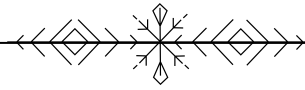
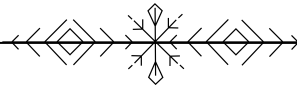




at the door

the quarterly newsletter of St. Francis Catholic Worker House



One Year of War

by Kathy Kelly

In June, 2022, four months into the Russian-Ukraine war, Prof. Noam Chomsky spoke of two options. One was a negotiated diplomatic settlement.

“The other,” said Chomsky, “is just to drag it out and see how much everybody will suffer, how many Ukrainians will die, how much Russia will suffer, how many millions of people will starve to death in Asia and Africa, how much we’ll proceed toward heating the environment to the point where there will be no possibility for a livable human existence.”

Now, entering into the second year of the war, “Children continue to be killed, wounded and deeply traumatized by the violence all around them,” reports UNICEF. “Schools, hospitals and other civilian infrastructure on which they depend continue to be damaged or destroyed. Families have been separated and lives torn apart.”

Estimates of Russian and Ukrainian military casualties vary, but some have suggested that over 200,000 soldiers on both sides have been killed or wounded. Rather than press for a cease fire and negotiations, all parties to the war pour increasingly potent lethal weapons into the region.

Shortly after western countries agreed to send sophisticated Abrams and Leopard tanks to Ukraine, an advisor to the Ukraine defense ministry spoke confidently about getting F-16 fighter jets: “They didn't want to give us heavy artillery, then they did. They didn't want to give us Himars systems, then they did. They didn't want to give us tanks, now they're giving us tanks. Apart from nuclear weapons, there is nothing left that we will not get.” Ukraine isn't likely to get nuclear weapons, but the danger of nuclear war was clarified in the recent “Bulletin of

Atomic Scientists Report” which set the Doomsday Clock for 2023 at 90 seconds before the metaphorical “midnight.” The scientists warned that the Russia-Ukraine War's effects are not limited to an alarming increase in nuclear danger; they also undermine global efforts to combat climate change.

“Countries dependent on Russian oil and gas have sought to diversify their supplies and suppliers,” the report notes, “leading to expanded investment in natural gas exactly when such investment should have been shrinking.”

A thoughtful friend recently sent me a report about a vicious Russian attack against an apartment building in Ukraine. It reminded me of living in Iraq in 1991 when the United States bombed each one of Iraq's electrical facilities, leading to an estimated 70,000 deaths, according to a U.S. military report. Attacking a country's civilians and civilian infrastructure are war crimes and the U.S., along with other aggressors, must be held accountable.

But we cannot have an eye for an eye. Young Afghans whose entire life was spent living through a war taught me a simple, wise proverb: “Blood does not wash away blood.”

In these perilous times, to address the greatest terrors we face, especially the threats of nuclear weapon proliferation and ecological collapse, our nations must collaborate. We must replace hunger and thirst for dominance with a determination to cooperate to ensure planetary survival.

“We must all be pacifists wanting peace,” says Pope Francis, “Not just a truce that maybe only serves to rearm, but a true peace, which is the fruit of dialogue.” ❄️

Letters to the Editors

From Kris Sonnleitner

The last time I saw Karl Meyer (who mentored me), he told me St. Francis House was entering a new "golden age". What a joy to hear that! As you may know, every CW has gone through struggles (Dorothy Day's books are instructive) but those periods when joy prevails over the conflicts – that's something we thank God for.

David Buer, a long-time friend, mentions me (*At the Door*, Advent 2022), but he forgets to mention Leonard Cizewski and Jerry Chernow who also were initiators of St. Francis House. And of course, I don't think the house could've ever existed, without God's grace and protection. We were all part-time minimum wage workers... and somehow we bought a house.

David does mention that Unity Community (who was moving to a farm) helped the process by only requiring us to pay them five grand and CWs from all over sent us money for this. Another important person who contributed to this effort we Fran Holtzman who paid off our mortgage (we had assumed Unity Community's arrangement). She was an amazing and generous woman who sorry to say, I have no idea where she is now.

Just to add to what you had printed. We did have more than just single men: a whole family from Mexico, several women with young children (one woman with three kids (ages 6yrs-6mos) left them with us without notice, returning two days later) and older teenagers (some called us, the Home for Unwed Boys).

From what I hear, St. Francis House still welcomes people of all persuasions (thank you, God). My husband was on a plane and he talked to the person next to him who was transgender. The guy told him about all the discrimination he had suffered but now he was an advocate and recognized speaker that traveled the nation speaking about gender issues. My husband asked what had changed his life (he had been homeless on the street). He said a small house for houseless folks in Chicago had taken him... and that was St. Francis House!

I am so grateful for you folks I don't know but continue the work. You are in my thoughts and prayers.

Pace e Bene,
Kris Sonnleitner

St. Francis House announces with great sorrow the passing of Jim Eder, long time friend of the house and director of St. Thomas of Canterbury Soup Kitchen, on February 6, 2023.

Easy Essay

by Peter Maurin

In the first centuries
of Christianity
the hungry were fed
at a personal sacrifice,
the naked were clothed
at a personal sacrifice,
the homeless were sheltered
at personal sacrifice.
And because the poor
were fed, clothed and sheltered
at a personal sacrifice,
the pagans used to say
about the Christians
“See how they love each other.”

In our own day
the poor are no longer
fed, clothed and sheltered
at a personal sacrifice,
but at the expense
of the taxpayers.
And because the poor
are no longer
fed, clothed and sheltered
the pagans say about the Christians
“See how they pass the buck.”

Join Our Hospitality Network!

You are invited to join us on **Sunday,**
March 12 at 3pm for coffee and an
orientation for our **Hospitality Network**
(*At the Door*, Advent 2022).

If want to learn how to use your gifts and
resources to help your neighbor in need
and join in the mission of the Catholic
Worker in your own way, please join us!

RSVP by emailing
sfh.chicagocw@gmail.com.

House News



by Sam Russo

Surprise! You may be wondering how another edition of *At the Door* has made its way to you so soon after our last newsletter. Did the community at St Francis House decide to flip its calendar ahead to spring? Is it possible that ChatGPT is behind this? No! We are delighted to announce that, due to popular demand, we now plan to publish *At the Door* quarterly.

The last three months have seen Francis House buzzing with people and energy. Folks from nearby shelters and tents come every day to get warm, fill up on hot soup, and, of course, enjoy Harry Potter marathons in our basement *theatre*. The community has been invigorated by the joys and challenges of having a continually full house. We also recently welcomed two new live-in guests: a Chicago native and a recently-arrived immigrant from Nicaragua.

We have had so much to celebrate, and celebrate we have! Since last fall, we've enjoyed hosting a monthly Mass said by Mary Mother of God parish pastor, Fr. Bob Cook. Also, our new friend Fr. Max Landman kicked off Advent on Nov. 29 by celebrating mass at the house to commemorate the life of Dorothy Day.

The community welcomed back Denise Plunkett and Rosalie Riegle for a roundtable discussion about the history of Francis House. They shared many tales and photos from their experiences at the house from the early 1980s. It was wonderful hearing their stories.

On Dec. 7, our community celebrated the Day of the Little Candles (El Día de las Velitas), a holiday in Colombia celebrated on the Eve of the Immaculate Conception. In the spirit of this tradition, we gathered in the garden by candlelight, eating buñuelos, drinking hot apple cider, and enjoying each other's company around our new firepit!

On the financial front, in 2022 the house spent \$29,019 on day-to-day operations and received \$19,356 in donations. Thank you so much to everyone who contributed, we couldn't do this work without you!

Amidst the busy-ness of daily life at Francis House, the community recently implemented "Sabbath Sundays." God needed rest after creating the cosmos, and we mere mortals need rest after six days of coffee-brewing and soup-serving. With the house now closed on Sundays, it has become a day for the community to recharge, and so far we have found it to be revitalizing. We hope that, long-term, it will strengthen our ability to provide hospitality and make opening our doors each Monday all the sweeter. ❄️

New Roof For St. Francis House

Dear friends,

The St. Francis Catholic Worker has put a roof over the heads of Catholic Workers and all of our many guests for 48 years. More than just a shelter for rain and snow, our roof provides a shelter from isolation and alienation.

While our work falls under the shelter of the Spirit, we rely on the generosity of our community to maintain our physical shelter. In 2021, a trusted inspector told us that replacing the roof was an imminent need. After six contractor visits, we have decided to move forward with our roof project. Our goal is to raise \$40,000 by June 1st to replace our roof.

Would you consider assisting us with our goal? Please visit gofundme.com/franciscw to donate today. With your help, we can continue to offer a roof to our friends in the community!

Sincerely,
Gordon, Daniel, Stephanie, Renee, Sam, & Dani



Scan this QR code
with a smartphone
camera to donate.



Peggy's Story

Reflection on her experience as a live-in guest and live-in volunteer from August 2020 – November 2022

How did you hear about St. Francis House?

I heard about it from Roberto, a former resident. He happened to be at the Heartland office, and I was there trying to find shelter and of course they were no help. It was my third day there and they said to Roberto “hey, tell her where you live.” I got the information, and I came down.

The Workers asked me to come back for an interview around 7pm and as I was walking away, I got to the corner and realized I had nowhere to go. So, I asked if I could sit on the porch until my interview and they said sure no problem. As I was sitting there it just hit me all at once, “Oh my God, I’m homeless,” and I started bawling my eyes out. Sam, Gordon, and David interviewed me and the next day, I brought one bag, and they gave me my room. It was the best thing that ever happened to me.

I loved the sense of community. We were like a little family, and I just thought that was the greatest thing. I’d never lived anywhere like that, and it was nice to know that I wasn’t alone.

Were you doing homelessness activism before you moved into the House?

No, it was after. Living there you would think Uptown was the capital of homelessness. When I met Fash at Communities United and we were discussing what issues I would like to campaign for, homelessness was one of them that I signed up for.

What did living at the House mean to you?

I’ve always wondered what a Catholic Worker does, and I found that it was very rewarding. And it showed me that the Catholic Workers do a lot for the people who do come there. I mean they bring them in from the cold, feed them, and shower if they need it.

Honestly, it’s better than a shelter and that’s probably why a lot of the people come. It’s a safe haven. They can feel at home and not feel homeless.

It just made me feel like I was one with the community and that’s what I loved – that sense of community and of being united. I thank God every day for St. Francis House.

What is your best memory of being at St. Francis House?

My best memories are the goofy holidays that we celebrated when the pandemic was really bad. I loved Groundhog Day and I loved how we kept the Christmas tree up and we decorated it for other holidays. I think St. Patrick’s was the last holiday we did.

Where are you at now?

I am living with my daughter and her family, and we bought a house! It’s just amazing that we could find a house and buy it. It took over a year and a lot of work but now it’s beautiful. The neighborhood is nice and quiet, and the neighbors are friendly and very helpful.

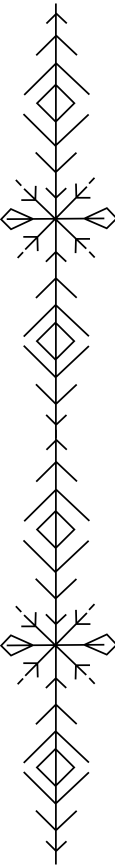
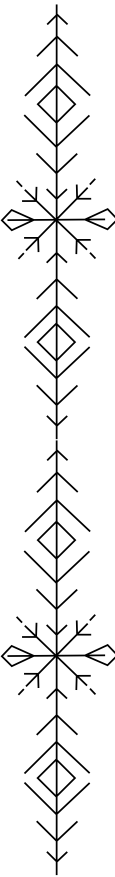
Any last thoughts you want to share with readers about your time at the House?

I was greeted with open arms. I felt safe, secure, and like part of a community. It was beautiful staying there while I did, and I miss it. But I love where I’m at now. ❄️



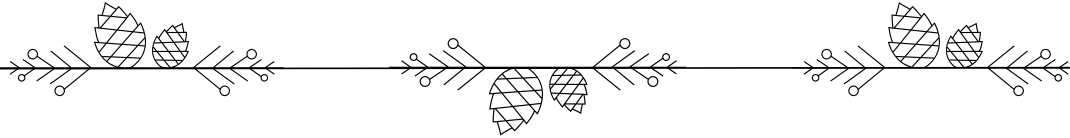
Winter 2023 Issue Editors:

Stephanie Held, Renée Roden, & Daniel Delapava



Our Historical Memory

In anticipation of our 50th Anniversary – to be celebrated in October 2024 – we will be curating excerpts from the historical, political, and theological memory of St. Francis Catholic Worker House in this new section of *At the Door*. Collecting memories is a first step in a needed "clarification of thought" process about our place in the Catholic Worker movement, the Church, and society as a whole. We are turning our eyes and minds to the past not with a nostalgic or merely anecdotal interest, but to build a Plan de Vida (Plan of Life) for the house with a resolute, confident, and piercing orientation towards the future. If you have been involved with St. Francis House in the past and have a story to share from your own experience, please email us at sfh.chicagocw@gmail.com.



"A New Catholic Worker Community"

from "Positively Dazzling Realism" (2015), an autobiography by Karl Meyer

In Autumn 1974, Kristine Pirie, who had been living with the Dahl-Bredines and the Franciscan priests and brothers in the Catholic Worker – Franciscan community on Armitage Ave. got together with two of my friends from the CADRE draft resisters movement to start a new Catholic Worker community at 4652 North Kenmore [Ave.], in the Uptown neighborhood. The CADRE cooperators were Leonard Cizewski and Jerry Chernow, Lenny was from a South Side Catholic background but had moved away from Catholic faith and practice. However, he had fallen for Kris, who was a devout Catholic, and he was drifting back toward his Catholic roots to be closer to her. Jerry Chernow was a Quaker Meeting attender from a Jewish background, who was active in the Peacemaker movement. All three were radical pacifists. Two other early cooperators and residents at the house of hospitality were Jim Eder, a devout Catholic school teacher, and Mike Koplow, an anarchist draft resister and friend of Lenny and Jerry. The house they acquired on Kenmore was an old eleven-room mansion with full basement and attic spaces. They bought it on contract from another radical Catholic-based commune that was moving out to start a communal farm in Lawrence, Michigan. They named the new house Francis of Assisi.

The first homeless guest of the house was Donald "Jimmy" Dolato and he has lived there ever since. [Ed. note: Jimmy lived at St. Francis House until his death on Oct 13, 2010].

I have been associated with the house for all of these years as a veteran Catholic Worker friend and occasional adviser and carpenter. The house is always run by the group of resident volunteers. Caring for a Catholic Worker community is an emotionally demanding vocation, and there is lots of turnover among the idealistic resident volunteers. There have been many generations of volunteers in the history of the community to date, and many changes and adaptations in the way they operate according to their changing needs and philosophies. It has always remained one of my favorite models for the familial radical *personalist* spirit of Catholic Worker communities. The house provides hospitality and meals for a diverse group of people who are economically destitute for a variety of reasons. The volunteers are also active in radical movements for peace and social justice in the broader community of Chicago and the world. ❄

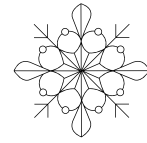
Karl Meyer, now in his 66th year of CW activism, coordinates the CW affiliated Nashville Greenlands community in Tennessee. He last visited St. Francis House in October 2022.



Karl Meyer



Jimmy Dolato



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From the Neighborhood: Canterbury House

By James Murphy

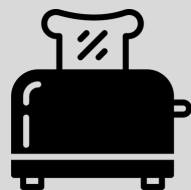
I'm the Outreach Coordinator and Director of Canterbury House (4827 N. Kenmore), a new ministry of St. Thomas of Canterbury Church. Since arriving in Uptown, I've been meeting people who put Catholic Social Teaching into action in the neighborhood, supporting their efforts, and connecting them to resources and to our community. We've hosted roundtables on urban farming, the Eucharistic Revival, and cooperatives – highlighting Uptown's food co-op, Chicago Market. We're also launching a community gardening project – Solidarity Gardens. We will be singing compline at St. Thomas of Canterbury every Sunday evening during Lent at 7:30 PM. Come join us!

Our next Roundtable at Canterbury House is on March 16. Our speaker, Lincoln Rice, is editor of "The Forgotten Radical Peter Maurin." Rice will discuss Peter Maurin's Irish Easy Essays as we gear up for St. Patrick's Day.

Join us for a roundtable or for prayer! Be a part of a community that is growing and vibrant.

House Needs

- USPS Stamps
- Hand-warmers
- 4-Slice Toaster
- Coffee
- Laundry Soap
- Toilet Paper
- CTA Passes



*Want: Chicago Tribune &/or
 The Reader subscription*

Thank You

Much gratitude to our supporters.
 We can't do this work without you!

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Support the House

You can support the day-to-day operation of our community by mailing a check payable to "St. Francis House" or donating via our website francishousechicago.org.



Scan this QR code with a smartphone camera to donate online.

