

Summer Updates at Hildegard House Catholic Worker



Dear friends and supporters of Hildegard House Catholic Worker,

The frantic pace of life in Duluth during the summer months never ceases to amaze me. After an even-paced and fairly predictable fall, winter and spring, life turned upside down. It finally feels like we are landing on our feet and firmly rooted in the Catholic Worker vision of Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, the social justice teachings, the works of mercy and the works of justice. This is a bit of an update on what we've done over these past 2 months and where we stand as we zoom through the rest of the summer.

In June, Hildegard House said goodbye to 3 live-in volunteers. One of those volunteers, Judy Sausen, will remain part of the core community and active in the life and breath of the community. For this we are very grateful.

Kelley Haldeman will always be a good friend to the community, sharing her love for the outdoor life with us and reminding us of the need to be lighthearted and playful.

Gail Johnson is still out east dealing with medical issues. The good news is she did not need surgery. Instead she is undergoing medicinal regimes to try to get her pancreas into better working condition. She calls us and misses us. She is staying put out east for now but who knows where she will land in the future.

We keep a constant prayer line going for Sr. Jean Maher. We also know that she prays for us and even though we may be separated because of illness, we will never be separated spiritually.

We hope that Sr. Gretchen's gentle presence and gifted bread baking skills will return to Hildegard House in the fall. After 16 months, another of our guests has left the Hildegard House nest to go to her new, fully furnished and decorated home. She has reunited with her youngest child who lives with her full time. She lives close to Hildegard House and has offered to volunteer once she feels fully settled in.

Another guest who moved to Florida in the spring has remained clean and sober and out of the life of despair and exploitation. She is working and has gained custody of her daughter. She is engaged to a wonderful man who we all wish would consider relocating to Minnesota. She keeps in touch regularly by phone and facebook and we still feel her presence, we still hear her laughter, and her exuberance echoes throughout the house.

Most of our previous guests stay closely in touch with each other. They still gather at Hildegard House for spa night and crafts. They have formed community with each other and they have remained in community with Hildegard House. This is a blessing to behold indeed and we can feel God smiling.

We are now blessed with 2 new live-in volunteers. Kathleen Harkins comes to us from Kansas City, has spent time with the Missionaries of Charity and with the Little Flower Catholic Worker in Denver CO. She is an artist and craftswoman, an avid walker and thinker and a faithful witness to God's presence with us on earth. She always maintains a helpful attitude and loves to experiment with making healthy muffins and cookies (and they are actually quite tasty). All-in-all, Kathleen provides us with a well grounded and peaceful presence at Hildegard House. We are very happy that she is with us.

Teri Torchia will join us in mid August. She comes to us from Massachusetts. She is a poet, and a healer. She has worked with Haley House Catholic Worker in Boston. Before even meeting us, she created a small plaque of Hildegard of Bingen and wondered where it would go. After visiting us, she knew it had found its home and it shares a space on our bookshelf with a drawing of Dorothy Day. One feels an almost immediate sense of balance and stability in Teri's presence and we are very happy that she has chosen to be with us.

While building our community over these 2 months, we have also restored our house. The living room is now a warm and welcoming yellow. Its wood floor has a new coat of polyurethane. The walls are decorated with new artwork. The basement is fully renovated with a new craft room. It also received a fresh coat of paint, a rug, some new shelving and furniture and Kathleen has already begun working on craft projects in the new room. There are many other minor touch-ups throughout the house and we now feel ready to greet and welcome new guests.

We continue receiving inquiries for hospitality and we are hoping to prepare a meal weekly for a new survivors group that will be coordinated through PAVSA this fall. At Hildegard House we are committed to welcoming and offering compassionate, non-judgmental hospitality to those who have experienced human trafficking and are in need of a supportive place to rest and heal. We strive to love and learn from each other, focus on the goodness in each person, and encourage the growth and wholeness of all.

We also remain rooted in the Catholic Worker traditions.. Dorothy Day makes it very clear that, “our problems stem from the acceptance of this filthy rotten system.” She tells us that what she would like to do is change the world-make it a little easier for people to feed, clothe and shelter themselves as God intended. She asked, “where are the saints that will change the social order. Where are the ones who will not just minister to the slaves, but will do away with slavery?” Where and who are those saints today?

Hildegard House remains part of a larger, vibrant movement committed to nonviolence, voluntary poverty, prayer, and hospitality for the homeless, exiled, hungry, and forsaken. As such, we will continue to protest injustice, war, racism, and violence of all forms. We will make mistakes, sometimes even look foolish, but for God's sake, we will try.

Hildegard House Catholic Worker is alive and Spirit-driven. We thank you for being with us, for keeping us in prayer, for bolstering us up when it felt like we were falling, for laughing, crying, hoping, singing, painting, playing and, eating with us. Thank you for supplying us with gift cards, blankets, toilet paper (we really, really thank you for the toilet paper), toothpaste and toiletries. Thank you for your financial support and pledges. The list goes on as does our gratitude.

We are working on another monthly series of “round table discussions” also known as clarification of thought to begin in September. We'll send out postcards and post the schedule on our facebook page.

We are planning a “Hope and Solidarity Vigil” in September for those still trapped in sex trafficking. We will send out details soon.

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.

Who we are: Michele Naar-Obed, Greg Boertje-Obed, Kathleen Harkins, Teri Torchia, Mary Kay Thornton, Judy Sausen, Treasure Jenkins, Laura Hoelter, Sr. Linda Wiggins, Diana Stephoni