In the chilly, short days of November, I stretch my mind back to August, when our last issue of the Sower was printed. On my way back to Maloy from visiting family and friends in Western N.Y., I spent time between my Amtrak trains in Chicago with Mike and Violet Schorsch and their children who came to meet me at the station. Mike and Violet both spent time with us during summers of their college years and went on connect with Catholic Worker communities in Winona, MN and South Bend, IN. I enjoyed catching up with them and their three children Stella, Juniper and Lazarus.

Arriving home in Maloy I found a lot of gardening to catch up on. With the rain stopped it became easier to catch up with weed control - but things that were planted in summer for late harvest needed more water to thrive than they got. I did quite a bit of hand watering but the weather wasn’t so hot and the well-established plants survived.

The amazing zucchini and yellow summer squash went on and on, though melons and cucumbers faded out. The garlic and onions were hanging in the garage to dry.

August we were near to the path where the total eclipse was visible on the 21st, and a few days before we heard from our friend Nancy from South Dakota. She had been collecting lichens in Iowa and was thinking of heading south to view the solar eclipse in Missouri, and wondered if she could spend the night before with us. As it turned out, our area had some clouds to prevent a perfect view of the phenomenon, I stayed home and viewed from the porch and Brian and Nancy and Mercedes headed south into Missouri, to catch “totality”.

Nancy’s bone jarring ride in the back of our aging Chevy Cavalier helped spurred our pursuit of a replacement vehicle with a special donation for that purpose. Brian located a Honda Civic for sale online and we were able to make a deal. With less rust and a better ride, we have more confidence in this vehicle going into the winter driving season.

The most productive of my tomato plants were smaller
varieties, some tiny red ones, some yellow pear tomatoes and some tomatoes more than cherry sized, but smaller than the sauce ones. I could make fresh sauce with them (throwing them in the blender) but they weren’t big enough to scald and blanch for salsa or my standard canned tomatoes. Neighbor Don Ray had plenty of larger ones to share. He and his friend Mercedes, from Spain got married in August and she came down to our house for several canning sessions.

The weather moving into September stayed very sum-mery. As Brian headed to Afghanistan, Hilary and Colyn Burbank came to Maloy for a long weekend with their baby Nell, so that I could attend the Midwest Catholic Worker gathering at Sugar Creek. Driving across the state to eastern Iowa, I was glad to have a reliable car for the trip, and happy to have help back at Strangers and Guests while I reconnected with Catholic Workers around the region and to share stories of growth and struggle. We also had a call for emergency shelter that week, a couple needed a place briefly, it was great to know that Hilary and Colyn could handle goats, chickens, cats, house and take an extra houseguest in their stride. The weather was warm for the Sugar Creek gathering-with a bit of welcome rain, and a rainbow! I enjoyed the singing, talking and dancing and both formal and informal discussions about how try to live the spirit of the Catholic Worker move-ment in our various homes, in the face of the today’s chal-lenges.

The Honda’s removable back set means it doubles as a “goat-mobile” and we took three of Frida’s quadruplets to St. Joseph Stockyards for the sheep and goat sale in St. Joseph, Missouri after Brian returned from Afghanistan. A friend of mine from high school, Sue Diller stopped for a couple days breaking her drive from Denver to New York State.

The following weekend was the Clarinda Craft Carni-val, usually my biggest day of the year for displaying, and selling my woven rugs and other weavings. Brian helped with lugging the stuff around and setting up and gave me breaks during the 8 hours of the sale. I spoke with many past customers, some looking for new items, other just to say how happy they are with their rugs or placemats or whatever. It is nice to have the contact you don’t always get when you sell through a shop.

October brought to a close the 22 weeks of delivery to my produce customer in Mount Ayr. With our “CSA” (community supported agriculture) arrangement, we agreed in the early spring that they would pre-pay for a weekly share of our garden produce- vegetables, fruit, herbs and eggs varying through the season. They get a share in the successes (and failures) that each particular year brings. We had more fruit to share this year than previously, but less of lettuce, peas and green beans -those darn rabbits! As a sort of coda-I delivered a bunch of mar-gold blossoms to contribute to a “Day of the Dead” art project We had bountiful amounts of marigolds among the vegetable garden-most of them “volunteers”. Even the goats had some in their upper pasture, where I had dumped plants cleaning up from last year. After the frost we still had fresh leeks, carrots, beets and parsnips along with parsley and kale. I got most of my tender plants moved into pots, first to the front porch, then as the weather got harsher, inside to various windowsills.

In late October, a call from our friend Chas Abarr in-vited us to come down to his place and press some cider from his abundant apple and pear trees and Brian and I picked up our neighbor Mercedes to go along. We spent the afternoon picking, cleaning, chopping and squeezing the fruit into jugs, and have been enjoying it in the weeks since then, while some still sits in the freezer.

In November I traveled to Des Moines for an Alterna-tive gift event at the Des Moines Intentional Eucharisti-Community. All and all I have had plenty of rugs sales this fall and am still working on custom orders of a number of customers, enough work to keep me bust at the looms till Christmas. Our senior goat, Bonnie is off to an Amish goat dairy farm for breeding purposes. Soon we will pick her up, and bring her home, looking forward to a new crop of kids next spring.

Not just another book about Dorothy Day-

By Betsy Keenan

Kate Hennessey’s book titled Dorothy Day: The World will be saved by Beauty is subtitled “an Intimate Portrait of my Grandmother”. As she says in her preface, this granddaughters examination of her life isn’t “an intellec-tual, academic, or religious exercise.” At its core Kate is trying to untangle her own story and her mothers from a web of memories, journals and writings that cover the times and history of the movement that Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin started. Tamars and Kate’s stories are in-separable from that of the Catholic Worker farms’ many joys and disasters.

The real, stark poverty of the conditions during the ear-ly days of the Catholic Worker movement, both in the city
tenements and at the Easton farm is sobering especially in contrast to the visionary utopian plan for the happy, healthy farm commune Dorothy envisioned as a counter weight to the labor of feeding the hungry and homeless in the city. Her dream of a place of spiritual refreshment brought her volunteers the country but many community members resisted the dualist spirituality in of the rigorous retreat that Father John Hugo brought to the farm. Tamar said, “The retreat was cruel, and the only good to come out of it was that Dorothy quit smoking”. Sixty five people from CW houses around the country attended Father Hugo’s first retreat at Easton in the summer of 1941. No talking was permitted, and the only book allowed was the New Testament. Each day there were 5 one hour conferences. Stanley said “What kind of religion is this where God creates beauty, and then tells us you can’t have it?” Ade Bethune thought the retreat was too intellectual and did not lead her to love God more. “How do you tie your shoe for the love of God?” Dorothy felt the retreat replenished her spirit, but her insistence that others submit to the same discipline, even her teen-aged daughter, sowed plenty of dissent and sorrow for years.

I arrived at the Tivoli Catholic Worker Farm in 1977 and many of the prominent people in Kate’s book were still living there, or passed through in the summer months. I heard bits and pieces of these stories from them. Stanley Vishnewski in particular helped put into context the dissonance I felt between the Catholic Worker I read about in the newspaper, which came to the Newman Center where I went to college and the experience at Tivoli. He knew the whole story and had ridden out the highs and lows—a wild ride at times. He appears many times in this volume, with Dorothy, to help Tamar and her family in dire times. He is there in the first happy days of the Tivoli Farm, when John Filliger was planting the huge garden, Rita Corbin and Marge Hughes keeping the house, and Stanley set up his printing press. Tamar and her family were a 3 1/2 hour drive away in Vermont and came for visits.

Although Dorothy would not let Tamar move to Tivoli with her family, the life they lived in Vermont, on the land was perhaps a better example of a life on the land then any achieved at any of the New York house’s rural communities. Tamar carded, spun and wove every winter, curtains, rugs, linens, scarves, shawls and coverlets. They harvested wood and maple syrup, hunted and fished and she gardened and canned and successfully raised livestock too. For a time Tamar worked away from home as a hospital nurse, but her major work was raising her large family and weaving was both a vocation and a therapy. She distanced herself from the Catholic Church eventually, but found a similar sustenance in Nature that her parents had shared with her from childhood, and passed on to her own children.

In the painstaking work Kate has done to connect the family story, with memories and interviews set against private journals, letters, and published writings many pieces of this puzzle are connected and make sense. I suspect no one who reads it will be content with a two-dimensional or plaster cast Dorothy Day again.

Craft Retreat at Strangers and Guests Catholic Worker
February 16-22, 2018

Pursuing the Vision of the “Agronomic University”…

As in years past, Betsy will tutor and support those who wish to weave rag rugs or other useful household items. Alice McGary has offered to facilitate a fabric dying session, either for already finished items or rags for weaving. Sandy Maxa is planning a project with willow, including cutting the basket willow from our homegrown stand. If there is interest, Brian can offer candle dipping and we may do paper making and proceed to assembling small booklets with the handmade paper. A fine local bread maker may be willing to pass along tips and methods for successful bread making. This will be a time to learn, teach, pray, eat well and make music and dance. Contact Betsy for details.
Brian’s Travels

Since the last issue of The Sower, I have continued my life and work, one foot planted here on the farm and the other on a constantly shifting and increasingly perilous landscape. I am grateful for my home here, for those who support us and for the many friends we have around the globe, especially for the Afghan Peace Volunteers and my colleagues with Voices for Creative Nonviolence that I am able to maintain a semblance of balance!

In September, I returned to Kabul, Afghanistan, for a short visit. My stay there coincided with a conference, “On the Road to Peace,” attended by young people representing most of Afghanistan’s provinces hosted by the Afghan Peace Volunteers. It was a joy to see old friends there (it was my fifth visit since 2010) and also a privilege to be included- a discussion of nonviolence and what can be done to assure a sustainable and peaceful future. The discussion takes on a certain significance and urgency when most of the participants have lived their entire lives under the weight of war and oppression.

On my way home, I attended another conference in Washington, DC, on war and the environment called by the organization, World Beyond War. I spoke there about the environment crisis in Afghanistan, caused by sixteen years of war, exacerbating the effects of global warming. Crowded with literally millions of internally displaced refugees, the water situation in city of Kabul is especially stressed. Few residents have access to potable drinking water and there is no sewage treatment. Due to a warming climate, the snow-melt from surrounding mountains that previously replenished the groundwater and the Kabul River has diminished sharply and in its place is raw sewage seeping down the hillsides from makeshift settlements.

For the month of October, except for a short visit to the Voices office in Chicago, I was mostly at home on the farm. I was able to dig the sweet potatoes before the frost, plant garlic and help Betsy with other seasonal chores.

This fall, more than in previous years, I busied myself with drying apples, pears, herbs and spices.

In November, I travelled to Tucson, Arizona, for the School of the Americas Watch convergence that also took place on both sides of the border with Mexico at Nogales. The SOAW has expanded its mission of exposing the crimes of the graduates of the “School of Assassins” in Georgia where the United States trains soldiers for many Latin American governments to demanding justice for the refugees crossing that border.

There was also a memorial in Tucson for our dear friend, Franciscan Father Jerry Zawada, who died some months ago after a lifetime of service and resistance.

By the time this issue of The Sower gets in the mail, I expect to be in New York City, joining with friends there to call attention to and call for the end of the war and siege in Yemen, waged by Saudi Arabia and the United States.

Photos, clockwise- “On the Road to Peace” conference; in the dry bed of the Kabul River; remembering Jerry Zawada at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base.
“We are Killing Terrorists” and “Attack We Will”
Trump’s Most Vicious Racist Rants

By Brian Terrell

On Monday, August 21, President Donald Trump delivered a prime-time speech almost shocking in its ordinariness. It was such an address as either of his immediate predecessors, George W. Bush or Barack Obama, could easily have given over the previous decade and a half. While hinting at nebulous new strategies and ill-defined new metrics to measure success, President Trump announced that the sixteen year old war in Afghanistan will go on pretty much as it has. And the establishment breathed a sigh of relief.

Reviews were glowing. While acknowledging how low the bar had been set, on August 25, the Washington journal The Hill opined that “even the most hardened members of the anti-Trump camp must admit that Monday’s speech communicated a remarkable amount of humility and self-awareness, particularly for this president.” The timing of the president’s crowd pleasing speech was duly noted: “Unfortunately, his very presidential announcement of the Afghanistan decision was bookended by Charlottesville and the president’s rally in Phoenix on Tuesday night.”

Ten days before, in Charlottesville, Virginia, torch bearing white supremacists had marched in a "Unite the Right" rally to protest the planned removal of a statue of the Confederate General Robert E. Lee. Replete with flags of both the Confederacy and the Nazi Third Reich and traditional fascist chants of “blood and soil,” the rally met with resistance from anti-racist activists, one of whom was murdered and others injured when one of the united right used his car as a weapon of terror, driving it into the crowd. There was outrage when Trump responded by condemning the violence “on all sides” and declaring that there are “very fine people” on both sides of the issue.

In the next days, thousands marched in cities nationwide and the denunciations of racism and white supremacy resounded from many surprising quarters. Trump’s tolerance of the use and celebration of overt symbols and slogans associated with hatred, slavery, anti-Semitism and genocide offended all but his most fanatical base. Members of his own party, many who had stood by Trump through other scandals, took steps to distance themselves from his statements, if not from Trump himself.

Five of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, representing the Navy, Marines, Army, Air Force and National Guard, came extraordinarily close to rebuking their commander in chief. While they did not address Trump by name, they posted massages on social media condemning neo-Nazis and hatred, citing the events at Charlottesville. “@USNavy for ever stands against intolerance and hatred.” “No place for racial hatred or extremism in @USMC.” “The Army does not tolerate racism, extremism or hatred in its ranks.” “We’re always stronger together- it’s who we are as # Airmen.” “I stand with my fellow Joint Chiefs in condemning racism, extremism & hatred. Our diversity is our strength # NationalGuard.”

In his primetime address on the war, Trump called for the national unity that he had seemed in the days before and after to disdain—“Loyalty to our nation demands loy-
ally to one another.” Saying that “the young men and women we send to fight our wars abroad deserve to return to a country that is not at war with itself at home,” Trump seemed even to shame his detractors for letting down those he calls the “special class of heroes whose selflessness, courage, and resolve is unmatched in human history.” Let us make a simple promise to the men and women we ask to fight in our name: that when they return home from battle, they will find a country that has renewed the sacred bonds of love and loyalty that unite us together as one.

The healing balm that should bring Americans together, Trump said to general applause, will be a continuing commitment to a seventeen year old war. When that war began in October of 2001, Vice-President Richard Cheney suggested that the US would eventually take it to forty to fifty other nations, an expanding war that he predicted “may never end” but would “become a permanent part of the way we live.” Like Cheney before him, Trump urges Americans to set aside the issues that divide us and unite behind an endless war of aggression against a people who never meant us harm.

It should be self-evident that the war against Afghanistan and the broader war on terror, like every war that the US has engaged in since the end of World War II, is as much a war about race and white supremacy as was the Civil War. The fact that the war on terror was presided over for eight years by our first African American president (who in his last year in office dropped 26,171 bombs exclusively over populations of people of color) does not alter the fact that it is a racist war. If the war on terror does not divide our nation’s people as severely as did our war against the people of Southeast Asia fifty years ago, it is only because fewer Americans are paying attention to it.

In 1967, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. noted “Now, it should be incandescently clear that no one who has any concern for the integrity and life of America today can ignore the present war.”

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr

“Now, it should be incandescently clear that no one who has any concern for the integrity and life of America today can ignore the present war.”

Last year, the Movement for Black Lives excited great controversy publishing its platform that draws these connections in the present context: “...we know that patriarchy, exploitative capitalism, militarism, and white supremacy know no borders. We stand in solidarity with our international family against the ravages of global capitalism and anti-Black racism, human-made climate change, war, and exploitation. We also stand with descendants of African people all over the world in an ongoing call and struggle for reparations for the historic and continuing harms of colonialism and slavery. We also recognize and honor the rights and struggle of our Indigenous family for land and self-determination.”

The violence that we see in American streets is a direct and inevitable result of the violence of our county’s wars. Since the war on terror began, police departments from large cities to rural counties have been plied by the Defense Department with an array of offensive weaponry from tanks to assault rifles, accompanied with training in counterinsurgency. Police department hiring preferences favor veterans who often bring with them skills honed in night raids of Iraqi and Afghan homes. Full scale Special Weapons and Assault Tactics (SWAT) teams then terrorize American families, disproportionally in communities of color and most often to serve simple warrants and summons for nonviolent offenses.

The Obama administration’s determinations that any male 14 years or older found dead in a drone strike zone is a “combatant” unless explicit intelligence posthumously proves him innocent and that “the condition that an operational leader present an ‘imminent’ threat of violent attack against the United States does not require the United States to have clear evidence that a specific attack on US persons and interests will take place in the immediate future,” have poisoned the culture of policing at home. The consequence of these policies is the summary killings of innocent young men because of who they are and where they live, in American cities as well as in places far way. The racial profiling that results in the killings of unarmed black citizens by American police is the domestic expression of surveillance by drones of the “patterns of behavior” that trigger the “signature strike” executions of colorless people of color in our wars abroad.

“A nation which continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death,” Dr. King noted in 1967. There is no serious discussion of racism in the United States today, or of providing healthcare and education
and basic human services that does not address the ever expanding cost of the present war.

Some of the outrage over the Trump’s responses to the events in Charlottesville and for his shameless affinity for hate and misogyny in general from his campaign until today may well actually be for his violation of a tacit “gentlemen’s” agreement not to say such things aloud. None the less, it is a sign of social progress that language and symbols celebrating hate raise so much public indignation. The discredited institutions of slavery and Nazism need to stay discredited and those who forget that are rightly and necessarily called out. There are, however, manifestations of hatred and racism that continue to be tolerated and celebrated even in the most polite, progressive and politically correct venues and these need be called out as well.

As grating and offensive as Trump’s off-script train wreck persona is, it is when he is most “very presidential,” when he acts and speaks from the same teleprompter as those who preceded him, that he is at his most malicious and hateful. When he declares as he did on August 21 that “we are killing terrorists” and threatens “attack we will” and when he praises the civilian catastrophe that he called the “liberation of Mosul in Iraq” as a model for the future of the war in Afghanistan, Trump is on a racist rant. His speech on August 21 calling for more war is hate speech, pure and simple.

The generals of the Joint Chiefs of Staff who bravely spoke out against neo-Nazis, where are they now? Some of them apparently huddled with Trump to devise his hateful and racist assault on the Afghan people and all of them, along with Defense Secretary General Mattis (whose advice to the troops is “You just hold the line until our country gets back to understanding and respecting each other and showing it.”) and White House Chief of Staff General Kelly are busily working to implement it. If generals Lee and Jackson of the 19th century who served under Confederate President Jefferson Davis in the cause of slavery and white supremacy deserve the censure of history and the scorn of every person of good will, so much more these generals who serve the hateful and vile agenda of Trump and his predecessors. To give Trump his due, one truth that he told in his celebrated speech is that those “who slaughter innocent people will find no glory in this life or the next. They are nothing but thugs and criminals and predators, and that’s right—losers.”

Those thousands of good people who took to the streets to denounce the celebration of racism and hate in its archaic and discredited forms need to seek the courage get back out and demand an end to racism and hate in its present, most virulent form. Together we need to demand a US withdrawal from Afghanistan and reparations for all the nations that have suffered US aggression in the so-called war on terror.

Into this world, this demented inn, in which there is absolutely no room for Him at all, Christ has come uninvited. But because He cannot be at home in it, because He is out of place in it, and yet He must be in it, His place is with those others for whom there is no room. His place is with those who do not belong, who are rejected by power because they are regarded as weak, those who are discredited, who are denied the status of persons, tortured, eliminated. With those for whom there is no room, Christ is present in the world.

Thomas Merton
As we fix our eyes on the Holy Family of Nazareth as they were forced to become refugees, let us think of the tragedy of those migrants and refugees who are victims of rejection and exploitation, who are victims of human trafficking and of slave labor.

Pope Francis