



Fertile Ground

Journal of Peace House, the Kalamazoo Quaker/Catholic Worker

Issue 20

December 2018

House Notes

By Jerry Berrigan

We are uncommonly late with the fall newsletter, to the extent that, as I write, all 2018 Peace House programming is wrapped up, including a successful and wonderful holiday party, and we have one final week of work and school before the winter break. We are grateful for the efforts of the year almost past, and we are ready for a break. There's lots to share! I'll get right to it.

To get our last report (June 2018) in the mail, I helped fold newsletters from a perch at the table, right foot elevated, to relieve the pressure on my recently broken fifth metatarsal, an injury incurred at a family basketball game (in sandals) on June 4th. Relative to the last time I found myself laid up (broken leg, soccer), my recovery was swift and relatively painless. By the end of the first week of our summer program I was able to get around without crutches, which greatly enhanced my efficacy at and enjoyment of the work. I'm now at a hundred percent.

Right at that time (early June) a group of us from Kalamazoo was arrested at the state capitol in Lansing, for speaking out with the Michigan Poor People's Campaign against war, racism and the predatory state of America's political economy. Trial for our group is still pending. In this issue we share a reflection by one of the lead organizers of the Michigan PPC, Lydia Wylie-Kellermann, on celebrating the season of Advent while her father, Bill Wylie-Kellermann, spent ten days in jail this December for his arrest in Lansing. Bill's stint in jail is of a piece with some four decades he has spent "on the line" for a society and world that is less violent and more just.

But I digress, in tying a witness in June to its legal ramification in December, from an overall effort to move chronologically.

Peace House summer programming went very well. We had big numbers pretty much from the beginning,

and lots of great volunteers making it all happen. Kalamazoo Jeter's Leaders were here, with four or six really awesome high school volunteers just about every day. The reading porch was open every day; thanks to Dolores the math porch was kickin' it twice a week; Open Roads came weekly to teach bike repair; Felicia coached basketball every other day. Becky brought her sewing camp for the second year in a row; Rooted Drum and Dance shared the music and taught the dance of West Africa. Read and Write Kalamazoo helped kids find their literary voice; Clean Water for the World came for three days to enlist volunteers for pre-

production of parts for water purification systems they build and send overseas. People need water not weapons!

Otherwise, we spent a lot of time on Phelps Avenue playing kickball, basketball, and gaga. We made stuff out of recycled items and created beauty with perler beads. We did cooking projects and played with legos, wooden trains and matchbox cars. We had fun on rivers, lakes and land with the Kalamazoo Nature Center. We four were joined in our efforts every day by Pereshieanna Smith, an Eastsider born and raised, and Shadaiah Grandberry-Peyton, Kalamazoo College CBI intern extraordinaire. Also, when we look back on the summer of 2018, we will remember it as the season of the rise of the



Self-portrait in pumpkin

Youth Advisory Board.

Beginning in January of this year, we initiated the YAB, made up of high schoolers and rising 9th graders from our neighborhood, longtime Peace House participants all. We sought feedback and needed help, as these young people are now role models in the neighborhood. We wanted the teenagers to have a home here and be able to contribute positively to the labor and the culture of Peace House.

They have done so, by showing up faithfully and punctually to work, by working with a willing spirit and by leading the younger kids with a lived example of

(Continued on page 8)

December, 2018

Dear friends,

It was all the way back in July of 2006 that two young couples and one feisty toddler first crowded themselves into an old gray house on Phelps Avenue in Kalamazoo, determined to make a go of it as an intentional community that would serve the families of our neighborhood. A couple of babies, a whole lot of renovation, and two and a half years later, we started our first formal outreach to the community, an afternoon of toys and games for the kids that we had already gotten to meet. It was a small start, with not many more than four or five kids in those first few months of 2009, but it propelled us to our first summer program (before we even had a playground) and the four or five grew to well over a dozen. Twenty the next year. Before long, thirty, forty, now sometimes close to sixty on a summer afternoon. Our afterschool numbers aren't quite so staggering, but these days, we can have up to twenty-five or thirty kids waiting for their turn to do homework in a cozy house with friendly people on a December afternoon.

Our relationships with our young friends keeps getting deeper, too. Some of those first few kids who started us out playing Connect Four in the living room, have grown to adulthood. They, and some others, have joined our staff. They have ownership here, too, as does our Youth Advisory Board, high-schoolers who help run and guide Peace House every day.

So now, just coming up on ten years after we "opened our doors to the public"- so to speak, we, the Peace House Community, which includes you, can look back and say, "We did it." We wanted to build a place where kids felt welcome and happy, where they will grow and realize their power, and whattaya know? We're doing it.

2019, we trust, will be another great year, and we know we'll have your support to create the fun, the learning, the moments of connection, the new experiences that Peace House offers young people day in and day out. This time around, though, we're going to ask to lean on you a little extra, and here's why:

Our first calling at Peace House is to provide excellent hospitality and a feeling of welcome to every person, young or old, who comes here. We want to make room for everyone. In the warmer months, that's easy. We have the nice big backyard, the playground, the ball court, and the decks as comfortable spaces. On these cold winter days, there are still plenty of kids, but the outside isn't fun for very long. There is an urgency to get kids into the house and to keep them warm and occupied, and on a lot of these days, the houses just aren't big enough to handle the need.

But we have an idea! We have a nice big garage between the two houses. Right now, it's used as a workshop and storage, but work is already underway to convert it into a multi-purpose



Yes, he can do it all.....YAB member and longtime Peace House participant Jaleen Johnson with Jatayvious, Marquon and Gaby at our annual pumpkin carving event

activity space. Heated, insulated, finished out, beautiful and very comfortable, it'll be a great hangout/homework/project/whatever spot that will be warm in the winter and get plenty of use all year long. It'll put an end to shivering on the porch and open us up to new kinds of activities that only a big open room will allow. We are planning to get it finished in the early part of the year, and we can't tell you how excited we are.

Our plan will be just like all of the other projects we've taken on: high quality, very functional, and very economical. But, as low as we will be able to cut the costs, we will still need a little extra help this year to pull it all together. We don't have a specific number right now, but we just ask you to keep the additional need in mind when you consider making a gift to Peace House.

As always, thank you, thank you, thank you, for all the wonderful ways that you support the Eastside kids through Peace House! We wish you the very best for the holidays and a truly excellent 2019!

In Peace,
Mike DeWaele
For Peace House

Donations can be made directly to "Peace House" and sent to 321 Phelps Avenue. We are still not a 501c(3), but tax-exempt contributions can be arranged. Please contact us before donating if you need such an exemption. If you have any questions, please contact us by phone (269-492-1206) or e-mail (peacehouse@peacehousekzoo.org).

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS- 10 POINTS

- 1. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE FREE.**
- 2. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE HEALTHY.**
- 3. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE BRILLIANT.**
- 4. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE SAFE.**
- 5. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE LOVED.**
- 6. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE COURAGEOUS.**
- 7. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE ALIVE.**
- 8. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE TRUSTED.**
- 9. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE EDUCATED.**
- 10. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO KNOW YOUR RIGHTS.**

From Colin Kaepernick's "Know Your Rights" Campaign

Homily: I want the world to be

By Lydia Wylie-Kellermann

Baruch 5:1-9

Psalm 126

My Advent has started out differently than I planned.

As I think most of you know, my dad was taken into custody for a 12-day sentence when he refused to pay a fine for an action he was part of (along with Tom Lumpkin) with the Poor People's Campaign on May 21. They blockaded the doors of the Department of Health and Human Services in

Lansing calling out the systemic racism and abuse of the poor by the very department that is supposed to support the needs of the poor. The director of DHHS is currently facing charges of manslaughter for his role in the Flint Water Crisis. And we recently learned that Child Protective Services has started following the Homrich trucks in certain neighborhoods in order to immediately remove children from their families when their water is shut

off. To cry out against this injustice, Tommy Tackett and my dad have gone to jail.

When I got the news that he was taken into custody, my brain jumped into organizing, press conferences, and vigils. It has been a week of conference calls and emails.

My body jumped into anxieties and fears carrying constant headaches and exhaustion- some of the worries about his medications and pain, and others than don't quite make sense to me for a short jail sentence.

And my heart has simply tried to play catch up, trying to remind me to slow down. I've been writing something every day and that has helped. I went up into the attic and pulled out a picture book

my mom cut and pasted called "Where's Daddy?" for the Advent when I was 2 and my dad was in jail for 30 days. I have spent time remembering the vigils at Williams International on most Advent Mondays of my childhood. I have tried to be there for my kids' hearts when my own is so shaken.

I am so aware of what a small time away this is. It is a constant reminder for me of how many families do this for years as we have become a nation of mass incarceration.



For my dad, there is no better place for him to honor this Advent season. He feels the days slow down, he writes, he prays, he awaits the person with the key to open the locked door. Yet I struggle to find such peace.

I hear these beautiful words in Baruch- "take off your robe of mourning and misery... be wrapped in the cloak of justice."

Yet, I listen to the news and I could weep! These words seem such folly in these times of real

mourning and misery at every turn. Yet we read them anyway. We pray them anyway. It becomes a prayer... a cry...

So, I pray
For the child in Mexico,
Who has walked hundreds of miles at her mother's side,
Only to meet with fear and tear gas
And no place of safety or welcome.
May she take off the robe of mourning and misery
and be wrapped in the cloak of justice.

I pray
For the black mothers who have buried their sons
after being murdered by police

wrapped in the cloak of justice

and for all black mothers who send
their boys out the door each morning
despite the fear and systemic terror.
May they take off the robe of mourning and misery
and be wrapped in the cloak of justice.

I pray
For all the children hiding in corners of classrooms
Keeping quiet as their hearts pound
Trying to fathom what their teachers means
When she says “we are practicing in case
There is a stranger with a gun.”
May they take off the robe of mourning and misery
and be wrapped in the cloak of justice.

I pray
For the old woman who fled the fire
Whose home is washed away by heat and flood
And whose friends weren't fast enough
To escape the flames.
May she take off the robe of mourning and misery
and be wrapped in the cloak of justice.

I pray
For the children who live with lead in their veins
Who cannot trust water as gift,
Who learned from a young age
That profit is more important than their brains and
lives.
May they take off the robe of mourning and misery
and be wrapped in the cloak of justice.

I pray
For the men, women, and children in Yemen
Whose hunger shows on their bodies,
Who have been left to violence and death
at the hands of war.
May they take off the robe of mourning and misery
and be wrapped in the cloak of justice.

I pray
For the ice caps as they melt into the ocean,
For hurricanes rising in strength
For ancient depths violated with fracking and
pipelines,
For waters poisoned, for the heat of droughts
For fires and snow and storms and floods

May the earth take off the robe of mourning and
misery and be wrapped in the cloak of justice.

I pray
For all those who suffer the powers and
principalities of beaurocracy
At the hands of the Department of Health and
Human Services.
For the endless lines and lost applications,
For the tiresome work and lack of humanity,
For Child Protective Services following Homrich
trucks
Tearing children from their family as their water is
shut off.
May they take off the robe of mourning and misery
and be wrapped in the cloak of justice.

These feel like impossible dreams, foolish prayers
to even utter aloud.
But the psalm says that this is the season
When we are to be like a humanity dreaming,
To wake with our mouths filled with laughter.
We are summoned to such sacred imagination,
Such wild yearnings and loving demands.
It is the kind of dangerous hope
That could cause us to open our doors,
To turn stranger to friend,
To move into a Catholic Worker
and begin community again.
It is the kind of dangerous hope
That could land one in jail,
That keeps us lighting candles
And listening in the dark.
So we hope and so we sing
And so we pray.
Amen.





Shay Grandberry-Peyton was our Kalamazoo College Summer Intern this past summer. She was amazing! Here is a short reflection about her experience:

My thoughts are running through my head because I don't know where to begin. When I first started at Peace House I didn't know what I was getting myself into, but I knew I wanted to try something new and help kids in a different area that I was not a familiar with. I must say it was the best choice that I could have made. I fell in love with my internship because it didn't feel like a job, it felt like something I loved to do. I gained many relationships with the kids, and they changed my life. The Peace House was more than a day camp—it was a family. Both of the families made me feel loved and like I was their child. I was in charge of planning activities, helping with snacks, tickets for prizes, handing out prizes, entering paperwork, and most importantly gaining relationships with the children. With each task that I was assigned I gained a new way of doing and looking at things. My skills with children improved because the kids began to open up with me after going through each obstacle course to try and figure them out, but each obstacle course was worth it. I loved every part of my internship and plan to use everything I learned and gained in the future. The highlight of each of my days was seeing the smiles on each child's face when they were awarded prizes or did the smallest task to help out.

Summer Photos





and Reflections

Julia Scott became a regular volunteer at Peace House last year, and was a consistent presence with us this past summer. Her enthusiasm and smile were appreciated by all! Here is a short reflection from Julia:

Everyday at the Peace House is nothing short of an adventure from navigating homework problems with the kids to field trips in the summer. This summer we did everything from making slime and pudding pops to canoe trips down the Kalamazoo River. By far the most memorable experience for me was when the Nature Center brought owls over for the kids to look at and learn about. Their eyes were so transfixed on those sweet little creatures and when given the opportunity to ask questions they did not hold back. The adventures at Peace House are not always glamorous but they are without question life changing for all those involved. Working at Peace House means finding community and stability not only for the children and families we serve but also the volunteers. I have found a place where my interpersonal strengths are recognized, utilized, and appreciated. Peace House has continually given me a sense of purpose and has rekindled my passion for working with youth and their families.



(Continued from page 1)

respect and joy. Each according to his or her own personality and style (some quietly, some at great volume), the YAB members make it clear to everyone



YAB members Dylan and Bahiyyah

who comes here what behavior is appropriate at Peace House and what is not. What we did not foresee—and what has been a great blessing and a gift—was the lovely sense of comraderie and friendship that developed among the group. So through the summer, though only two YAB members would work for wages on any given day,

the rest of the YAB would show up too, and volunteer. We greased the skids with regular check-ins and pizza. Please check out the photo spread of summer fun.

Peace House was popular this fall! We were slammed, every day, for two months straight, until the time change and the arrival of colder weather. We adjusted our methods a little bit, and increased the hours of the YAB staff. The main challenge of this year has been to keep the peace when a number of the younger kids are ready to fight at the drop of a hat. One will side-eye another, who will utter an epithet, and it's on. Please pray for them, and for us, as we continue to teach, and require, nonviolent conflict resolution at Peace House. We continually work to educate ourselves and seek greater compassion and a better understanding of what methods are helpful (and what methods are not) when dealing with kids who are struggling. Some of the kids who come here are up against a whole lot in this fraying America in which we all live.

We were graced at the beginning of October by a visit from our old friend, Rev. Terry Moran, a Catholic priest of the Redemptorist order, from New Jersey. Terry had a full schedule going to cross country meets and soccer games of our kids, and

celebrated Peace House's first ever Catholic Mass. The gathering was small, and powerful and real; it reminded us of all the reasons we love house church. No hierarchy, no fancy vestments! Just a community of people trying to live better lives. It may happen again.

Jen continues her work with Communities in Schools of Kalamazoo, running extraordinary programs at Woodward Elementary. Molly coordinates restorative justice initiatives at Schoolcraft Middle School for Gryphon Place, and my work as a self-employed residential contractor or has been varied and interesting. Mike has been holding down communications at Peace House, and just finished out the year by getting shoulder surgery. As you may know, Mike injured his shoulder (being a He-Man) 4 1/2 years ago and has suffered chronic pain ever since. Because of the joint's makeup, shoulder injuries can be hard to diagnose with a MRI, but nevertheless after exhausting all other options Jen and Mike decided to proceed with a shoulder surgery the terms of which would be determined in the moment once the shoulder was "opened up." The major fear was that there would be nothing repairable inside, and Mike would still have to recover from the surgery...but lo! Their decision was vindicated when the surgeon (none other than Pat Noud, classmate and old friend from Kalamazoo College) found and repaired a torn rotator cuff and a bicep tendon that had come mostly unattached.

Mike is recovering well, and while convalescence will last long into the new year, significant improvement is very likely. Spirits are high.

In the week before Mike's surgery we hosted two major celebrations. The first was the annual Peace House holiday party, a wonderful coming-together in the gym at St. Mary's Church. Many thanks to everyone who worked so hard to bring joy and fellowship and a full Christmas meal to 120 people. Special thanks to the parishioners of St. Catherine of Siena Church for providing gifts for the kids.



A fun creation from sewing camp!

The second was a great big party at Jen and Mike's house last weekend, to celebrate Mike's birthday and get his well filled up before he went under the knife. What a lovely celebration that was! We were all left humbled by and deeply grateful for the community of love that surrounds us and carries us. Thank you all, friends. We love you.

The five children who call Peace House home are all growing up faster than we can imagine, and we are often awed by their beauty and goodness and the originality of their thoughts. (The rest of the time, we're trying to get them to help out more around the house, get off the phone, and quit



Holiday party portrait: Anthony, Zy'are, Zane and Amare

represents to us a fleeting, momentary fruition of all the seeds we have labored year in and year out to plant.

Speaking personally, 2018 has been something of an emotional roller-coaster, as we have been made to witness, and in many ways feel powerless to meaningfully engage, an ascendant derangement and cruelty in America. We live in a uniquely perilous time.

Catastrophic climate change is on our threshold and is indeed already under way.

The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists has the Doomsday Clock set at two minutes to midnight, indicating that the world is at greater risk of nuclear war than we have been at any time since 1953. The powerful nations are doubling down on war and dehumanization, from the West Bank to Yemen to the southern border of the United States. Our democracy is under assault; our judiciary, not impartial. The President is a madman and a rogue. He is adored by a third of our population, maybe more. Black Lives (nor brown), where official rhetoric and policy are concerned, still don't Matter.

When you add all that up, it can seem that our efforts here on Phelps Avenue, so hard-won and costly in terms of time and effort, are paltry, insignificant. Additionally, we are busier, and are pulled in more directions now that our kids are older than they were five years ago; thus we are less able to take on significant new work. In many ways, our lives are deeply enmeshed with a culture we know to be destructive and sick. We are compromised in ways we could not have foreseen when we were younger.

But we are still here. And again, speaking personally, I cannot imagine surviving the Trump era without this place. Peace House is our No to all that is nihilistic and hateful and dismissive and it is our Yes to everything hopeful and living and full of possibility. What happens on the grand stage might be out of our reach, but we each have choices to make about our time and how we use it, where we invest it, and why. As my Uncle Dan would say, the difference between doing nothing, and doing something, is everything.

Blessings to you and your loved ones in 2019. Please continue to walk with us. We are grateful.



A hardworking crew of older kids gutted 70 pumpkins in preparation for our pumpkin carving event. Who said gutting pumpkins can't be fun!

being so inconsiderate, ha ha.) But really, the parenting ride is amazing. Amos started high school this fall at Kalamazoo Central. He is in the marching band, is playing high-level soccer and hopes to run track in the spring. Jonah and Clara began middle school at Linden Grove, and their friendship is an incredible thing. As they ride the bus, or run on the cross country team, or play D and D with Mike, or play cello for the orchestra, they remain largely post-verbal. They both just...know. Finally, Alice and Leah are in third grade at Northglade, and in different ways, each is wildly creative, and again, in different ways, each is flinty and sweet and loving and fierce. Each one of the five kids continues to find new ways to engage in a helpful way with what is happening at Peace House. Such initiative, never forced, is a joy to behold as it

King's Bay Plowshares Update

On April 4th, the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., seven veteran Catholic peace activists, including Jerry's mom Elizabeth McAlister, entered the King's Bay Naval Base in Camden County, Georgia, home to the US government's Atlantic fleet of nuclear-armed Trident submarines. They planned to draw attention to what Dr. King called the "evil triplets" of racism, militarism and extreme materialism.

For two hours they remained on the base, hanging crime scene tape, pouring bottles of their own blood, leaving literature, and spray painting anti-war slogans.

"The arms race is a treacherous trap for humanity."

—Carmen Trotta, King's Bay Plowshares

Theirs was an effort to take seriously the injunction of the prophet Isaiah to "beat swords into plowshares." Their hope is for a world free of nuclear weapons and war.

One Trident submarine can incinerate 192 cities with nuclear bombs. The US operates 18 such subs.

On Nov. 7, the seven argued a motion to dismiss the case based on a 1993 religious-freedom law. They are facing felony charges and the trial has not been set. Three, including Liz, remain in jail. Their statements are excerpted below.

Mark Colville: "Nuclearism in the United States has become a compulsory religion, one that demands assent and allegiance, punishes non-participation, and above all requires a faith that is utterly incompatible with the teachings of the Bible."

Clare Grady: "Our non-violent symbolic act of disarmament seeks to withdraw consent from the Trident weapons system, and the systems of theft and domination that the Trident enforces... We went in a spirit of VULNERABILITY, willing to suffer, but not inflicting harm or ill will on anyone."

Martha Hennessey: "We have religious freedom laws put in place to protect peacemakers from being labelled vandals, criminals, or terrorists. What was temporarily damaged on the base doesn't compare to blasting whole modern cities and killing millions of people if or when the purpose and preparedness of the base is carried out."

Fr. Stephen Kelly: "The religious witness of the Kings Bay Plowshares is a concerted effort, the seven of us having agreed to preach the Gospel, non-violently, where it had to be preached: in the locale of the greatest sin... If the testimony at this vestibule of omnicide was anything, it was religious. Ours was not an individual whim or esoteric act of fanatical origin. We were embodying the prophetic call given by God to Isaiah."

Elizabeth McAlister: "Being constantly ready to commit the nation and the planet to a war of annihilation within minutes for the sake of so-called national interests elevates these weapons over any belief in human dignity, any belief in the sanctity of human life, any belief in life itself, or any belief in God. This is idolatry. I, as a Catholic Christian, cannot bow down to these weapons."

Patrick O'Neill: "By prosecuting the Kings Bay Plowshares – and saying nothing about the criminality of nuclear weapons – [the Government] has opted to crush dissent and maintain a status quo that puts the very fate of God's creation in peril."



What I Pledge Allegiance To

By Kiese Laymon, excerpted from the article "What I Pledge Allegiance To," <www.thefader.com> Kiese Laymon is a black southern writer, born and raised in Jackson, Mississippi. Laymon attended Millsaps College and Jackson State University before graduating from Oberlin College. He earned an MFA in Fiction from Indiana University. Laymon is currently the Otilie Schilling Professor of English and Creative Writing at the University of Mississippi. Laymon is the author of the novel, *Long Division* and a collection of essays, *How to Slowly Kill Yourself and Others in America*, and *Heavy: An American Memoir*.

...I watched patriotic football fans burn the jersey of Colin Kaepernick, the quarterback of the San Francisco 49ers. During preseason games in late August and early September, Kaepernick refused to stand for the national anthem because of the nation's lack of commitment to liberty and justice for black Americans. Like Kaepernick, I do not stand for the Star Spangled Banner or the Pledge of Allegiance, though our reasons differ slightly.

My first whooping in a Mississippi public school happened in third grade because I refused to stand and recite the Pledge. The American flag in our classroom hung right next to the state flag, its confederate battle symbol always in eye's view. I didn't know much as a third grader, but I knew that I was from Jackson, home to thousands of black American freedom fighters who never went abroad to fight. Those wonderful soldiers strategized, organized, and battled against the most patriotic, morally monstrous Americans on the face of Earth for me to be free. I still sit during the national anthem and the Pledge of Allegiance because they dared to love me and themselves when morally monstrous patriotic white folk with American flags, Confederate flags, and Mississippi State flags showed them that loving black Americans was a murderous offense.

The same reason I chose not to stand for our pledge or anthem is strangely why I still haven't taken down the American flag flying outside my new house. It looks, to me at least, like every American flag on Earth should look: beat down, bleeding, fading, weak, tearing apart, barely held together, absolutely stanky, and self-aware.

American symbols and American choices matter. I have no idea how long I'll choose to live in this neighborhood. I have no idea what's going to happen to the neighborhood when or if I encourage more black folks to move in if I stay. Every day that I live here, I will choose to fly the American flag out there now or the alternative Stennis state flag. Some days I will choose to fly a red, black, and green freedom flag. Other days, I will choose to fly no flag at all. No matter what flag I choose to fly outside or inside of my house, many white Americans and white Mississippians will insist that *their* black folk, Mexicans, and Muslims remain passive, patriotic and grateful for the limited choices we have been *given*.

I am a black Mississippian. I am a black American. I pledge to never be passive, patriotic, or grateful in the face of American abuse. I pledge to always thoughtfully bite the self-righteous American hand that thinks it's feeding us. I pledge to perpetually reckon with the possibility that there will never be any liberty, peace, and justice for all unless we accept that America, like Mississippi, is not clean. Nor is it great. Nor is it innocent.

I pledge that white Mississippians and white Americans will never dictate who I choose to be or what symbols I choose imbue with meaning. I pledge to not allow American ideals of patriotism and masculinity to make me hard, abusive, generic, and brittle. I pledge to messily love our people and myself better than I did yesterday. I pledge to be the kind of free that makes justly winning and gently losing possible. I pledge to never ever confuse cowardice with courage. I pledge allegiance to the Mississippi freedom fighters who made all my pledges possible. I pledge allegiance to the baby Mississippian liberation fighters coming next.

This is a pledge of allegiance to my United States of America, to my Mississippi. Raggedy or not, this is a pledge to my home. Are y'all standing up?



Peace House

321 Phelps Ave.
Kalamazoo, MI 49048

Fertile Ground is sent twice a year to friends and supporters of Peace House. If you would rather not receive this newsletter, please return this page with a note to that effect. If you would like to receive periodic electronic updates from us (no more than twice a month), please visit peacehousekzoo.org and click on "Stay in Touch."

"The greatest challenge of the day is: how to bring about a revolution of the heart, a revolution which has to start with each one of us." —Dorothy Day

Who we are

Peace House, a community in the Catholic Worker movement, is dedicated to fostering peace, justice and relationship in the Eastside neighborhood of Kalamazoo. We believe that the good of each person is bound to the well-being of society as a whole; therefore we advocate taking personal responsibility for creating, in the words of Catholic Worker cofounder Peter Maurin, "a new society within the shell of the old...a place where it is easier for people to be good." We are here to be a resource for our neighbors. We rely on the involvement of a loving, dedicated extended community to do this work. **Please feel free to get in touch.**

Jen and Mike DeWaele

Clara and Alice

321 Phelps Ave.

Jerry and Molly Mechtenberg-Berrigan

Amos, Jonah and Leah

313 Phelps Ave.

Kalamazoo, MI 49048

(269) 492-1206

peacehouse@peacehousekzoo.org

How you can be a part

We welcome and celebrate ALL people, regardless of race, religion, political affiliation, nationality, class, gender identity, sexual orientation, age or ability.

- ◆ Please consider donating snacks for our afterschool program. We enjoy healthy snacks like fresh fruit, trail mix, crackers, cheese, granola bars, and popcorn (no nuts please). Homemade cookies and other treats are also welcome for our older kids on Wednesdays.
- ◆ We always need prizes (\$1–\$2) for our "prize box." These are small rewards that kids select after they have completed their homework.
- ◆ We often need help with our tutoring program in the winter months when our regular volunteers go out of town. Join our sub list!
- ◆ Join our email list to get regular updates and discover other ways to participate. To do this, go to our website peacehousekzoo.org and click on "Stay in Touch" and then "Join our mailing list."
- ◆ Spread the word! If you know of someone who may be interested, please tell them about Peace House!