Yes, Jesus commands us to wake and watch. Watch for who or what? Watch for the Holy Spirit of God who teaches us the life of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit continues the ministry and sacrifice of Jesus, consecrating people unto Him: “The Holy Spirit will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you (John 14:26).”

Upon request, the Holy Spirit will shower us with gifts that help us to become like Christ: wisdom, understanding, knowledge, counsel, piety, fear of God, fortitude. Upon request, the Holy Spirit will give us the faith necessary to control our fear. “I believe, God; help my unbelief.” Upon request, the Holy Spirit will speak the word of God to our hearts, the word of truth and life.

Watch the words of others, since God often speaks to us through sisters and brothers. Watch for conformity between words and deeds, and when the two are the same, watch only their deeds. Watch for heroic women and men who give their lives tending victims – the bombed, starved, raped, tortured – and to exposing the victimizers from within prison and without. Watch the hope that they give you by the speech of their lives, and then dare to extend hope to others.

- Phil Berrigan
The Hartford Catholic Worker
Established November 3, 1993
Volume 30 Number 1

The Hartford Catholic Worker is published quarterly by the St. Martin De Porres Catholic Worker community. We are a lay community of Catholics and like minded friends, living in the north end of Hartford, working and praying for an end to violence and poverty. We are a 501c3 tax exempt organization. We do not seek or accept state or federal funding. Our ability to house the homeless, feed the hungry, and work with the children depends on contributions from our readers. We can be reached at: 18 Clark St., Hartford CT 06120; (860) 724-7066, purplehousecw@gmail.com and www.hartfordcatholicworker.org We are: Brian Kavanagh, Baby Beth Donovan, Joshua Collazo, Dwight Teal Jr., Sasean Sanders, Jacqueline, Ammon, and Christopher Allen-Doucôt.

Jesus Christ

Woody Guthrie

Jesus Christ was a man who traveled through the land
A hard-working man and brave
He said to the rich, "Give your money to the poor;"
But they laid Jesus Christ in His grave

Jesus was a man, a carpenter by hand
His followers true and brave
One dirty little coward called Judas Iscariot
Has laid Jesus Christ in His Grave

He went to the preacher, He went to the sheriff
He told them all the same
"Sell all of your jewelry and give it to the poor;"
And they laid Jesus Christ in His grave.

When Jesus come to town, all the working folks around
Believed what he did say
But the bankers and the preachers, they nailed Him on the cross,
And they laid Jesus Christ in his grave.

And the people held their breath when they heard about his death
Everybody wondered why
It was the big landlord and the soldiers that they hired
To nail Jesus Christ in the sky

This song was written in New York City
Of rich man, preacher, and slave
If Jesus was to preach what He preached in Galilee,
They would lay poor Jesus in His grave.

St. Martin’s Wish List

+ An end to conspiracy theories but a rise in conspiiring, sharing in the Ru'ah, the breath of God;
+ Justice for workers and Jubilee for the impoverished;
+ Windmills atop every telephone pole, solar panels on every roof, and every empty house turned over to an unhoused family;
+ A sincere apology from the cop who shamelessly harrassed the woman at the traffic light seeking help;
+ A society where women never need to seek help at traffic lights;
+ Vaccines for everyone on every continent;
+ Humility for the proud, meekness for the arrogant, and gentility for the angry;
+ Joy for the downtrodden and serenity for the anxious;
+ A couch, kitchen table and chairs, an easy chair, and a coffee table;
+ Donations in support of the Hartford Catholic Worker: 26 Clark St. Hartford CT 06120. Amen
Calling out War and Cancelling Debt

Christopher J. Douçot

Many moons ago I was invited to teach religion at a new, tuition free, preparatory middle school for urban boys. I was excited by this opportunity to explore questions of meaning, belonging, solidarity, and justice with the boys. My plan was to keep the class relatively simple by structuring it around the seven virtues: prudence, temperance, justice, courage, faith, hope, and charity; and the seven sins: lust, gluttony, greed, sloth, wrath, envy, and pride.

We were going to explore how these sins operate in our individual lives and are often embedded in our social structures. We were also going to seek out examples of the virtues operating in our society and each other. A portion of each class was devoted to listening to an archival version of the “This I Believe” series (testimonies from folks like Helen Keller and Albert Einstein), as well as a contemporary testimony. The class would have culminated with the students writing and recording their own This I Believe testimony. Well… my tenure as a middle school teacher was cut short by my own This I Believe testimony.

Early in the school year I was informed by the principal that my class would not meet one day because a field trip was planned for the U.S.S. Nautilus submarine. I was taken aback that I was not part of the discernment, if there was any, about taking 13-year-old boys to tour a museum that glorifies nuclear weaponry. I had been consulted for a religious perspective on things as mundane as the school logo but not this? I was kind-of incredulous. The principal said it “was not like we were having military recruiters come to the school”. I replied that the field trip would just lay the groundwork for the boys to be more receptive to the recruiters’ siren call when they would eventually appear in their lives. The principal told me to lighten up, he said it was the boys who suggested the field trip. I agreed that submarines are cool and asked why not schedule a trip to Woods Hole instead? The principal then offered his compromise; I could give the students a lesson about nuclear weapons when they returned to class. I replied: “you know 13-year-old boys are also curious about breasts (I may have used a less formal term), I bet they would love to have a field trip to Kaho'olawe, why don’t we make that happen and when they return, I could offer them a lesson on why objectifying women is harmful.”

The principal was succinct in his response: “You’re fired!” Given the current culture war fetish of censoring from school curricula ideas that might elicit feelings of guilt or discomfort, it seems my former boss was ahead of the times…

In response to my essay in our last issue I received a four page, single spaced, letter from a reader and supporter that objected to just about everything I wrote. We receive very, very little feedback on our newsletter; sometimes I doubt anyone reads it. The writer, an older fellow, in his 80’s I think, wrote of his experiences of being discriminated against as a young man due to prejudice against his ethnicity.

I don’t agree with some of the conclusions he makes vis a vis his struggle- but the historical record doesn’t support the notion that the experiences of individual “ethnics” who ethnicity has since been accepted as white have experienced ongoing systemic disadvantage in the same way or in the same degree as experienced by nonwhite individuals in our society. The Black feminist thinker I referenced in that essay, Patricia Hill Collins, argues that “all knowledge begins with the lived experience”, my corollary would be that for many who occupy dominant social locations (the wealthy and/or whites and/or men) their knowledge tends to end with their lived experience as well.

Hearing men expressing feelings of disempowerment despite our society being a patriarchy, the sociologist Michael Kimmel has written “men’s experience of powerlessness is real- the men actually feel it and certainly act on it- but it is not true, that is, it does not accurately describe their condition”. He cites the philosopher Hannah Arendt: “power corresponds to the human ability not just to act but to act in concert. Power is never the property of an individual; it belongs to a group”, in patriarchy the group is men.

This dynamic also operates vis a vis race. In our individual lives most men and most white people will feel disempowered at least some of the time, nonetheless the social experience of men and white people is that we dominate our society (definitely click here!). These feelings of disempowerment rarely elicit feelings of guilt or discomfort. (Please see: Calling, p4)
powerment have been seized upon by conservative forces in society who have successfully convinced tens of millions of white people and men that their current struggles are the result of gains made by women and nonwhite Americans. Catalyzed by the anxiety of no longer being in the majority, men and white people have had their anger focused on women and people of color.

In a masterful sleight of hand Hannity, Jones, Limbaugh, and their elected marionettes have us scrutinizing the lives of folks whose struggles are even more difficult rather than interrogating why wages have been stagnant while the wealthiest in our society have become exponentially wealthier.

Nonetheless, I don’t question the letter writer’s recounting of his lived experience and I am grateful to him for sharing it with me. I have written him back with an invitation to join me for a cup or coffee or a cold beer to continue a dialogue, not a debate (another of P.H. Collins’ ideas about how knowledge is built) about the state of our society.

A recent exchange, or lack thereof, in one of my classes at CCSU gives me pause that the civil exchange of ideas and the collaborative production of knowledge is imperiled as my students seem to have internalized the strictures that conservative state legislators are proposing. In a recent session of a class that is exploring notions or othering and agency one student made an innocuous comment about the race and ethnicity boxes on some applications. A second student, who had conflated ethnicity and race, then commented, with a modest bit of passion, that she was offended that there was not a box for her race which she stated as Puerto Rican. Her comment was prompted by, but not in response to, the previous comment. The discussion did not continue in this direction. Later that day the student who made the initial comment emailed asking how he could make comments in the future without being “called out” like he had been. On the heels of this email came another from a third student in the class who was confused about why the Puerto Rican student was upset. I don’t think the Puerto Rican student was upset and I don’t think she “called out” the first student, but I’m left worried that these students are hesitant to speak in class, to participate in the production of knowledge. This experience seems to confirm what most of the students in this class wrote to me when I asked what could be done to facilitate more robust classroom discussions; nearly every one of them responded that they have plenty to say but they don’t participate in class because they are “afraid to say the wrong thing”.

How are we supposed to learn if we are too afraid to share ideas, encounter ideas that are new to us, and explore themes that make us uncomfortable? It seems to me that this dynamic in my classroom is a by-product of how knowledge, nay, how confusion, conspiracies, and magical thinking are produced today. None of my students reads a newspaper or magazine, none. Aside from the texts assigned to them the texts they encounter online have been curated by algorithms (which are written to keep them engaged so that they see as many ads as possible) that confirm their suspicions, justify their prejudices, and comfort them in unknowingness. Outlandish conspiracies, propaganda, disinformation, shallow thinking, hostility towards those who think (and look) differently, disregard for peer review, anonymous posting, and distrust of science and the learned are fraying our society. As social solidarity further withers so do hopes for a more just society. The disintegration of society propelled by rising revulsion of folks from other camps distract us from interrogating what is going on; enraged with each other hopes for consensus are not just dim but beyond Pollyanish.

What is going on? According to Brown University during the last 20 years the US has spent $8 trillion on the War on Terror, that is $12,700 a second, every second since the 9/11 attacks. 900,000 people have been killed in this war: American military personnel, enemy combatants, and 363,000 civilians.

On April 4, 1967, Martin Luther King preached: “A third casualty of the war in Vietnam is the Great Society. This confused war has played havoc with our domestic destinies. Despite feeble protestations to the contrary, the promises of the Great Society have been shot down on the battlefield of Vietnam. The pursuit of this widened war has narrowed domestic welfare programs, making the poor, white and Negro, bear the heaviest burdens both at the front and at home.

While the anti-poverty program is cautiously initiated and zealously supervised, billions are liberally expended for this ill-considered war. The recently revealed misestimate of the war budget amounts to ten billions of dollars for a single year. This error alone is more than
five times the amount committed to anti-poverty programs. The security we profess to seek in foreign adventures we will lose in our decaying cities. The bombs in Vietnam explode at home. They destroy the hopes and possibilities for a decent America.

If we reversed investments and gave the armed forces the anti-poverty budget, the generals could be forgiven if they walked off the battlefield in disgust. Poverty, urban problems and social progress generally are ignored when the guns of war become a national obsession.

It is estimated that we spend $322,000 for each enemy we kill, while we spend in the so-called war on poverty in America only about $53 for each person classified as ‘poor’. And much of that $53 goes for salaries of people who are not poor. We have escalated the war in Vietnam and de-escalated the skirmish against poverty. It challenges the imagination to contemplate what lives we could transform if we were to cease killing.”

If I’ve done my math right the figures compiled by Brown University reveal that we have spent about $21 million per person killed. This has happened with virtually no Congressional oversight, scant scrutiny by the press, and no knowledge by the typical taxpayer. And yet the discourse that dominated this past Fall was that the president’s proposed Build Back Better social spending package was too expensive, the scaled back version would have cost $1.5 trillion over ten years. This in a land with more empty homes than unhoused people, a land with 12 million children living in poverty. It is this dynamic that King was referring to when he said that the bombs we were dropping in Vietnam were exploding in our own cities.

Is this who we want to be? Who we could be? I’m not a Democrat (nor a Republican), but who is being served by not bringing Build Back Better to the floor for debate and to the people for discussion? Who is being served by relentless military spending that even the generals say is too much? Could you imagine retired general and Republican president Dwight Eisenhower saying today what he said in April 16, 1953?

“Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed.

This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children...

This is not a way of life at all, in any true sense. Under the cloud of threatening war, it is humanity hanging from a cross of iron.”

While we’ve been busy stewing in anger at “libs” or “Trumpers” and scapegoating the poor, the foreigner, Black people, lgbtq people; dumping unions, and cursing scientists wages for nearly all Americans have been stagnant for 45 years, CEO pay has increased 1300% since 1978, and the 20 wealthiest Americans are now possess nearly $2 trillion! And because we’re so busy fighting each other, or too intimidated to have conversations of substance about this with people who don’t agree with us, proposals to levy new taxes on the billionaire class to fund “Build Back Better” died without a whimper.

It’s nigh time that we stopped worrying about being “called out” for saying something unpopular; let’s engage our critical faculties and imagination before they completely whither, and start interrogating the mess we’re in. If anything needs to be called out it’s the concentration of wealth and power in fewer and fewer hands. If anything needs to be cancelled it’s student and medical debt.

It’s time for all of us to take a breath. We are better than this, and we deserve better than this.

I’m grateful for the letter writer and for his willingness to write. I hope we grab that cup of joe. As for the principal… well, a mutual acquaintance crossed paths with him in Haiti years after my dismissal- turns out he regretted “cancelling me”.

On Easter Day… I read over the last chapter of the four Gospels and felt that I had received great light and understanding… “They have taken the Lord out of His tomb and we do not know where they have laid Him,” Mary Magdalene said, and we can say this with her in times of doubt and questioning. How do we know we believe? How do we know we indeed have faith? Because we have seen His hands and His feet in the poor around us. He has shown Himself to us in them. We start by loving them for Him, and we soon love them for themselves, each one a unique person, most special!… There are wars and rumors of war, poverty and plague, hunger and pain. Still, the sap is rising, again there is the resurrection of spring, God’s continuing promise to us that He is with us always, with His comfort and joy, if we will only ask.

-Dorothy Day
from The Mystery of the Poor, April 1964
“Living in the Light of Christ’s Peace”: A Pastoral Letter of Archbishop John C. Wester of Santa Fe

Fr. Terrence J. Moran

As I write, two nuclear powers, the United States and Russia, are sabre rattling over Ukraine. A January 22, 2022, Connecticut headline gloats, “Electric Boat looking ahead to next-generation attack subs” in an article that is mostly about jobs. And the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists Doomsday Clock tells us we are at doom’s doorstep; 100 seconds to midnight. But the prospect of State-sponsored omnicide draws little attention. It seems to perturb the consciences of so few people who profess the religion of Jesus who called peacemakers blessed and proclaimed an ethic of love of enemy.

Pope Francis is forthright about the necessity of moving the Church from its past tentative acceptance of nuclear weapons as instruments of deterrence to promoting complete nuclear abolition. The Vatican was the first nation state to sign and ratify the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Sadly, his words find little echo among the Catholic bishops of the United States.

It has been over forty years since a bishop has said anything even faintly resembling the words of Seattle Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen’s 1981 speech “Faith and Disarmament,” “Trident is the Auschwitz of Puget Sound because of the massive cooperation required in our area — the enormous sinful complicity that is necessary — for the eventual incineration of millions of our brother and sister human beings.” All people of good will, but especially Catholics, owe deep gratitude to Archbishop John C. Wester, Archbishop of Santa Fe, for breaking that cowardly and sinful hierarchical silence.

On January 11, 2022, Archbishop Wester released his pastoral letter “Living in the Light of Christ’s Peace: A Conversation Toward Nuclear Disarmament.” Wester references the influence of his 2017 visit to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the places where "humanity crossed the line into the darkness of the nuclear age.” I believe that the pastoral letter is the first church document of this level to praise a Plowshares activist, Sister Megan Rice, SHCJ.”

I also think of Sister Megan Rice, who died in 2021 at the age of 91 and spent several years in federal prison for entering the nuclear weapons facility in Oak Ridge, Tennessee while calling for nuclear disarmament. During her widely publicized sentencing, Sister Megan called the U.S. bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki “the greatest shame in history.” She said her only guilt was that she had waited 70 years before speaking out publicly and taking action against nuclear weapons.”

Wester begins his pastoral letter with a chapter We Are Called to Be Peacemakers: The Teachings of Pope Francis, the Church, and the Gospels, grounding his reflections in the recent teaching of the Popes on nuclear disarmament as a return to the nonviolent ethic of Jesus. From this standpoint, he calls the people of his archdiocese and all people of good will, to a conversation: “I invite us to have a conversation together about what it means to follow the risen, nonviolent Jesus who calls us to be peacemakers, put down the sword, and love everyone, even the enemies of our nation. Certainly, these commandments challenge us to face the violence that is being prepared in our name here in New Mexico, and to start the process of nuclear disarmament so that no one ever again calls down hellfire from the sky. As Dr. King concluded, ‘May we hear and follow Jesus’ words—before it is too late.’”

Chapter II, The Ongoing Threat of Nuclear Destruction, masterfully outlines the current status of nuclear weapons and their economic and cultural consequences. He maintains that our present state, “is arguably more dangerous than the past Cold War.” This analysis of reality leads to Chapter III, A People Living in Darkness Have Seen a Great Light: The Only Real Alternative Is Nuclear Disarmament. Wester’s conclusion is bracing: “In light of these statistics and realities, I agree with Pope Francis and many others that the time has come to commit ourselves globally to the complete abolition of nuclear weapons. We should end all these massive financial investments for building and maintaining these weapons of mass destruction—investments which make only a few individual and corporations enormously wealthy—and instead invest those massive funds in education, healthcare, environmental cleanup, addressing the climate threat, rebuilding our infrastructure, and providing vaccinations for everyone everywhere against future pandemic.”

Chapter IV suggests A Way Forward: Suggestions for Reflection, Dialogue, and Action: “I invite everyone in New Mexico and across the nation to join this conversation about the urgent need for nuclear disarmament. I invite us to pray together, study together, dialogue together, and take concrete steps together that we might cut back and soon abolish our nuclear weapons.”

Appendix I offers valuable resources for this conversation.

Wester’s pastoral letter is also beautifully formatted with stunning art including Christ Breaks the Rifle, by Otto Pankok, work by the recently...
Solidarity Prevails: Striking Nurses Win After 301 Day Strike

To the Editor: Three lessons from the 301 day long nurses strike at St. Vincent’s Hospital in Worcester: 1) Communities and hospitals. Some non-profit hospitals like UMass Memorial in Worcester take their community responsibilities very seriously and Worcester is better for it. But non-profit hospitals purchased by for-profit national companies like Tenet make their communities dependent on far-away decision-makers accountable to investors. They have little if any accountability to local communities and the services they offer come at a cost not just to some of their employees but to the communities they profess to serve. It is a process made familiar by “big-box” retail stores, but puzzling when local managers of extremely profitable hospital systems like Tenet continually proclaim their dedication to the local community. During this strike the local Mayor and City Manager, the state’s two United States Senators, Congressional Representatives McGovern of Worcester and Neal of Springfield, Chairs of powerful Congressional committees, spoke out strongly on behalf of the nurses and the community during this strike. Their voices seem not to have been heard at Tenet headquarters in Texas.

2) Labor Unions. When a labor union fights for a voice in its firm, in this case a hospital, it can expect to meet fierce resistance. Some of us—too few—support unions as effective for improving wages, hours and working conditions; the pandemic has made it clear that they do help a lot. But the St. Vincent nurses went out on strike over long standing issues of patient safety and medical care, and many of us do not accept the idea that workers—professionals and non-professionals alike—actually share responsibility for their firm and their industry and need to accept those responsibilities, even when it may mean losing your job. But even their closest colleagues in health care apparently did not agree. In this case St Vincent nurses fighting for better patient care never heard from the vast majority of doctors who send their patients to their hospital. Doctors of the Reliant Medical Group, whose members are committed to St. Vincent’s for hospital services for their patients, are heirs of Worcester’s pioneering community based Fallon Clinic and Health Plan. Now they too are part of a vast, national, for-profit medical group—Optum Care, an affiliate of United Healthcare—which claimed...
that its members had no responsibility in this dispute about patient care in the hospital to which they commit their patients. Like local community power, the social and civic responsibility of the medical profession may be another component of democratic self-government fading into memory.

3) Catholic Medical Care. Then there is St. Vincent. Catholic Church officials in Worcester were once closely connected to this hospital named after that great Saint, a hospital long served by an order of vowed religious sisters, the Sisters of Providence and supported by the sacrifices of generations of immigrant, working class Catholics. And the local Jesuit college once conducted a labor school to support union members and leaders. But the local Bishop and priests were at least as silent as the doctors during this long, painful strike. That was puzzling as a diocesan priest serves on the St Vincent “Executive Team” with responsibility for “Mission Integration” and he and Bishop Robert McManus serve on the local hospital’s “Governing Board”. They too were silent during the strike.

Perhaps they privately offered sound advice based on very pro-labor Catholic social teaching to their colleagues in Worcester and Houston during the strike. If so it seemed not to make a difference.

In summary democratic self-government is about more than elections and public policy, important as they are. It has to do with working together, in families, neighborhoods, at work and in the marketplace, for the common good of our communities and country. And it requires all of us, when necessary, to organize as the nurses did in order to gain enough power to actually carry out our share of responsibility for our common life. Thanks to the St Vincent nurses for risking everything to make this clear. And thanks to the citizens and local and state public officials who stood with them, in public, and learned they had little power to make a difference. Like the local nurses the rest of us had better get organized if self-government is to be a possibility for the next generation. Worcester has a rich democratic history, the nurses honored that history, and history is still being made right here.

Catholic Workers Scott Schaeffer-Duffy, Frank Kartheiser, Christopher Doucet, and Ammon Allen-Doucet exit St. Vincent hospital after “excorsizing greed” on June 22, 2021

Practicing Resurrection With Works of Resistance

Jeremy Varon
(Professor of History, New School for Social Research and Eugene Lang College. The following is excerpted from Pr. Varon’s reflections on Daniel Berrigan’s funeral.)

Christianity is at once a protest of, reconciliation to, and overcoming of death. The great wager of Catholic faith is to believe in the resurrection — to believe in the divine, in the promise of everlasting life, and in life itself in the face of, and despite, death. In this message, the story of Lazarus, which dominated Kelly’s exegesis, takes on its ultimate significance. Letting Lazarus die so as to raise him from the dead, Jesus chooses cunning means to demonstrate that he is the son of God. But it was also his test of faith to a community embarrassed by the stench of death and fearful of its dismal finality. It is here that Jesus first proclaims that, “he who believes in me will live, even as he dies.” Performing this subversive miracle on Lazarus, Jesus hastens his own imminent martyrdom that will repeat the drama of resurrection. “In hell they say,” Berrigan once wrote, “heaven is a great lie.”

The Berrigans by their acts against militarism and war rose up against death, but not of the inexorable kind. Their concern was murder by earthly conflict and the sorrows of persecution. In that sense, they ignored or even rejected the idea of theodicy. They were vastly more interested in the evil that men and women do to one another than whatever evil God may apparently permit. Humanity had made a mess of free will. Their mission was to turn the world toward peace, in defense of life itself. Human beings cannot raise the dead. But they can stop the killing. Thus, in works of resistance — not faith — the resurrection finds its truest home and Christianity its essential teaching. Still vital, faith seemed to Dan Berrigan the hope that in some times and places lives can actually be saved. On that hope he staked his life.
in their time of grief, they chose to remember their loved ones with generosity to our cause. We hold them up in prayer, gratitude, and mourning.

We have been able to count on weekly donations of produce, eggs, and fresh food courtesy of the Chrysalis Center, Margie Elizabeth, and Whole Foods (without spending a whole paycheck) via Mimi and John Rixon. We also need to thank our friends at St. James Episcopal who have been a pillar of our food ministry, with the Hoopers, in particular, always ready to restock our pantry!

It has been great having our volunteers continue to return to program. Jim Conway has been here every Friday and is absolutely beloved by the kids, I try not to resent that a man nearly twice my age can still school me in basketball, but that's the price of good help I guess. Barb Karas and Rita Holly have been holding down art activities on Mondays with Dwight alongside them. It has been great to have Dwight's continued help even as he holds down his own apartment and job. Chris Haddad has been bringing his squads of high schoolers from Northwest to do science projects, play basketball, and fawn over the new house dog, we always love the chance to build friendships across lines that could have otherwise divide us and the Northwest students have been doing that with us for years now. Marybeth Farley and Carole also are program regulars and we even have Denise Weeks and her beloved banana bread back in the fold.

As far as the community here, we have been getting back in gear and looking to grow. In January we had a community retreat led by Blaire Wlochowski. We talked about our own goals and understanding of the ministry and worked on new ways of communicating and supporting each other. Creating and preserving this sense of community among those living at The Worker remains as vital as ever to our ability to do the Works of Mercy. We are excited that soon an alumnus of our program is hoping to join our community. Anthony is hoping to try his hand at being a full-time community member after graduating high school. I have known Anthony since he needed

water wings and have never met a young man with such a gentle demeanor and kind mind. We look forward to his steady joyful presence and strong work ethic joining us on an everyday basis.

Jackie had a small operation on her ears that she is recovering from, it does occasionally make it hard for her to hear, but hasn't stopped her from anchoring the art room at program. As one who is predisposed to smart comments worthy of retribution, I have been very kind and made sure to repeat said comments at a higher volume so she doesn't miss them. Chris has resumed teaching for the spring semester and is at the Green House making sure we don't fall to financial ruin in the immediate future and ensuring that all the aid from you fine folks makes its way to those who need it. Josh just celebrated his 23rd birthday last week, the whole community went to The Tavern together and had a wonderful meal together. There was one blemish on that night that will be addressed at the end of this piece, but I should probably finish updating you on the community. Bethanne continues to play den mother to the young men of the community while serving as the contact hub for most of our volunteers and donors. Sasean has continued to help out at program and is an invaluable connection for families on the periphery of our network. Cullen continues to help out wherever he can while building his own profile, and I became the owner of delightful puppy over Christmas who has completely dominated my life. Riff Raff (Rafi) is growing up quickly and will soon be a good dog, even if at the moment he is a teething menace.

Now, back to that blemish on a fine community night out. Pops and I were driving to the restaurant together when we passed a woman begging at the intersection of Albany and Main. As his constant practice, my father reached into his wallet to offer this woman a small piece of mercy. Not a moment after, an unmarked police car behind us, pulled an illegal u-turn through a red light to accost the woman. While my father did his best to reprimand the officers, the light turned green and the inexorable push of traffic drove us away from the scene. I hope the officers in question heard my dad's words “It is not a crime to be poor.” Perhaps they considered their actions, regretted stopping this woman, whose exposure to the elements was evident upon her, and giving credence to the sinking sun and dropping temperature let her find her way to a hot meal. The overwhelming evidence of experience, both mine and my father’s, tells me otherwise. Experience tells me that the small act of mercy from my father was a drop in the bucket compared to the thousands of indignities we inflict on the impoverished daily. Most likely that woman was held up by those officers until well after the sun went down and her exposed face was further chafed by the blistering wind, chances are the hot meal was missed or made moot by the cold of that night. It was a stark reminder that our Beloved Community doesn’t stretch far enough, that until we address the structures that leave that woman exposed, that make it a suspect act to show mercy, that punishes poverty instead of treating it, we are falling short of the Kingdom of Heaven we seek to make real. I realize this is a somewhat sad note to end on, but I hold on to the lesson from the barren garden: all ice melts eventually, even that in the hearts of those who might accost a woman simply for begging. I pray to God that the coming thaw finds us all.
The snow has almost entirely melted from the spot in front of the barren winter garden, the monumental pile of solidified slush cleared from the basketball court yielding to rain, weak sunlight and the tramp of children's feet. The constant battle to keep doors closed to preserve heat has been replaced with a constant refrain of "Please wipe your feet!" and the ice rink that had replaced our volleyball court has fully disappeared. Spring is trying its very hardest to spring forth and we are likewise trying to spring with it as we jump back into program with both feet. Things have been somewhat slower as we are now asking that all children coming to the program be vaccinated, but we are happy to report that more and more families are taking steps to ensure their children's safety getting them the shot, and we hope you are doing the same if able dear reader. We eagerly await for the clocks to change and our normal hours to resume, allowing those kids with later dismissals to return to the program as well.

We continue to help families with their utilities thanks to the very generous grants from the Sisters of Mercy and the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving. Alongside helping families keep the heat, lights and water running, we have also continued keeping fridges filled and cabinets stocked. Bimonthly deliveries of grocery staples like eggs and milk have made the difference in some houses; we, and our families, thank you for your continued generosity in supporting that ministry. We also invite you to join us in holding the Williamson of Manchester and the Templetons of Longmeadow in prayer. These families lost beloved members in recent weeks;