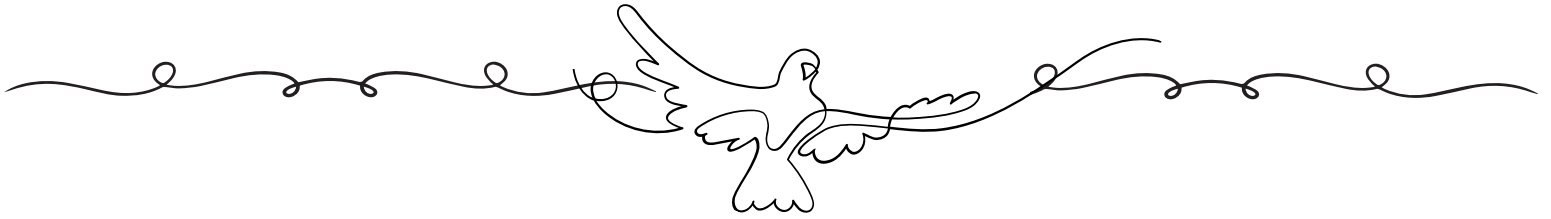




at the door

the quarterly newsletter of St. Francis Catholic Worker House



Answering the Call - Pentecost Reflection

Elizabeth Duff-Russo & Stephanie Held

The commotion begins long before the dinner bell rings on Monday nights. Growing clusters of folks gather on the front of porch of 4652 N. Kenmore as five o'clock approaches. A Worker unlocks and opens the the heavy wooden front door and neighbors pour inside.

“What’s for dinner tonight?” “Alright good to see you, good to see you.” “Do you have any meat?” “Yeah, my father passed away.” “Can I take a shower?” “Hey! Remember when it was my birthday? You were there!”

The chatter moves through the front hall and establishes residence on the couches in the living room. It floats into the dining room and settles among the coffee station and fruit bowls. It drifts into the kitchen as frantic chiefs toss donated vegetables into a stirfry.

Over the past year, word has spread about the presence of St. Francis CW House like how the Good News traveled after Jesus’s Ascension. There are a variety of “calls” that bring people to our home for Monday night dinner. Some live under the viaduct and crave warmth. Others live alone and find themselves in need of friendly conversation. Many are brought by friends. Most desire community. All are hungry.

In this time of Pentecost, we celebrate the birthday of the Church and at the beginning of

May we celebrated the 90th anniversary of the Catholic Worker movement. It’s incredible to think that just as the disciples were called to spread the love of God in the early days of the Church, the creation of the Catholic Worker newspaper was Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin’s answer to that same call in 1933. The word “vocation” comes from the Latin “vocare,” which means, “to call.”

In 1974, the three founders of Francis House were called to respond to a need that was present in Uptown, and continues to persist today, a need for community. The house is a space to share our voices. Unhoused and housed neighbors alike can depend on a place to rest, a warm meal, and the authentic presence of others. We know we aren’t able to feed hundreds of people every day or solve the Chicago housing crisis, but we can provide an opportunity to engage with another person and build genuine connections. At the House, we welcome the stranger, but the beauty is that no one stays a stranger for long!

During the season of Pentecost, we seek to lift up the voices of those who are called to our community – Catholic Workers, volunteers, live-in guests, and those who walk or drive to join us for dinner. In this issue of *At the Door*, we are proud to highlight members of our entire community especially those who may not have the opportunity to be listened to very often.



The Spirit of St. Francis CW House



We asked volunteers, guests, and Workers to help define the spirit of St. Francis Catholic Worker House. Here are some of their voices:

“Many encounters at the house have impacted me. The residents and visitors are always in good spirits which is contagious and has allowed me to understand that being happy is something we often forget or take for granted. I love how my time at the worker has allowed me to stay in good spirits more.”

– Matthew Malchow, Loyola Student

“Some of my favorite memories of Saint Francis House are the discussions, including one after a talk by Martha Hennessey, with participation from Catholic workers, those interested in the movement, and guests of the house. The great variety of people made for a wonderful conversation.”

The Spirit of St. Francis House is one that the saints would be proud of. It is a spirit of welcome, and while Monday nights are a whirlwind of personalities, a spirit of peace and hospitality pervades, along with a good meal.”

– Max Landman,
Jesuit Scholastic



“Pentecost”

Woodprint - Gary Thomas (2023)

“The spirit of St. Francis House is that everyone cares. You never have to second-guess whether the people there are really invested in what they're doing — it's baked in. Through thick or thin, there is a lightness and convivial attitude to the place. A background hum of purpose and a sense that under all the chaos of life, there is a hand on the tiller somewhere. It's just a place with an energy to it that's hard to ignore, and any amount of time I've spent there has been a gift.”

– Adam Martin, Loyola MDiv Intern

“The spirit at St. Francis House reminds us of the comradery of the early Christians, where all “were together and had all things in common.” This spirit of sharing is a welcome counterpoint to the world's avarice.”

– John & Anita
Revord,
Superhero
Volunteers



House News

Sam Russo

This spring has been flying by and taking time to compile the house news section has provided a good opportunity to take stock of the many joys we experience at St. Francis House. Shortly after publishing our last newsletter, the House was fortunate to host Bishop Mark Bartosic for the first time. The good news of his visit must have spread quickly. When he started saying Mass, there were perhaps a dozen of us – but by the end of Mass, the house filled with almost 40 people! He stayed for dinner and fellowship afterwards, and we hope to have him back again soon!

Over the last few months, we've been blessed to see a lot of Fr. Bob Cook, OFM Conv. He's been incredibly supportive of the House and has introduced us to some new friends at the Catholic Lawyers Guild of Chicago. We'll miss having him as our neighbor but are excited for him as he starts his next chapter as the new pastor at the Basilica of St. Josaphat in Milwaukee.

We've had a number of people support Francis House with their time and talents. Our friends Adam and Matt have been helping the community with odd tasks ranging from painting the porch to seeding grass to installing a new dryer (in the garage). The dynamic duo, John and Anita, have paid regular visits to help with large house projects that have been long overdue. Dani has been lending her expertise to the roof fundraising subcommittee and even helping with the food run in her spare time. Students from Mt. Carmel cleared ivy in the garden, and many other hands kept our spaces clean by doing dishes after meals.

This March, Daniel went to the Faith & Resistance retreat in Madison, where he was joined by other Catholic Workers and peace activists from all over the country. Additionally, Renee was able to spend time with CW communities in Milwaukee and South Bend, while Elizabeth and Sam visited the St. Joseph's community in New York. Stefan Gigacz, Secretary of the Australian Cardijn Institute, also spent a few nights at the house. And the community enjoyed a visit from fellow Catholic Worker, Clare Bellefeullie-Rice, who spent a few days at the house in early May.

In April, the community closed the house for two weeks to reflect on its ministry and consider what the live-in Workers need to continue living out the mission. While these conversations are ongoing, the community did make a few changes to the hospitality schedule to make it more sustainable. Open hours have changed to Mondays & Thursdays 5-9 PM and Saturdays 12-9 PM.

The Francis House community will be sad to see our friend Yoli Jones return to Oregon in June. Yoli has been a live-in volunteer for the past year while finishing grad school. We'll miss Yoli's presence, charm, sense of humor, and curiosity. Congrats on your graduation, Yoli!

Lastly, we invite you all to SAVE THE DATE! Francis House will be celebrating its 50th Anniversary with a nine-day-long festival from Sept. 28th to Oct. 6th, 2024. Stay tuned for details to come in the following months.



Roof Project Update

Hi friends! I am happy to share that our roof fundraising efforts have been incredibly successful. With the help of your generosity, we have raised \$36,995, including \$2,245 through gofundme, which is enough to begin taking steps forward with the project. We have chosen a contractor that we trust will do the best job to keep a roof over the heads of the Workers, guests, visitors, and friends of the worker for another 30 years.

Your financial support is still greatly appreciated not only to help cover the rest of the anticipated cost, but also any additional costs that may arise. Please visit [gofundme.com/franciscw](https://www.gofundme.com/franciscw) to donate today. With your help, we can continue to offer a roof to our friends in the community! Thank you again, and be sure to swing by the House late this summer to check out the new roof.

-Dani Bodette, Friend of St. Francis House



Scan with a smartphone to donate.



The Spirit of St. Francis CW House



Voices from the community continued...

How has St. Francis House impacted or transformed you?

"Brought me back into a community of spirit and faith."

"It's reminded me that hospitality can be both around the corner and across the country. It's been my doorway to the Worker movement/values."

"Made me feel welcome."

"Yes, St. Francis has transformed me. I am a better person."

"Supportive work space for self care and hair care."

"Brought God closer to me and helped me become a faithful follower and believer. Amen!!!"



What is a favorite/funny memory you have of St. Francis House?

"The cookie party, house full of guests, and I baked my peanut butter cupcakes." - Shadae

"Just sitting back enjoying company with others." - Shadae

"Having living room liturgy with St. Harold's Community (religious sister, Workers, guests, and all!) It was my first parish in the city!"

How would you describe the spirit of St. Francis House?

"Opening, connected, friendly."

"Miracle"

"A blessing"

"Homey! Familiar!"

"It's nice people treat you with Respect and smile, say Hi to you... I enjoy. God bless."



Going to the Catholic Worker, I haven't felt like I have been doing much "working." Instead, I arrive to a home of people from all walks of life who greet me with hugs and smiles. People ask me how I've been and how that class I always talk about is going; they'll ask if I've eaten, and we catch up over the kitchen while we bake banana bread or a Greek yogurt family recipe; we'd share the spoils of our labor at the table and discuss diverse topics such as politics, religion, Edgar Allen Poe, the phenomenology in Hans Urs von Balthazar, what life is like in other countries or what the best Taylor Swift song is. [...]

It might seem more productive and straightforward to have an apostolate where you are providing a concrete physical service to those you would consider "those in

need." But so easily can this harbor an assistentialist mindset that promotes the idea that helping people is mainly about giving them things they don't have and can't get on their own instead of seeing people different from you as your friends and equals and that they have much to give and teach you, even about yourself. [...]

I've learned that in today's world, where everything and everyone is monetized, marketed, measured, and classified based on its production value, and with wars among nations, wars on the Earth, and political wars in our country and in our own homes; hospitality and friendship is perhaps the most necessary form of work we can commit to.

— Pablo Velasquez, Jesuit Scholastic



Spring 2023 Issue Editors:

Stephanie Held, Elizabeth Duff-Russo, Renée Roden, & Daniel Delapava

Our Historical Memory

In anticipation of our 50th Anniversary – to be celebrated with a nine-day-long festival from September 28th to October 6th, 2024 – we are curating excerpts from the historical, political, and theological memory of St. Francis CW. If you have been involved with the community and have a story to share, please email us at sfh.chicagocw@gmail.com.

Letter to “Community”, a publication of Chicago's Friendship House

by Kris Pierie, Jerry Chernow, & Len Cizewski – May 29, 1975


Francis of Assisi will soon be eight months old. In small ways we have been attempting to realize the philosophy of Peter Maurin, co-founder of the Catholic Worker Movement, by living and working to meet the immediate needs of the poor. During the past months, we've housed people from the street, some victims of fire, those displayed by the infamous Urban "Removal" programs, plus a number of mentally disturbed. This has often caused the "usual" problems of drug overdoses, suicide attempts, and just plain drunkenness.

Besides keeping up with the hospitality, our beautiful old house is in a continual state of despair. Plumbing leaks and faulty wiring are our major sources of aggravation. But most discouraging, is the fact that any modest attempt at repair generally turns into a major production. In addition we have been short-staffed. Out of three people, one member has been in the hospital and ailing for over six weeks, and one of us has been working full-time. As of this writing, we are only housing two people, and will take in up to three more.

Friday night meetings for clarification of ideas, an old CW tradition, have been held sporadically. We have Mass at 6 p.m., potluck supper at 7, and discussion at 8. Our talks have ranged all the way from friendly chatters to discussion of aid to drought victims in Mexico. Our meetings are open to all.

In the Franciscan tradition of making our needs known, we are appealing for the following: We need help from plumbers, carpenters, and electricians; and most urgently, someone to repair the leak in the roof before it gets even worse. If you aren't skilled in a trade, perhaps you could come a couple of times a month and prepare

the 6 p.m. supper — or hoe weeds in our garden. Friends are also needed to come on a regular basis, so our guests can have someone other than the three of us, Kris Pierie, Jerry Chernow, and Len Cizewski, to help sort out their problems. We would welcome a call (561-5073) from anyone interested in living here and sharing the work.

Finally, a retired teacher has offered us an interest-free loan of over \$9,000 to pay off the balance of the mortgage. The money comes from personal savings. We need to pay back this loan as fast as we can, since the money is our friend's only source of income. But operating costs are averaging over \$500 a month. Our own salaries and contributions from a few friends have barely sustained us thus far. If you could help with a donation, please make a check payable to Catholic Workers. The house is located at 4652 North Kenmore, Chicago, Illinois, 60640. 

Summer Benefit

Join us **Saturday, July 15 at 3:00 PM** for a summer social & fundraiser benefiting St. Francis House. Enjoy food & visit with old friends! Donations of any type are appreciated.





St. Francis Catholic Worker
 4652 N Kenmore Ave.
 Chicago, IL 60640
 francishousechicago.org
 sfh.chicagocw@gmail.com

Thank You

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

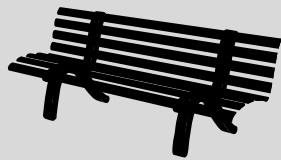
Ronald York, Ron Carrier, Alex & Paul, Anne Whicker, Joan, LuAnn, Garry & Kim Thomas, Jennifer Franco and Saint Thomas of Canterbury Soup Kitchen, Cornerstone & Jesus People USA, St. Harold's Community, Ray, Adam Martin, James Murphy & Canterbury House, Thresholds, John & Anita Revord, Jim Revord, Bridget, Joan Rossi, Walter Hallen, the Murphy's, the Mostek's, the Juliani's, Charles Russo, Rachel Shultz, James Sherry, Kathleen Mayeda, Sarah Byrne, Alice Victor-McCawley, Michael Nitsch, Anthony Ginocchio, Anthony Spalla, Douglas Liu, Annie Church, Emma Bosch, Timothy Lacy

By reminding me of the essentials of my faith, love of God and love of neighbor, St. Francis House inspires me to be a better Catholic and Jesuit. I love it for its compassion, its communitarian spirit, and its chaos. And then there are the conversations, which have played such a meaningful role in my time at the Worker. From the question of how Catholics are called to engage with U.S. politics to the harrowing accounts of survival on the freezing streets of Chicago, I always find God at work in the sharing of experience and opinion that takes place around the dinner table. I'm grateful that the Catholic Worker movement has played, and will continue to play, such an important part in my priestly formation.

- Cyrus Habib (Jesuit Scholastic)

House Needs

- Prayers
- USPS Stamps
- Coffee
- Toilet Paper
- Laundry Soap
- Dish Soap
- Shampoo/Conditioner
- Volunteers to help clean the house



Want: patio set of furniture, bench for garden, dining room chairs

Give to the House

Support the daily operations of our community by mailing a check payable to "St. Francis House" or donating on our website francishousechicago.org.

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

