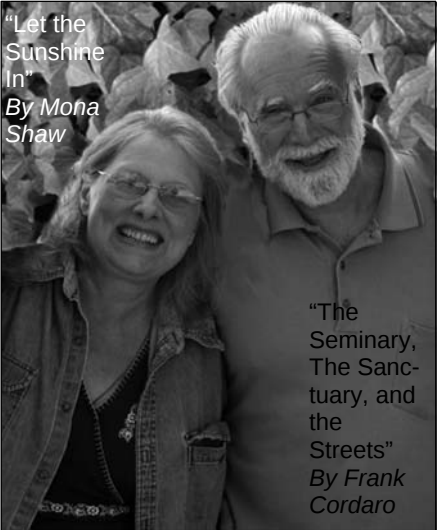
Hair was more than a musical. It was a movement. The lyrics and melodies reflected the hopes and fears of all the years. I have yet to witness anyone after listening to it who remained unaffected. Things were changing. Everyone felt it, and *Hair* told us what was changing, and that the change was good. It was a movement and Michael and Stephen joined us. Grandma Cory would often say then, "The four of you are something."

I've been an activist now for almost 50 years, beginning on a strike picket line at the factory where my mother worked when I was ten. I spend some of my sabbatical reflecting on this and all the "movements" since in which I have taken part. Had I known back then, that things would not become better decades later, but much, much worse. I think my heart may have been too shattered, as they say, to keep on keeping on.

As it is, my heart is shattered plenty, and I mourn with every pore despite the unparalleled joy I paradoxically know through my two-year-old granddaughter Wrigley. Tom died 38 years ago now, Michael 14, Stephen 7; and Grandma Cory 24. I don't see evidence that we accomplished much. So, when I take Wrigley for a walk to St. Vinnie's thrift shop, and I see a woman there wearing a faded t-shirt that reads, "Jesus died for our sins," I want to take her in my arms and weep.

"Yes, sure, but don't you get it?" I want to say. "People die for our sins every second. It's more common than summer mosquitoes. Millions upon millions—in war, lack of healthcare, AIDS/HIV, dying, dying, dying from all manner of greed and corruption. Do you understand this government funding we bicker about is a paper fantasy? And not just people, we're killing all

"Let the Sunshine In"
By Mona Shaw



"The Seminary, The Sanctuary, and the Streets"
By Frank Cordaro

the animals in Ecuador, the Gulf, the North Pole. We could change this. We could, but we're broke, financially and spiritually. We're more Orwellian than Orwell: lying is truth, cowardice is prudence, media manipulation is called information. Selfishness and avoiding pain/compassion are called emotional stability. We don't just engage in denial; we're wed to it in our pretense that it's not as bad as we know it is. I'm ready, like Dostoevsky, to give up and just write for no one who will ever read it about our inevitable demise."

I don't tell her this. Instead Wrigley and I stroll to Dingman House. In the front hallway; Wrigley notices a poster on the ceiling for the first time.

"What's that?" she asks me.

"Honey, that's a photo of Earth."

"It's so beautiful!" she exclaims in yet untarnished wonder.

How can I not yearn for a better world for her? Love still can trump the deepest despair. Later, in my prayers, the paraphrased words of the martyr Harvey Milk push me off my pity pot and stitch to my soul, my sin and salvation.

"If you want a world where people care about others, then care about others, and you will live in that world. If you want a world where people put their body on the line for justice, then put your body on the line for justice, and you will live in that world. If you want a world where we love our enemies, then love your enemies, and you will live in that world. If you want a world with forgiveness, then forgive and you will live in that world. If you want a world that is gentle and kind, then be gentle and kind and you will live in that world."

"Somewhere, inside something,

there is still a rush of Greatness....

Let the sun shine in."

The Seminary, the Sanctuary, and the Streets

The second annual US Social Forum (USSF) was held this June 22-26 in Detroit MI. It was a regional gathering of the World Social Forums started in Brazil in 2001, billed as a peoples' alternative to the top down world forums of elites like the G8 and G20 gatherings this summer in Canada. Over 20,000 people converged on Detroit - "grass roots-led, labor-wise, color-loving and beautiful, gender-bending, movement-experienced activist - who are pushing back against war, neo-liberal policy and predatory capital; fighting prison-growth and mountain-beheading. People who stand fiercely against extinctions and warmings and habitat plunder, building another world form the ground up because we know another world is possible." (Word & World flyer) It seemed like everyone and anyone working to bring down the US Empire was there.

Detroit proved to be an ideal setting for just such a gathering. Ahead of the curve in the experience of the downfall of the US Empire, Detroit has already experienced the inevitable "bottoming out" of our automobile-based society. In the 1950's Detroit was a city of 2 million people. It is now down to less than 800,000. It is approximately 138.8 square miles in area and 20 to 30 percent of the city's lots are vacant. "...The single most important characteristic of Detroit is that it is a city without resources. Most of our people earn less than \$15,000 a year... Officially, Unemployment is above 20 percent. Most people think it is closer to 40 to 50 percent when you look at the actual people who have dropped out of the count. And when you talk about groups like young African American men, you're talking unemployment of upwards to 70 percent." Sharon Howell - Democracy Now , April 2, 2010.

On the up side, with all the empty spaces available, there is a growing urban agriculture movement that community groups are using to reclaim Detroit. Several farms currently exist within the city, and there are hundreds more community, school, and family gardens, the largest number of urban gardens in any one city in the country. Jeff Debruyn is a Detroit CW community member and neighborhood organizer. One of the high points

of our stay was a walking tour of the Corktown neighborhood, with Jeff telling us about his efforts to organize and network local people to support gardening and rehab efforts. Jeff echoed many of the themes and issues raised during the USSF workshops on urban farming and inner city struggles.

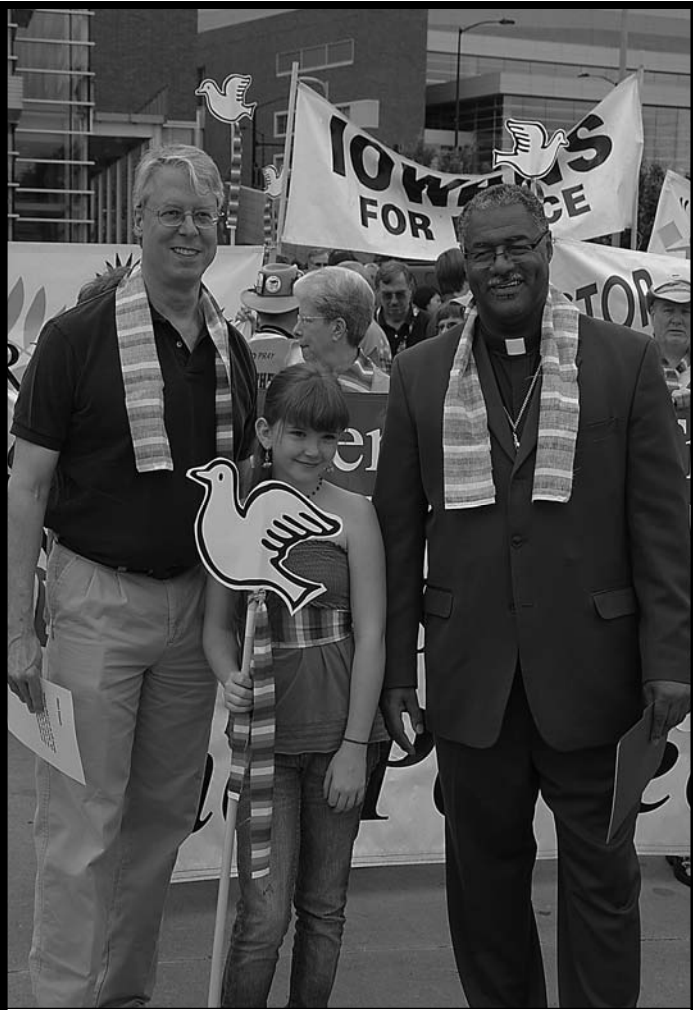
With over a 1,000 workshops to pick from, there was no way any one individual could possibly get an overview of all that was covered during the forum. I chose to concentrate my time with the programs and works shops put on by the Word and World people.

The Word and World Initiative is an Faith based organization of socially-conscious Christians who for the last ten years been providing radical popular education for activists grounded in faith and committed to the work of social transformation. Their original goal was to join the seminary, the sanctuary, and the street. They draw from five living streams of faith traditions; Black Theology, Liberation Theology, Non-violent Resistance to War, Feminist Theology, and the Faith and Labor movements.

The Word and World folks did three workshops entitled "Biblical Economics and the Post-Industrial Resurrection of Detroit", "Jubilee Economics and the Movement for International Debt Relief" and "Sabbath Economics and Personal/Social Practice". In each, they used the local situation in Detroit to explore the ancient biblical vision of "Sabbath Economics". In what they called the "Sabbath/Jubilee" practice of rest and release "of slaves, of debt, of labor and land, of consolidated capital" a very old and biblical take on what a just society looks like presents in today's world a holy new way to read and re-imagine another Detroit happening. These folks make the "Word of God" jump off the pages and into current struggles for peace and justice.

Perhaps the most humbling event sponsored by the Word and World folks was a panel discussion billed as "Faith, Labor, and Community Alliances". Among the panelist were 95 yr old Grace Lee Boggs -Detroit's dean of activists who's been involved with the civil rights, Black Power, labor, environmental justice, and feminist movements over the past seven decades, and 79 yr old Vincent Harding who was a

Continued on page 11



Frank Cownie, Frankie Hughes, Julius Trimble
Methodist Federation for Social Action Peace March at the
Methodist Iowa Annual Conference

Frankie Hughes was arrested in Senator Harkins office along with Christine Gaunt (see page 8) for trespassing. She was participating in the Peaceable Assembly Campaign (vcnv.org) to advocate for the cessation of war funding, specifically in the supplemental spending legislation. When asked for a quote for this caption Frankie replied:

“Everyone can make a difference, but more importantly, everyone needs to make a difference!”

Nunc Dimittis Liturgy as the Work of the People
continued from page 3

ego pulls itself into itself by comparing, competing, and separating itself from others: ‘I am not like that,’ it says. The soul, however does exactly the opposite: ‘I am that’. It sees itself in God, the other, the flower and tree, the animal, and even the enemy. Similarity instead of separateness. It participates in the human dilemma instead of placing itself above and beyond. But this is a long journey of transformation, which leads one to ever new questions about one’s own goodness, and where goodness really lies, one’s own evil, and where evil really lies. It is humiliating.”

“St. Benedict said that the only requirement for the admission of a monk is that s/he is ‘seeking the Lord’—not religious careerism, not security, not status, not roles and titles, not vestments and habits, not a portfolio of answers, but simple seeking of God. Spiritual seeking will make him or her a perpetual and humble student instead of a contented careerist, a quester rather than a squatter, an always impatient, yearning and desirous lover.”

The liturgy (work of the people) here at the DMCW is growing bigger and becoming supple. When Simeon looked into the eyes of that beautiful infant, his experience exploded and he was expanded into joy. He knew joy enough that he could abandon himself to the greatness of love. We seek his virtue, sing his canticle and more and more, we taste his joy.

In my last article, I asked that you be Simon for us—I now ask that you be Simon—hold us. We beller out our song, we are on an adventure of living liturgy. We ask who are we and pray that we will stub our toes and blister our palms on answers that are in the form of growing questions.

We ask for your canticles of experience, strength and hope from your liturgies. This would be a work of mercy that you could provide to us! This would nourish us and though we do not know much...we know that we are hungry! I promise that we will relish and savor any potluck offering that you are generous enough to share.

Penalty Sharing

Please consider joining with the rest of us as we contribute to the bold strides—the “prayers with her legs” that our sister Chris makes on our behalf and as a response to a call heralded in the Gospels. This is a way we link arms and act as one body.

In her efforts to exercise her First Amendment rights, Chris Gaunt (see page 8) has incurred large court fines. If you are interested in participating in these actions in this way, please send contributions to P.O. Box 4551, Des Moines, IA 50305, and memo checks as “Penalty Sharing.”

Covenant page 8

stan, development of new nuclear weapons, to name only a few of our nation’s present crimes, do not constitute what Wallis calls “honest disagreements over policy issues.” There are many issues that good people can disagree on, but these are not the issues that threaten “democracy’s unraveling” in America at the present time.

To “question the integrity, patriotism, and even faith” of those who support torture and wars of aggression is a moral imperative, not the transgression against civility that Wallis implies. These are the hard questions that are prerequisite to civil discourse. Can a politician, soldier or citizen who supports the use of torture be said to be a follower of the crucified Savior? (A recent Pew study shows that while a majority of Americans condemn the use of torture, most church attending Christians DO support its use!) Of what credibility is a claim of “patriotism” in the mouth of one committed to holding prisoners indefinitely without recourse to a court? Of what meaning is our own faith, our own love of home, our own integrity if we do not ask these questions?

In a recent visit to Senator Tom Harkin’s Des Moines office, members of his staff took great offense that some of us gathered to protest Harkin’s support for the siege of Gaza and his votes to continue to fund war crimes against the people of Afghanistan and Iraq raised questions regarding the senator’s ethics and his faith. Some in our group were clergy and long time personal friends of Tom Harkin. Questions concerning the state of Tom’s soul were not raised lightly. Failure to ask these questions in the name of civility would have been egregiously irresponsible.

Tom Harkin and the 47 other senators who voted to pass President Obama’s recent supplemental bill to pay for the surge in the killing in Afghanistan and Iraq are not friends with whom we have “honest disagreements over policy issues.” They are criminals whose crimes are putting the earth in danger. Like their brothers and sisters

on the streets and in prisons, these criminals must be treated with charity and patience with the aim of their reclamation and rehabilitation, rather than their destruction or punishment. A pledge to act civilly towards and to refrain from violence against ALL who commit crimes, be they in congress or on death row, would be a useful work. A covenant not to condemn their crimes in the name of civility, however, does not help these perpetrators or their victims.

Wallis and *Sojourners* seem to hold that we can comfortably share a faith with those who are in favor of murder to achieve “national objectives.” The Trappist monk, poet, theologian and mystic Thomas Merton would fervently disagree. “It is my intention to make my entire life a rejection of, a protest against the crimes and injustices of war and political tyranny which threaten to destroy the whole race of man (sic) and the world with him,” he wrote in 1966, two years before his death. “And when I speak it is to deny that my faith and my church can ever be aligned with these forces of injustice and destruction. But it is true, nevertheless, that the faith in which I believe, is also invoked by many who believe in war, believe in racial injustice, believe in self-righteous and lying forms of tyranny. My life must, then, be a protest against these also and perhaps against these most of all.”

While it may be unhelpful to civil discussion to compare our nation and its current leadership to Germany under the Nazis, it may also be a hard necessity to compare the situations of the churches and of people of faith in these different times and places. In 1948 the philosopher Albert Camus was asked by a group of Catholic scholars to address the question, why did not the Church speak more clearly and forcefully against the crimes of the Nazis? “Why shall I not say this here?” Camus asked. “For a long time I waited during those terrible years, for a strong voice to be lifted up in Rome. I, an unbeliever? Exactly. For I

knew that spirit would be lost if it did not raise the cry of condemnation in the presence of force. It appears that this voice was raised. But I swear to you that millions of people, myself included, never heard it; and that there was in the hearts of believers and unbelievers a solitude which did not cease to grow as the days went by and the executioners multiplied. It was later explained to me that the condemnation had indeed been uttered, but in the language of encyclicals, which is not clear. The condemnation had been pronounced but it had not been understood. Who cannot see that this is where the real condemnation lies? Who does not see that this example contains within it one of the elements of the answer, perhaps the whole answer to the question you have asked me? What the world expects of Christians is that Christians speak out and utter their condemnation in such a way that never a doubt, never a single doubt can arise in the heart of even the simplest person. That Christians get out of their abstractions and stand face to face with the bloody mess that is our history today. The gathering we need today is the gathering together of people who are resolved to speak out clearly and to pay with their own person.”

Now is not the time for a call for civility. Wallis and *Sojourners* are mistaken as to the very real moral dangers that our society faces. They are even more gravely mistaken about the response that Christians should take to meet this danger. Rather than a “covenant for civility,” perhaps we would better enter into a covenant to speak out and utter our condemnation of our nation’s aggression in such a way that never a doubt, never a single doubt can arise in the heart of even the simplest person. Let us instead covenant to be the gathering together of people who are resolved to speak out clearly that the Gospels call us to be, a community ready to pay with our own person the price that such clarity of speech and action will necessarily exact in evil days such as ours.



**“Ground the Drones,
Lest we Reap the Whirlwind!”**

**Hear Kathy Kelly on
Friday, July 30 at 7:30 pm
Grace United Methodist Church
3700 Cottage Grove, Des Moines**

“Human interaction, negotiation, diplomacy and dialogue, not surveillance and bombing by robots, will ensure a more peaceful future at home and abroad.” Kathy Kelly

Kathy Kelly, co-coordinator of Voices for Creative Nonviolence in Chicago and Nobel Peace Prize nominee, has recently returned from Pakistan and Afghanistan where she met with victims of drone warfare. On September 14, she will stand trial in Las Vegas with two Catholic Workers from Iowa, Brian Terrell of Maloy and Renee Espeland of Des Moines and 11 others for trespassing At Creech Air Force Base in Nevada in April 2009. Creech is headquarters for the Air Force’s drone warfare program, from where unmanned planes (called “Predators” and “Reapers”) do surveillance and fire (“Hellfire”) missiles at targets on the other side of the globe.

The arrests came at the end of a ten day vigil, “Ground the Drones; Lest we Reap the Whirlwind, A witness in the desert that peace will come through love and not through predators armed with hellfire.” As this was one of the first public protests of this insidious new technology, a spirited defense, including an appeal to international law, is being prepared.

Kathy will be in Des Moines on July 30 to raise awareness about the drones and their effects and to raise funds for the defense of the ‘Creech 14.’ Donations to the defense fund can be made out and mailed to Strangers and Guests CW farm, with ‘Creech 14’ in the memo line.

This event is cosponsored by Strangers and Guests Catholic Worker Farm, Voices for Creative Nonviolence and the Catholic Peace Ministry. More cosponsors are invited.

Contact: Brian Terrell, 641-785-2321 or terrellcpm@yahoo.com or Renee Espeland, 515-664-1326 or purpleclothlydia@aol.com

“The problem of nuclear weapons is so familiar as to be almost beyond comment, but take the apparently less momentous military revolution that has been launched by American drone warfare. No one can predict the consequences *for the meaning of war* of this total removal of one combatant from the field of battle on which the other is met. War’s mainly personal character has, until now, been its only check. The video-screen pilot in Nevada, whose weapon obliterates lives half a world away, is a psychological mutant. The technically ingenious Pentagon has set devils loose here, without regard for ultimate consequence — either to drone victims, drone victimizers, or a drone-infested world.” — James Carroll, *Boston Globe*, June 7, 2010



Louis Vitale and Brian Terrell at Creech Air Force Base in Nevada, April 2009

Welcome Megan

Megan Felt is our very newest presence here at the Des Moines Catholic Worker.

A recent graduate of the University of Iowa, in Spanish and Anthropology. She is bringing with her a set of skills and charisms that are unique and important for our community. We know this so soon after her arrival that we can be nothing but... enkindled.

She recently attended the Detroit US Social Forum (USSF) and before that she had participated in the Michigan Peace Team (MPT) non-violence training.

Her mission, should she choose to accept it, will take her to Ciudad Juárez, Mexico for three months of nonviolent protective accompaniment, “decreasing violence by getting in the way”. Her discernment whether to take a hiatus so soon, will busy her soul for the next couple months. We will support whatever decision she deems is right for her at this point in time.

Meanwhile, she is chopping and slicing our Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) harvests so that we can utilize every last leaf, stalk and stem. What does not get used for the humans around here is fed to the wonderful “red wigglers” that came in tow with her when she arrived here in Des Moines. Yippie yi yo ki yay little wormies—and Megan too!

Cordaro from page 9

close friend and partner of Martin Luther King, Jr. and nationally known human rights activist and 63 yr old Baldermar Velasquez – the President and founder of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC). Their personal testimonies alone were worth the trip to Detroit. The Word and Word folks took their message to the streets on Friday with a March on the Chase Bank building in downtown Detroit demanding a moratorium on home foreclosures in Michigan and a severance of business ties with RJ Reynolds, who refuses to join negotiations with the FLOC over the slave-labor working conditions at the company’s contract growers in North Carolina. Over 300 activists joined the march and a delegation from the march met with Chase Bank officials and got a commitment from them to meet with a group of local Detroit pastors about the foreclosures. We returned to Des Moines inspired by all the folks we met who are doing lots of the little things that, in the end, will make a big difference in the world we live in.

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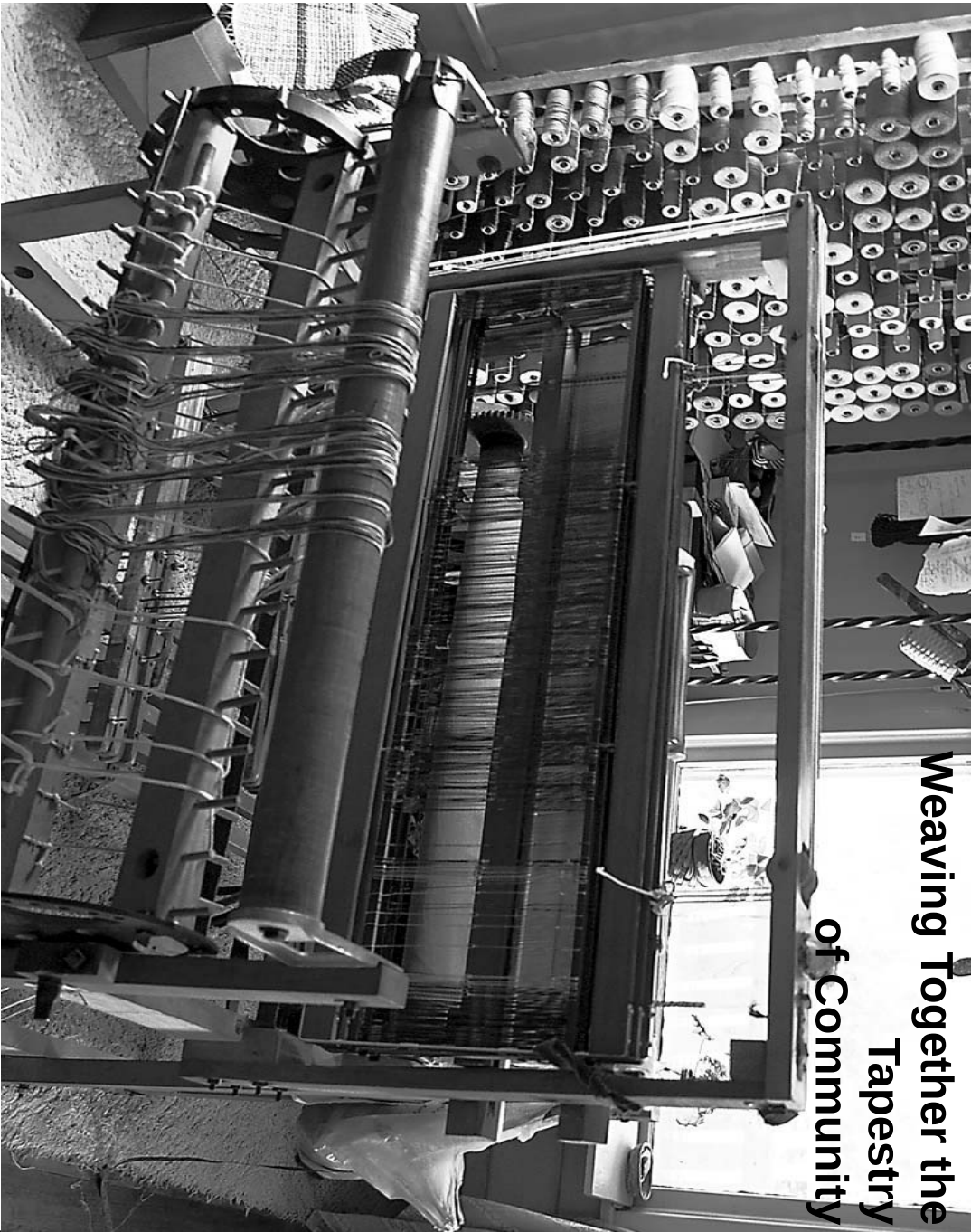
The voice of the Des Moines Catholic Worker Community

July, 2010

www.DesMoinesCatholicWorker.org

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<i>Prayers and Love</i>	<i>Food</i>	<i>Health and Hygiene</i>	<i>Household Supplies</i>	<i>Clothing and Bedding</i>	<i>Volunteers</i>	<i>\$Cash Money\$</i>
Without your prayers and goodwill, nothing happens.	Cereal Coffee Fruit Vegetables Beans Meat and Fish Soups and Stews Sugar and artificial sweetener Coffee Creamer Juices Milk Cheese Butter or Margarine Eggs Salt and pepper Salad dressing and condiments	Tylenol Ibuprofen Multiple Vitamins Ointment Disinfectants Band-Aids Feminine Hygiene Items Disposable Razors Shaving Cream Shampoo and Conditioner Lotion Deodorant Toothbrushes Toothpaste Toilet Paper Lip Balm	Bleach Laundry Detergent Dish Soap Murphy's Oil Soap Pinesol Toilet Cleaners Paper Towels Sponges Trash bags Brooms Rugs Floor mats Candles Light bulbs Aluminum Foil Plastic Wrap Sandwich and freezer bags	Underwear T-shirts Towels Blankets Sheets Pillows Socks Sweatshirts Hoodies Coats Sleeping Bags	Individuals and work crews for hospitality (serving food, cleanup), cleaning and general inside and outside maintenance.	Cash donations are essential to pay taxes, utilities, repair and maintenance bills, to purchase supplies, fund resistance opportunities, jail solidarity, community gardening and off-grid projects.
<i>Peace and justice books and videos are always welcome donations for the Berrigan House Library.</i>	Donations are gratefully accepted on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, and Sundays, 3-7 pm at our Hospitality House, 1310 7th Street, Des Moines.			House Repairs With four old houses, there are plenty of projects large and small. We invite do-it-yourselfers--individuals or groups--with skills in carpentry, plumbing, painting, electrical, etc. to come in, look over our housing needs, and choose a project. Bring your own tools if possible.		
Major House Repair Lazarus House will need its roof replaced this summer. Any help in labor or donations to help defray this expense will be very gratefully received.						



Weaving Together the Tapestry of Community

This is Betsy Keenan's loom, it is one of the tools she uses to craft a living at Strangers and Guests Catholic Worker Farm in Maloy, Iowa. keenanweaving@yahoo.com

Photo
by Greg Schmick

“If we are to achieve a richer culture, rich in contrasting values, we must recognize the whole gamut of human potentialities, and so weave a less arbitrary social fabric, one in which each diverse gift will find a fitting place.”

—Margaret Mead