



Hildegard House In Its Second Year-

Michele Naar-Obed

Hildegard House Catholic Worker made it through the first year of hospitality. On September 17, 2014, on the Feast Day of St. Hildegard, we got a request

for our first guests to live in our house of hospitality. Our core community members spent over 9 months preparing the house and ourselves for such a call. We grappled with what it would mean to provide hospitality for women who have experienced exploitation through human trafficking. We consulted, discerned and prayed and in the end, we believed that offering catholic worker hospitality in a safe and welcoming environment would be a great contribution in the Duluth MN community. Over this year, we have provided long-term, short-term and drop-in hospitality to numerous women. Now we are challenged to go deeper.

I often hear myself saying that all we offer is simple catholic worker hospitality. But this hospitality is grounded in the firm belief in the God-given dignity of every human person. Our actions are guided by the works of mercy, and we oppose the works of war. We comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.

Following the works of mercy as our guide in the recognition of the God-given dignity of every human person, is by no means easy. We don't have a cookie-cutter policy handbook to refer to. We offer a place in which, as co-founder Peter Maurin stated, "It is easier for people to be good." As our guests begin to pick up the pieces of their lives and move on in a good way, we offer to walk hand in hand, shoulder to shoulder with them as they maneuver through a sometimes unforgiving and unwelcoming system. In doing that, we too feel the dehumanization and humiliation, the frustration, anger, degradation of self-esteem and self-worth that people often encounter in a system that reduces someone in need to a case number.

Duluth MN is a beautiful city with some of the finest natural resources in the world. Of course, these resources have been stolen from the original inhabitants of this part of the world and have remained primarily under the control and management of the descendants of the European conquerors. Reparations and righting of these wrongs have yet to come forth. In fact, it is in the context of colonialism, racism and exploitation of the Indigenous people of the Minnesota Northland, that has left the Native community so vulnerable to human trafficking.

As part of the mission of the catholic worker, this is the area where we are called to "afflict the comfortable." We are called to expose, challenge and undo structural racism, colonialism and exploitation even when it means that our catholic worker houses will likely lose out on some of the crumbs that the system can offer.

We don't use the term, "afflicting the comfortable" as an excuse to point fingers at others. Afflicting the comfortable also means the willingness to move out of our own comfort zones.. This is the place where those of us who have inherited unearned privilege because of our skin color, gender, and/or religion, have to come to terms with this and begin to undo and right the wrongs. It forces us to look at the power dynamics in our catholic worker communities, to make sure that our houses do not mimic the very systems that keep these inequities in place. This sometimes puts catholic workers at odds with each other. It's especially hard for some of us to believe that the system is deeply flawed and corrupt when it is a system that has always worked, and worked well, for the privileged.

For Hildegard House, this is the year of "Clarification of Thought", also known as roundtable discussions. Peter Maurin stressed clarification of thought as one of the 3 components of the Catholic Worker Movement. From September 2015 through May 2016, we will hold these discussions on the first Thursday of each month at Hildegard House (see page 7). These are issues of our day discerned through the lens of the catholic worker principles. It is our hope that through

these communal discussions we can understand and meet these challenges while thinking outside of the traditional dominant society box and staying rooted in the universal teachings of social justice.

At Hildegard House, we will do our best to be grounded in the firm belief of the God-given dignity of all living beings, to be guided by the works of mercy and to oppose the works of war. We will challenge ourselves to live more justly. We will make mistakes along the way. We will fall short more often than we care to admit, but it looks like we'll be here for another year at the least.



What You Might Not Have Known

kelley haldeman

Many wonderful women have been passing through Hildegard House in its first year. One woman, Luryiah (not her real name), came for a short stay in December 2014. We remained in touch, developed friendships, and Luryiah recently became a volunteer here at the house! I asked her if she might be willing to be interviewed, and graciously, she agreed. Thanks, Luryiah, for your willingness to share some of your story with us.



What are your hobbies and interests?

I like to garden, watch movies and TV. I am working on a quilt. I like sewing and arts and crafts. I love to volunteer; I have volunteered recently at Animal Allies. I like to read books; Sarah Dessen is my favorite author – she writes young adult fiction novels about grief and loss, transitioning, etc. I like to go down by the lake, walk through Chester Creek. I like cooking and trying new recipes.

How did you come to be at Hildegard House?

Back in August [of 2014], my abusers threatened me, and told me to come back home and “make things right.” “Make things right” means you get punished – physically, emotionally, sexually. I had filed police reports against my abusers and you’re not supposed to do that stuff. In December, people tried to break into my apartment while I was in there, and later they did break in while I was away. I told my friend about this [who lived at Hildegard House at the time] and ended up coming to Hildegard House in order to be safe.

Can you share a little of your story?

The trafficking started when I was 3. It was off and on until I was 13. Then I got out. I went through a lot of therapy to know how to function in normal society. I had to learn how to turn my feelings back on, how to laugh, how to watch TV, how to talk to people in general without physical violence being a part of it. I had to learn to accept my family for who they are and not who I want them to be. I went to finish school, and I went to college for early childhood education. I had 3 jobs. Then my abuser tried to traffic another one of my family members. I threatened him, went to court, and threatened that I would tell everything. After this, my abuser stalked me and tried to kill me. That's when I came to Minnesota. I stayed in a shelter for 4-5 months, then got transitional housing for 9 months. Then I got my own place.

What do you wish people understood about sex trafficking?

Human sex trafficking is not prejudiced – any age, race, gender, family history, how you grew up, your career – anybody can be a trafficker, anybody can be trafficked. It's about taking advantage of someone's vulnerabilities. I wish the laws were different. If you are over 18 [and get caught in prostitution], you are considered a criminal and you go to jail. This goes on your record, people won't hire you, it is very hard to get it expunged, so you go back to trafficking. Pimps and johns often walk free. Cops see jail as a place where girls are “better off” than in the other environment. In Sweden and Finland, the girls [who are being trafficked] are decriminalized. The men are criminalized and held accountable.

It is hard running away from trafficking – they outnumber you, out-resource you. And other people are involved too – police, lawyers, political people, doctors, firemen – people who are supposed to protect you. A trafficker can call a certain doctor or a police officer who will “take care of stuff.” The traffickers know how to use the law a lot better than we do. And the law favors them. Also, when traumatized women are questioned by police, there should be someone there who is familiar with trauma, with triggers, with mental illness. People don't realize that trauma affects memory. If you are re-telling a story that is traumatizing, you don't always remember it “in order” - there are gaps in memory; you should be telling it to a therapist, not a police officer. I wish there were advocates for girls in trafficking who knew how to work the system.

What is life like for you in your day-to-day?

Sometimes getting out of bed can be a challenge. Eating, showering, brushing my teeth is challenging. I love going to the gym, but sometimes I am so anxious I have to leave. I enjoy a lot of things but sometimes you lose interest even in the things you enjoy. I get lots of support from therapy and groups. I do research at the library to come up with solutions. I am very active in my healing and recovery process.

What helped you to be able to break free?

When I was little I talked to a light. I thought it might be the sun but my mom said “The sun doesn't talk to you.” This Light showed up when I needed it to. When I was taken into houses, or dangerous situations, that Light has always had my back. Also, you have to stop caring for awhile – caring whether you eat, sleep, have shelter, die or get hurt. The more you care, the more power they have over you. The traffickers make you feel worthless. That you don't deserve better. You have to take any opportunity you can to *not* accept that as your reality.

What are some things you have learned from your life experiences?

I've learned that when people are cruel to others, they are just causing the same pain they are suffering from. This makes me able to be not so angry; I can have compassion. There is a lot of cruelty and violence out there, but there is also a lot of good. I guess you have to be what you wanna see around you. You never know what someone else is going through, and you never know how you might inspire someone. I was told by a friend that “you heal every time you tell your story.” There is always something to be thankful for....like good friends, a roof over your head, and food in your stomach.

The Hildegard House Catholic Worker community welcomes Gail Johnson as our new live-in volunteer. Gail has lots of catholic worker experience on the east coast and she is an avid seamstress. Drop by the house and say hello if you are in the neighborhood.

There is still space at Hildegard House for live-in women volunteers. Contact us by email (hildegardhouseduluthcw@gmail.com) , come for a visit and see where the Spirit leads you. We also would appreciate local women to volunteer a few hours a week at the house. No special skills are needed. Just an empathetic ear and a kind heart. Experienced volunteers will welcome and help orient you.

RESISTANCE CATHOLIC WORKER STYLE

Excerpt from Frank Cordaro's "Call Out to Catholic Workers to come to Jeju to support "Save Jeju Now" resistance <https://groups.google.com/forum/#!topic/national-cw-e-mail-list/AxztnfByfIE>

I leave Gangjeong Village (JeJu Island, So. Korea) and our new friends here with deep emotions of love and respect for the faithful witness that takes place here everyday at the soon to be completed U.S./So Korea Navy Base. One thing is clear about what the future holds for this little village and its peace community, things are going to change. And with these changes the "Save Jeju Now" campaign will continue to try to keep a faithful presence at



the base. Key to that presence is the Catholic Diocese of Jeju Island and the local Catholic peace activists committed to continue their witness at the base. The "Save Jeju Now" campaign has always encouraged internationals to come and join the effort and will continue to do so.

This is a special request for CW'ers to make every effort to visit Jeju Island and stand in solidarity with the Catholic peace community here. They could use the support and we CWers can join a peace campaign in which the Church and the peace community work closely together.

Currently, 3 catholic workers; Martha Hennessey from the NY Catholic Worker, Toni Flynn from the LA Catholic Worker, and Chrissy Kirchhoefer from the MO Catholic Worker are scheduled to go to Gangjeong Village in December. A fund to help pay for their airfare has been set up. To contribute or learn more about catholic worker solidarity and resistance at JeJu, contact: Frank Cordaro at the Berrigan CW House. Checks can be made out to Berrigan CW House, (note Jeju Island on the memo line) and sent to the Berrigan CW House, 713 Indiana Ave, Des Moines, IA 50314

To learn more about the "Save Jeju Now" campaign, visit <http://savejejunow.org/declaration-of-catholic-priests-and-monks-for-peace-on-jeju-island/>.



CLOSER TO HOME RESISTANCE CATHOLIC WORKER STYLE

36th Annual Feast of the Holy Innocents' Retreat & Witness at STRATCOM Headquarter & US Military Space Command

Dates: Sun. December 27 to Mon., December 28, 2015

Site: Basement of St. John's Church, Creighton Campus, Omaha, NE

This year we want to gather at St John's basement for snacks and an evening discussion on the Gospels of Mathew & Luke's Infant Narratives and how they relate to us, our celebration of Christmas and why we protest the mission and purpose of STRATCOM. Our banner so clearly states the moral case, "Herod Killed the Infants, STRATCOM would kill the World. Celebrate Christmas, Shut Down STRATCOM".



We will end our gathering at the main gate of Offutt AFB at noon Mon. Dec 28th for a reading of Mathew's Christmas story, prayer circle and line crossing if anyone feels called to do so.

Come join us. It's a wonderful opportunity to get your head and heart cleared of the USA Christmas spirit of glut and over-consumption by taking a some time to study the Christmas texts, examine the deeper meaning and spirit of the birth of Jesus and how the political powers of his day received his birth. It will be evident that little has changed in the last 2000 years. The difference being a profound confusion by Christians in the USA with just who are the modern day Roman's, Caesar's, Herods, High Priest, friends and enemies of Jesus and they are most confused with who is Jesus today.

Starting time.... Sun. Dec 26 - 6 p.m. Gather at St Johns Church basement on Creighton Univ campus, 2500 California Plaza Omaha, NE

For more info contact:

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We Are Young And Old Together

Michele Naar-Obed

IN THE LAST DAYS IT WILL BE, GOD DECLARES, THAT I WILL POUR OUT MY SPIRIT UPON ALL FLESH, AND YOUR CHILDREN WILL PROPHECY, AND YOUR YOUNG SHALL SEE VISIONS, AND YOUR OLD SHALL DREAM DREAMS.....

I have noticed in these past few years of attending the annual Midwest Catholic Worker gathering, that our region consists of an eclectic bunch of catholic worker communities filled with promise and commitment and most importantly, faith. Each year, I am filled with hope as I see the number of new young people interested in the catholic worker life grow. Each person forms a new link in the chain that stretches back and connects to to a time-honored storehouse of wisdom and knowledge which for us, has been passed on through the founders of the Catholic Worker Movement, Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin.

There are catholic workers amongst us who have spent decades studying, discerning, praying and living the works of mercy and resisting the works of war. The Sermon on the Mount remains the catholic worker manifesto. We recognize these teachings as universal and they are found throughout the great faith traditions. They are not owned by the Catholic Church. The elders amongst us are anxious to pass this on to the young ones.

Dorothy is well known for her condemnation of the “filthy rotten system”. As each layer of the onion is peeled back, as each lie is exposed, the rotten core becomes more evident. Catholic workers have given their lives exposing, challenging and attempting to rebuild the beloved community in the shell of the old.

Each new layer of the onion in the rebuilding of community, represents a piece of the truth that will not be told in our nation’s traditional history books. It is layered by the experiences of the 99% as opposed to the 1% who tell a story to protect their own interests. Where we are today in the world is a consequence of events that happened 50 years ago. Not enough people knew the true history of our empire building. Different paths, different decisions, different policies could have been made if the truth was known which could have brought us to a much more peaceful and promising world. Instead policies were built on the lies that protect “national security” which is just a code name for protecting the interests of the 1%. These lies remain at the core and at the foundation of our empire. They have left our homeland in, amongst other things, trillion dollar debt, an environmental cesspool of nuclear and toxic chemical waste, our “breadbasket” poisoned by mega-corporation’s genetic engineering, and a stock pile of weapons sold to the highest bidder regardless of their intention of use. This is not an indictment against the multitude of people of goodwill that live amongst us. It is more of a plea to find the courage to look at our reality, to not lose hope, and to work together to build the beloved community in the shell of the old.

The young people of today can set a new course. They are linking up with those time-honored teachings and examples from the great faith traditions. Those teachings were honed under the shadow of other empires of long ago . The elders have a story to tell and count on the young ones with vision and wonder to steer our world on a new course.

We can do this together, we must do this together for the youth needs the elder and the elder needs the youth. Check out the larger movement's website at

www.catholicworker.org. Read about the history of the movement. Find a community in your area. Check out clarification of thought/roundtable discussions. Hang out at a hospitality house and walk with the guests. Form alliances for the common good. There's much to do.



The following article consists of excerpts from notes shared at our Roundtable discussion November 5.

Finnish Farming and Don Kinnunen

Linda Ward

I have known Don Kinnunen for more than 30 years and have spent time learning from him, along with my husband, Steve Chadwick, who felt traditional farming was so important that he applied for a Kellogg Grant to share information and encourage others to start farming in this form.

Don for 74 years has successfully operated a small diversified farm. His income came from: small scale logging, selling potatoes door to door, an on-farm sawmill, rebuilding farm equipment, milking five to twelve cows, raising all feed and hay with horses, custom grinding and numerous other income-producing activities. One of the other things the Finnish people did was to harvest rye, and the rye stalks were sold for \$20 a ton.

Don's experience and skills are exceptionally broad in this time of increasing specialization, and with his willingness to share this knowledge, he has a vast amount of experience that needs to be passed on. Don is very knowledgeable about the older farming tools which are displayed in the Esko museum, and they can be viewed by appointment. Preserving this and similar knowledge is essential if small sustainable farms are to become models for rural community revitalization.

Why did the farm economy collapse? Until the early 1950's, there existed numerous community institutional supports for small farms which included: local markets, access to affordable supplies, credit through co-ops and local businesses, two University Experimental Stations which worked to improve diversity and productivity, and equally important, to promote voluntary associations (farmer clubs, growers and breeders associations, etc.). Today, Urban Farming is enjoying a comeback, (a.k.a. Community Gardens), which is important to many cities that currently experience poverty and permanent joblessness. Rural communities have the potential to again economically support families, related small businesses, and to generate predictable increased economic activity throughout our region. Working together, urban and rural farms can accomplish much.

Clarification of Thought Schedule

Mary Kay Thornton

Easy conversations with folks on topics that really matter can be very enlightening and satisfying and can lead to changes both within ourselves and our community. Through this type of dialogue we are led to ask ourselves, "Where do I stand on the issue?" Clarification of Thought gatherings have always been a vital part of the Catholic Worker Movement, and that's why we'd like to encourage you to attend some or all of our meetings at the Hildegard House, first Thursdays from **6:30 – 8:00 PM**.

Dec. 3: Babette Sandman "Restoring dignity and healing in the Native American tradition"

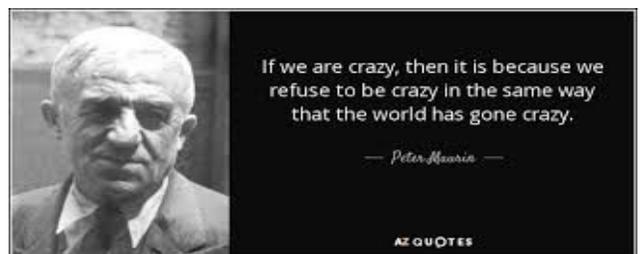
Jan. 7: Dr. Constance Gunderson "A relational cultural approach to addressing human trafficking"

Feb. 4: Treasure Jenkins "African-American Poetry"

March 3: Bonnie Ambrosi "Eating Justly"

April 7: Sister Gretchen Johnston "The Spirituality of St. Hildegard"

May 5: Karen Barschdorf "GMO Seeds: A curse or a cure for healthy living and feeding the poor"



Hildegard House
617 N. 8th Ave E.
Duluth MN 55805

In keeping with the Catholic Worker tradition of opening up ways in which many people could participate in the life of Hildegard House, we asked for 50 people to pledge \$10 per month for one year. Many people responded and we managed to get through the year with ample electricity, heat, water, and phone communication. We paid the property taxes and insured the house. That's where the money goes and that's why those pledges play a vital role in the life of our hospitality house.

We are not a tax exempt organization because we are convinced that justice and the works of mercy should be acts of conscience, without need for governmental approval, regulation or reward. Your investment is leading to a much greater return, which is the breathing of life back into the spirit of all who walk through our doors. We hope that you will consider pledging another \$10 per month in 2016.

Hildegard House Wish list:

Monetary pledges which can be made in monthly, quarterly, bi-annual or one time payments.

Grocery gift cards (SuperOne, Cub, or Co-Op)

Toilet paper

HILDEGARD HOUSE CORE COMMUNITY: Kelley Haldeman, Laura Hoelter, Treasure Jenkins, Sr. Gretchen Johnston, Sr. Jean Maher, Michele Naar-Obed, Greg Boertje-Obed, Judy Sausen, Mary Kay Thornton, Sr. Linda Wiggins

Contact: hildegardhouseduluthcw@gmail.com. **Follow us on Facebook:** Hildegard House Catholic Worker

If you would like to be on our mailing list to receive our newsletters or notifications of events, please email us your postal address.