

# The SERVANT SONG

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## Can Christ Be Found in Christianity Today?

by Brayton Shanley

Christianity that most believers practice is one of the youngest of the world's major religions. It was formed out of the communities of those who followed Jesus after his death and Resurrection. Today, Christianity is the largest religious tradition comprising almost one third of the world's population. It continues to grow globally while declining in the US, with New England states among the fewest Christian practitioners.

As Christian faith has developed over the centuries, it has attracted adherents with its message of inclusivity and salvation for all, offering hope for a better life in a world marked by hardship and suffering. Its history and theology emphasize community, while appealing to the various economic and social classes, especially the poor. Theologian Hans Kung writes in *On Being Christian* of the unique distinction of the Christian religion: "The whole of Christianity is focused on the person of Jesus; the whole is left without its central focus if Jesus is removed."

So, let's begin with sheer numbers--2 1/2 billion Christian faithful. Then add Jesus at the center, a virtual paragon of prophetic truth and Agape, unconditional nonviolent love. One might be certain, therefore, that the church would be a more nonviolent church, and this very church, which has worldwide adherents, would be more influential in establishing a more peaceful and just world. It takes a Jesus loving Hindu, Mahatma Gandhi, to offer a clue to the problem with how Christianity has been lived: "I love your Jesus, but I don't love your Christians because your Christians do not look like your Jesus."

Have we lost Jesus in the story so embedded in Jesus? When Christianity was subsumed by the Roman Empire and survived through the Emperor Constantine, it had the mark of Rome on it, which made it attractive to the empires of Europe which became Christian. Christianity now becomes the religion that acclimates to Empire. How could Jesus' life and message possibly survive within the violent power and wealth of Empire?

### Following Jesus: Post Resurrection and Pentecost

*Acts of the Apostles* outlines the first Christian communities after Jesus' death, Resurrection, Ascension and Pentecost where the Holy Spirit worked one of Her mightiest acts. The spirit of Jesus was embodied in his followers, a strength and confidence that they could lead a life of prophetic courage, intoxicated by God. It was a spiritual ecstasy that often yielded to speaking in tongues which was a unifying gift of otherworldly utterances where Christians transcended their national identity. These early communities created a deep bond, the truth of the spirit of Jesus so pulsating within them that they could directly experience him and believe in him as the true nonviolent Messiah.

Christians grew in number, even in persecution throughout Asia Minor, with the witness and evangelizing of St. Paul. Their religious experience and revelation



Advent 2025

of Jesus was not a patriotic allegiance to the state that prized wealth and political power. Being baptized into Christ did not call these early Christians to join the state with its domineering hierarchies, economies and military might through conquest and plunder. They chose, rather, the leadership of the spirit of Christ love, compassion and mercy as the Truth under God, risking the threat of persecution and death. Thus, they kept alive the task of moving away from the isolation of myopic worldly concerns for self, preferring common good values and striving to live in pacifist communities of Christ-like love.

These virtues are not exclusive dreams of a certain people; a life of true peace is the deepest yearning of all who live, and they became the foundation for true Christian economics. Luke's account of the first Christian Community recorded in Acts, reads:

"These remained faithful to the teachings of the apostles, to the community of believers, breaking of the bread and to the prayers. And everyone was filled with awe; the apostles worked many signs and wonders. And they shared the faith, owned everything in common, sold their goods and possessions and distributed the proceeds among themselves according to what each one needed." (Acts 2: 43-46)

Following the word and example of Jesus was the norm, a Christian way of being in the world, a witness to the prophetic truth of Agape Love. As a life's practice, the enemy was now a privileged object of love. Faith in living Jesus' message was tightly held and spread throughout the first centuries.

### In Comes "The World"

Embedded in the cares of the world, most Christians today seem not to know exactly what they believe, not clearly

grounded in the life of Jesus, but by default. Christians are formed by the values of the world, frequently defined by privileged American styles of living. Our perpetual fight for survival carefully places security first, by maintaining advantages, while social climbing, all with a tinge of church on Sunday.

Today, fears of Socialism and Communism dominate the American economic discourse, dimming the significance of US Catholic Social Teaching and its emphasis on the common good and solidarity with the poor. Christians live for the private good, not the common good, a contradiction of the clearest of Jesus's teachings: his uncompromising position prioritizes the need of the poor and the dangers of riches: "You cannot be a slave to both God and money. (Matt. 6:24).

In Luke's *Sermon on the Plain*, Jesus states his obvious option for the poor: "Blessed are you poor, the Kingdom of God is yours. Woe to you rich who have plenty to eat, you will go hungry (Luke 6:20). Jesus tells the rich ruler that to inherit eternal life, "sell all you have and give it to the poor and follow me." (Luke 18:21-22) No tolerance here for US mercenary capitalism and an economy where the wealthiest 1% own 31% of the wealth while the bottom 50% own just 2.5% forcing the poor and working people to choose between paying for food or rent while perpetually living without affordable health care.

### The First Followers of Jesus

In *Acts*, Chapter 6, Stephen, who lived early in the First Century AD, began his ministry as a humble servant of the poor and became a fierce defender and advocate of the prophet, Jesus. This was a risky evangelization: "Jesus is Lord." Stephen ended up the first Christian martyr, a prototype for Christians in what be-

gan an age of persecution and martyrdom.

While evangelizing, Stephen ran into two opposing camps, nationalism and traditionalism, and was accused of blaspheming Moses and God-- religious traditionalism. Risking his life, he proclaimed that Jesus was bigger than allegiance to any nation and God could not be contained by Judaism alone. Neither did this new faith in Jesus have any loyalty to government or the state which comes into power by violent conquest, always protected by the military and an arsenal of weapons.

Post-resurrection Christians did not join the military or justify the use of any violence, even for the protection of their own lives, preferring to die than to kill. "Thou shalt not kill" for them did not admit to exceptions. Just to proclaim you were a Christian could lead to physical violence, imprisonment and death. Uncompromising, Stephen followed the spirit of Jesus while praying for mercy for his executioners.

### Has "The World" Formed Our Christian Faith?

Paul's Letter to the Romans is instructive: "Do not conform yourselves to the standards of this world but let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind. Then you will be able to know the will of God, what is good, acceptable and perfect." (Rom. 12:2)

The gravest threat to a formation of a life in God is the pull of the world and its values which begins as we experience our early years. Gradually, imperceptibly, our lives are organized to conform to the people that surround us. By degrees, we drift into obedience, or what Buddhists call "the conditioned mind." Our thinking, shaped by family and neighbors, or-

# “Let the Flame of Nonviolent Resistance Burn!”

by Suzanne Belote Shanley

For months, I have been studying an excerpt from W. H. Auden’s poem “September 1, 1939:”

“Defenseless under the night/Our world in stupor lies;/Yet, dotted everywhere, /Ironie points of light/Flash out wherever the Just/Exchange their messages; May I, composed like them/Of Eros and of dust, Beleaguered by the same/Negation and despair, Show an affirming flame.”

Auden’s lament over the German invasion of Poland and the beginning of WWII, captures global stakes depressingly downward, like today’s. Our world and most of its inhabitants, are seemingly not only “defenseless” but lying “in stupor.” Like Auden, I can locate in my life feelings of powerlessness and numbing amid genocide in Gaza and the assaults of the unjust, the minions of empire.

Yet, even in these past despairing days, I have daily reminders of the resilience of the human community, experiencing, in Auden’s words, the “Just” who “exchange their messages.” I take these “messages” to be those mysterious, inexplicable threads of communication inaccessible on a literal level but available as unseen “ironic points of light.”

Social media provides immediate visual and audio images of mass rallies, and thousands of local efforts to fracture a cold, calculating murder machine. Collectively, the “Just” among us, the doctors of Gaza, the nonviolent resisters in Combatants for Peace, the Gaza flotillas, the COs in Israel, hundreds of reporters sacrificed in the carnage of Gaza, are carriers of “ironic points of light.” Such illuminations do “flash out” affecting us in profound ways, “dotted everywhere,” particularly in consciousness and memory, yet to be revealed.

Such “light” is carried by Gazan poets like Rafaat Alareer, whose poem, “If I Must Die,” gives voice to Auden’s “negation and despair,” and far beyond, to the slaughter in Gaza, to Alareer’s murder and return to “the dust.” Alareer’s final words are a plea to those of us who must “live,” he urges, to “tell my story.”

Alareer’s poem, an ironic point of light, flashes out to us who are seekers of the Nonviolent Jesus, of affirming flames, the call to prophecy, and yes, even martyrdom, as revealed by a Cloud of Nonviolent Witnesses. In the Book of Wisdom, “The souls of the just are in the hands of God and no torment shall touch them.” (Wisdom 2:23). Wisdom suggests that even in death and affliction the “just” “are worthy of peace” and “greatly blessed.”

Wisdom, in a woman’s voice of the Divine Feminine, speaks of “sacrificial offerings” which are rooted in the “visitation” of the Just who “shall shine and shall dart about as sparks through stubble.” I love the promise of this book, these words, yet though I am consoled, even uplifted, by the words of our beloved poets, including the woman’s voice in Wisdom, these moments inhabit my psyche as spiritual uplift, but not as motivators for action.

The unheard voices of the just, the poor, the migrants locked in ICE concentration camps, the starving of Sudan, those buried alive under the rubble of Gaza are carried in the news, with endless descent into death. We hear the cries of mothers of the tens of thousands of children killed and turned to dust. How we make sense then of our impotence, when reading in Wisdom that the just “understand truth” and are in God’s “care...with God’s elect.” Are we among the just, the elect? Or are we simply observers? Does Wisdom offer Christians, a rarified, exultant promise that cries out for fulfillment to be known? How do we access the action that responds in real time to taking on the destiny of the Just Ones: suffer-



Palestinian mother and child escaping from Gaza.

New York Times photo

ing, pain, prison, even death. Are we ready?

## Opening Remarks on Francis Day, 2025

With billionaire madmen at the helm, how does one show an “affirming flame” of the “just”? Is our witness tepid by comparison to what is needed? I carried these thoughts with me as I prepared remarks for Francis Day. 200 of us gathered at Agape’s sacred fire, our faces fixed on the bonfire, as friends formed concentric circles on a clear, fall day. As we stood in silence together, Nathan Dufour Oglesby, called on St. Francis, embodiment of nonviolent love, in a passionate voice and with a resonant guitar, leading us to the tent meant to hold our hearts: “Make me a channel of your peace.” Rising smoke, woodland elegance, the sound of crunching leaves moved us as we experienced what Jim Robinson in opening remarks called our “lineage” and “its web, which sustains us.”

Looking out to familiar faces, and among them, a significant number of young people, I sensed the presence of the “defenseless” nonviolent Jesus. ICE kidnappings, extrajudicial killings, government shut down, on and on. Do these accelerated assaults on life and consciousness, leave us at times upended, in a “stupor”?

Our theme “A Call to Resistance” led to my discover of an essay by Nancy Small, former director of Pax Christi national, who intones flame imagery referencing the invasion of Iraq. (“Tongues of Fire Overcome the Darkness of War”, Catholic Peace Voice, 2003). Nancy describes hundreds of protesters carrying taper candles while rain began to fall. Despite the rain, one persistent candle kept flickering as the crowd stood at the feet of a statue of Gandhi.

“Let us Rise up,” Nancy wrote: “as tongues of fire burning with steadfast resistance against the ominous darkness that engulfs us.” I intoned this cry to the pilgrims before me, and they called back: LET US RISE UP! Incantations of resistance, voices lifted, we sounded strong, convinced: LET US RISE UP!

## Tax Resistance, Boycott, Strikes: Affirming Flames

The days following an uplifting community event, still leave us with the ques-

tion: How to resist? The momentum of the 60’s and the Civil Rights movement make even No Kings Day rallies like stunning moments of collective outrage but lacking in terms of the sacrifices of a Fanny Lou Hamer, John L Lewis and the “ironic points of light” of that era. We lineage elders wonder where the younger generation will stand. Are we called to action beyond the necessary spiritual uplift of the words, the rallies? Where is Pettus Bridge?

In the late 70’s, inspired by Quaker war tax resisters and by Wally and Juanita Nelson, Randy Kehler and Betsy Corner, we felt compelled to withdraw cooperation from the American war machine. Before forming Agape, Brayton and I engaged in “slow, evolutionary steps of disengaging from a predictable salary with deductions and pension buy-ins, to rely on donations freely given.” We embarked on a course that would “radically alter the rest of our lives. For years, we kept our family income below the taxable threshold, a way of life that we called stable precariousness.” (Loving Life on the Margins; Haley Publishers. To order see [www.agapecommunity.org](http://www.agapecommunity.org))

In 2024, the average taxpayer paid \$5,009 in income taxes to fund weapons. Consulting the National War Tax Resistance Coordinating Committee, <https://nwttrcc.org> offers extensive background on the essentials for war tax resistance. Noncooperation with war taxes, the money collected supporting genocide in Gaza, is a deep desire in the hearts of many but remains an elusive, untraveled path as the specter of “unstable precariousness” mounts. Living in a community, however, with trust in the “affirming flame” of the “just” gives us courage, and a network of support with practical advice and companionship along the way. If millions of Americans withheld even a token amount of war taxes, the impact would be significant.

## National Strike

In the fall issue of Servant Song, 2002, we carried an article by Philip Berrigan in which he called for a national strike, asking: “Where do we start?” His formula: “the common agreement that nonviolence, whether religious or secular ...is the essence of our effort.”

Several organizations are now calling

for Black Friday and Christmas boycotts “until these major retailers cease collaborating with and enabling this administration’s harmful policies.” Instead, the advocacy groups, joined by the Working Families Party and the grassroots movement 50501, said they and consumers who join them will “invest our collective dollars in Black-, minority-, and immigrant-owned businesses, small and local shops and retailers that have stood firm for the rights and freedom of the American people.” (<https://thegrio.com/2025/11/04>)

## Civil Disobedience or Divine Obedience

The violent arrest of Diana Patricia Santillana Galeano, a childcare worker in Chicago, Illinois, “sparked outrage and solidarity among mothers in the state.” (CBS News). The Cook County Sheriff’s Office reported that 15 women were arrested, consisting of a coalition of suburban moms. These mothers, among the legions of the “just” became “ironic points of light” who acted, based on their humanity and love of their children and the children’s teacher. Mothers spoke about their traumatized children who witnessed the brutal treatment by armed men while Diana called out “I have papers.” How did these women find the courage to take action in a manner they may not have thought possible just the day before?

How will we be called? What alliances will we build? How creative or reactive will our actions be? Will we go beyond massive rallies? Will we withhold our tax dollars to fund this Maga Monolith? These are the challenges that await our decisions.

Before his death several years ago, Professor John Bracey (W.E.B. DuBois Department of African American Studies) stood before us on Francis Day, 2019. Bracey invoked 2 Corinthians 4: “We are troubled on every side yet not distressed. We are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted but not forsaken; cast down but not destroyed.” To convey his sentiments about capitalism and slavery he said: “You can’t justify capitalism if you can buy and sell human beings. ...you cannot claim to be civilized and allow children to go hungry, be hurt, not have a place to sleep, and claim to live in a civilization.”

Invoking the words of the theologian, Howard Thurman, Bracey recounted how Thurman preached “about the inner light, a light within you that makes you a human being. God’s divinity is in us all. If the light goes out, then oh what a darkness.” Bracey then cried out to the Agape crowd that day: “You hold on to that; you never give that up. That’s why we are here. That makes us move.” “Hold on .... you never give up.”

As a finale, Bracey urged us to take “A Track to the Water’s Edge,” (Servant Song, Winter, 2019, p. 3) recounting that this track was part of a dream shared by a South African woman resister, Olive Schreiner. Schreiner had a vision of bodies crossing a river, some sinking some piling on top of each other, but building a bridge “so that others can cross.” The stark image of life out of death, seemed to meet the moment of Bracey’s final words:

“It is not freedom unless everyone is free. Every human being on the planet is you: no exceptions.”

Our nonviolent actions need to include the Maga world--Kristi Noem known as ICE Barbie, the women who hold up the vicious men of ICE. What a steep climb and a rough “track to the water’s edge.” I rebel internally. Nevertheless, I know, as Bracey warned us then, with words we need now: “You’re not going to win today, so don’t worry about Donald Trump. We may not get across in our lifetime or our children’s lifetime, but what we can do as an individual person is beat a path to the water’s edge.”

# Join an Economic Boycott

**BOYCOTT WE MUST** rather than simply watching and complaining about the Gaza Genocide, the cruelty of ICE raids, illegal arrests and Trump’s dismantling of critical economic programs serving the poor and working people.

**Start the Boycott on Black Friday through the Christmas Season and Ongoing:**

**Boycott all buying on Black Friday, especially at Big Box stores (corporate retailers and their chains). Instead, send your dollars saved to Gazan and Immigrant Relief Organizations.**

## Christmas Season

- 1. Boycott Amazon, Tesla, Walmart: Musk, the Waltons, and Bezos support Trump policies and Israel’s war on Gaza.**
- 2. Resist buying beyond your means and supporting the horror of war and cruelty and torture of immigrants and people of color.**
- 3. Non-cooperate with rampant materialism that warms the planet.**
- 4. Instead of buying gifts, make the gifts you give to loved ones which have a powerful, creative meaning for giver and receiver.**

**In the New Year: Continue the Boycott of Amazon, Target, Tesla and Walmart**

**Historically, economic boycotts have an effect when people vote with their wallets. India, through Gandhi, successfully boycotted British goods. Cesar Chavez led a boycott of grapes with the United Farm Workers Movement in 1965, to protest low wages and poor working conditions, including lethal doses of pesticides which were causing serious toxic injury winning key concessions from the growers.**

**Boycotts are only successful when they create an economic challenge to those boycotting, a hardship or inconvenience to their “business as usual.” The working people and poor will continue, understandably, to rely on Amazon, Walmart and Target as affordable. This boycott is an initial method of noncooperation with the unjust wealthy class who keep working people in financial extremity. But the discipline of boycott is an empowering sign that we can effectively change the cruel policies now on the throne with those in power in Washington.**

**Contact Agape for more information on the above: [peace@agapecommunity.org](mailto:peace@agapecommunity.org) or 413-967-9369**

# Psychological Safety in a Disabling and Traumatizing World

by **Ryan O’Connell**

A month and a half ago the strangest thing happened when my neighbor’s house caught on fire at 10:30 at night. My wife and I were lying in bed about to go to sleep after a heat wave had broken. We were talking about how nice it was to have some cool air blowing in through the windows. As we were saying this, we started to smell smoke, not that sort of cozy fireplace smell or charcoal grill smell. This burning chemical smell which grew more intense by the second, alarmed us. I assumed whatever was burning was close by. I walked down the hall and could see out my daughter’s windows which faced the back of the house, orange glowing light reflecting off our garage.

My first reaction was: “Oh my God, our house is on fire!” I ran downstairs, and out the back door, to see my neighbor 50 ft away with a fire extinguisher. He was trying to put out flames that were already probably more than 10 ft tall and growing quickly. I watched him for 5 seconds, hoping in vain that his little fire extinguisher could handle the scale of the fire. I knew that this wasn’t going to happen. Reflecting on it now, I remember it was eerily quiet. Other than the crackling of the flames, the only thing I could hear was this poor man coming to the realization that this was really happening.

This man’s house was on fire and his family, including two children under the age of 3, were inside. I could hear him frantically cursing and saying, “Oh no, oh my

God” as he ran back into his house yelling to his wife “the house is on fire!”. My first thought was to grab my fire extinguisher from the kitchen, as if this would help. Then, the most peculiar thing happened. Although I couldn’t remember the location of my fire extinguisher, I was looking right at it. I was disabled. I thought to myself: “Fear is powerful,” something I had not previously realized. Something real and scary happened when I lost my sense of psychological safety. I felt paralyzed.

My family couldn’t go back into the house that night which had filled up with smoke. The air on our block smelled toxic-- melted vinyl siding, burnt metal. Not wanting our kids to breathe that air, we went to my wife’s parents’ house. As we drove, I was reminded of the violence of a house fire.

Yet, this was a “small” experience, given the violence in the world. Large numbers of our global and nation’s neighbors are without material safety or any material possessions, any sense of psychological safety. How torturous and disabling that must be.

### Loss of Psychological Safety

Imagine how much more intense that loss of psychological safety would have felt if not only my neighbor’s house went up in flames, up, but our house too? All our neighbors’ houses? Our entire city? Imagine, if the fire hadn’t started because of an electrical issue or human error, but because a drone flown by somebody, somewhere, dropped a bomb on my neighbor’s house

and one on ours. God forbid, if I lost my wife or my children. What if I knew that tomorrow, whoever decided that my block needed to be bombed, also decided to bomb again? What kind of psychological safety could I expect to have then?

Yet, hundreds of thousands of our neighbors all over the world find themselves in these circumstances today, right now. Whether it’s because they fear death, imprisonment, deportation...the loss of everything they have...the loss of their dreams and the dreams of their family...our neighbors have lost that most important, yet often unappreciated sense of psychological safety.

### Pray and Remember

I met a woman named Terry Steele, a Canadian born Algonquin and Catholic, who recounted that the way her family and community express reverence for the sacred is by remembering. “We pray by remembering.” And I thought, “Isn’t that so important? To remember, especially when it seems that so many forces around us are trying to distract us, tempting us to forget, to look the other way and just go on with our lives.”

With us all here now for this sacred gathering at Agape, we might take some time to remember. Remember our brothers and sisters in our nation and on our planet who have lost their psychological safety, who are being tortured by violence or the threat of violence, disabled by the trauma of violence.

Let us close our eyes. Now, think of

these brothers and sisters and remember them. If someone whose name or face or community comes to mind, and if you feel comfortable, please share it out loud. Remember...we honor, pray, and embrace them as a community.

Agape is not a community of desolation. We come together not only to remember, honor, and pray for those victimized by all forms of violence, but to stand together and resist the disabling power of fear. We are a community of believers, of radicals and listeners. We are sensitive. We are generous. And when necessary, we are stubborn.

We may live under an authority that wields the weapons of confusion, but we wield the blessing of tradition, of believers, radicals, and listeners who came before us, saints who inspire us, people who loved us into this nonviolent peace movement. Let us remember them today.

I ask us again: Let us close our eyes and name our ancestors in this movement for peace and nonviolent resistance. Shout their names for all of us to hear. As we seek to recover some semblance of psychological safety and strengthen this nonviolent resistance, let us look to our gifts: our faith, our fellow companions, our communities. For community is what will defeat the forces of division and confusion. This we know. So, let’s work today and build that community.

*Ryan is a clinical social worker working at community health clinic in southern VT. He lives in Schenectady New York with his wife, Mollie, and their two children.*

# Call To Nonviolent Resistance

## A Pivotal Moment: Francis Day Transitions

by Bob Wegener

The odds are low that one can see a pivotal moment for change while it is happening.

Even years later there can be diverse opinions about identifying the occasion for launching a new era or a movement transition. It might make sense to just realize that all growth is an ongoing process of seen and unseen, small extensions towards blossoming. And yet, the mind wants to claim the pivotal moments, small and large, personal and social, and mark them in time.

Francis Day 2025 was a pivotal moment for the Agape Community. I have been to almost every Francis Day celebration since its inception, and many new things were afloat this year: how the day was conceived, organized and carried out in postcard New England weather in the beckoning woods of Hardwick. The germination and blossoming of the day lay in the hands of many younger members of Agape's Mission Council. What I experienced,

which I am sure other observers did also, was an energy for inspiration, opening a view to Agape's future.

The planning for the day was carried out like a well-honed team of veterans and young players, such as Kate Carew and Rin Leung, pivotal in getting the word out. The program gracefully wove together the roots of Agape under the emerging guidance of Nathan Dufour Oglesby, Ryan O'Connell, Jim Robinson and Jeanelle Wheeler with themes for our troubling times of contemplation, resistance and community.

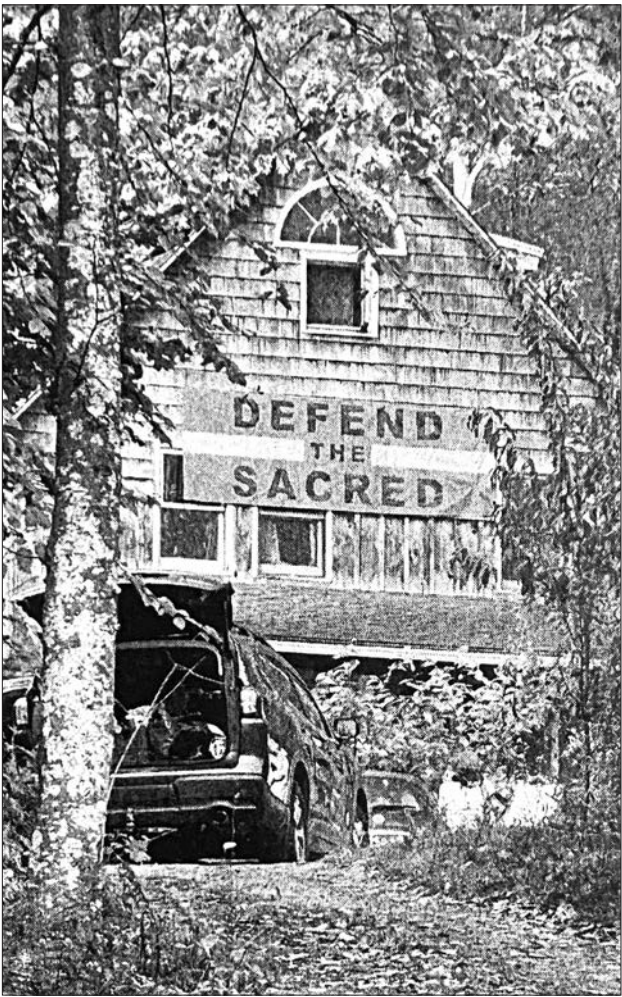
Throughout the day, Jeanelle kept us focused on the topics and the schedule so effortlessly it seemed like we were all just sitting around the living room talking about what mattered to us. And what mattered got shared in small groups that richly pulled everyone into our personal and collective struggles. My wife, Tara shared that this was the best Francis Day she ever attended. A big shift from the longer inspirational talks by renown nonviolent peacemakers of past years, the gathered community seemed to embrace the shift and

the opportunity to share in each other's lives.

Freedom Farm Community members followed Edgar Hayes' (co-founder with wife, Ann) poetic image of trees communally working together in rich, dark ways below ground. The roots of Agape and Freedom Farm have long been entwined with common stories of struggle, peacemaking and Christian service. Freedom Farm community members got us off our feet with sing-along music. Community and resistance also need celebration.

For some time, Agape's Mission Council has been discussing how to bring about a transition into a new era for the next 40 years. After decades in the making, change doesn't happen with one event, but Francis Day 2025 gave us a glimpse of how the transition might look. We'll need all of you who have been part of the Agape Community to continue down that road.

*Bob, a member of Agape's Soul Board, Agape Mission Council (34 years) designed and built Francis House.*



Driving up to St. Francis house.



Father Richard Trainor saying opening prayer.

### Let's Circle Up

by Jeanelle Wheeler

My early years of Francis Days were spent scampering in the woods. The next two decades were spent sitting beneath the tent. Hands folded in my lap, I listened attentively to all the speakers. But this year, things changed a bit. This year, I took the microphone and told everyone to pick up their folding chairs and find their designated small group to discuss the day's themes.

I shuffled quickly to my group. The lavender-and-teal facilitator guide I created crinkled in my hand as I welcomed all those in the small circle.

Months of Mission Council subcommittee meetings had led to these circles. We carefully crafted a series of questions on spiritual grounding, strategies of nonviolent resistance. We began with this simple question: "What's your favorite plant?" I heard the replies, willows, raspberries, cacti. Plants tell us where home is and where hope is. Throughout our circle moment, high school students and elders sat beside one another.

The admission of "I'm scared" enabled the outstretched "I hear you. You're not alone." This political moment calls for intergenerational co-conspiring. It calls for listening not to one but listening to one another. Let's circle up.

*Jeanelle is a member of Agape's Mission Council.*

### This Is What the Church Should Be

by Teagan Mustone

We arrived at Agape and were greeted by the beautiful "Defend the Sacred" red and yellow banner sticking out from the clearing in the woods, matching the changing yellow leaves of the trees behind it. I have always felt a special connection to St. Francis of Assisi, but it wasn't until last month that I learned what he meant.

While sitting around the firepit while breaking bread my friends and I had brought, we joined in the singing "Make Me a Channel of Your Peace." We either met or were introduced to one person after another and made connection with them and I realized: This is it. This is what the church should be.

It is easy to feel disheartened. I am tired, especially tired of government. Tired of the systems. Tired of what seems to be every possible force working against us, except for God.

That is what I remember from Agape. We have a God, and we have these people, and these people are the church.

These woods are God. The garden gives us food to eat, and the guitar gives us music to listen to. What more is there to life? What more do you need but to break bread and revel in music.

*Teagan is a member of Haley House, a Boston non-profit, supporting those in need in the South End. (<https://haleyhouse.org>).*



Iona students.

### I Came into Another World

by Rowan Torres, Iona Student

Agape is another world, filled with such love and joy, opening my mind to how we can make this world a better place, not just for ourselves, but for others in need. How can we live in harmony and beauty, using nature?

### Francis Day Changed Me

By Ian Smith, Iona Student

I am not some deep theological thinker, so going into this experience, I did not know how I could plug into the community. Yet the experience of the event, with my fellow Ionians and the greater agape community, is something that I've carried with me since the event. The themes of social justice covered in the event, in both a practical and contemplative way. The community built in one day is nothing I have ever seen before. If you are a student who gets to read this somehow, I can't recommend getting involved with this community enough. It will change your perspective.



Final circle around sacred fire.



Final prayer.



St. Francis robed in a Keffiyeh.

## Making a Joyful Noise at St. Francis Day

by Alexander Mitchell

St. Francis Day, 2025, was, at its core, a celebration of the whole Agape Community. I came to St. Francis Day as a “youngster” (recently graduated from his twenties) with one overriding objective: to answer question of “how I can build such community myself”. As I wrote that phrase in my notebook, the irony struck me. No one can build community by themselves. Community arises from the gathering of people. But how do we gather? For a citizenry organized for peace has never been more essential.

I embarked on my quest with great enthusiasm. Whether in a circle of wobbling folding-chairs, huddled against the campfire, or over potluck salad in Francis House, I grilled the movement veterans for the tricks of the trade—how they had built such a successful and enduring community. Yet many seemed equally mystified; one even echoed “How DID we pull this off?” I worried I would not get an answer.

Then, I stopped asking questions and simply watched. I saw old friends reconnecting, inquiring about so-and-so and what’s-their-name. Deep are the bonds here. People communicate with love and abandon, with no fear of offense or embarrassment. And it was beautiful. I don’t know if I left Agape hopeful, but I certainly left joyful.

I went to a “No Kings” rally just two weeks after. As I chatted with neighbors, raised my sign, and sang the songs, I felt something of that Agape joy again. And I am sure I will feel it again the next time we march.



Small group discussion.

# St. Francis Day 2025

## Turning to St. Francis, Rooted in Community

by Jim Robinson

We gather today to celebrate St. Francis of Assisi. We turn to this medieval saint, this channel of peace, not as a figure from the distant past but as an active presence, a living presence. He comes to us not just from above but from within and from below. He comes to us in and as the vibrant soil that grounds our gathering. And so, we pause to invite Francis to draw near to us, here and now, to dwell with us throughout this day, to enfold us and to hold us, to charge our time together with his vitality and vision.

In his own historical moment, St. Francis divested himself of inherited wealth and privilege in an unjust society, to live in solidarity with the involuntarily poor, to love lepers, to be present to the lilies of the field and the birds

of the air. He imitated the spontaneity and freedom of the more than human world. He recovered his humanity by reestablishing contact with the humus, the soil, the earth. St. Francis called the sun brother and the moon sister, the wind brother and the water sister and he seemed to really mean it.

Francis was deeply attuned to the community of creation, and he was also resister, a disrupter, a wandering prophet. He was a radical saint—he went for the roots. He rooted himself in the web of life, and he struggled to uproot injustice all around him. He gave his life over to the source of life, the creator, and he allowed himself to be recreated. Then, he attempted to recreate the society in which he was born.

We turn back to Francis as we struggle to resist the injustices of our moment, as we strive to root ourselves

more deeply in the earth, and as we attempt to envision and embody a more just and sustainable future. As we turn to Francis for guidance, we find ourselves held by a living and growing lineage of contemplative and prophetic people and communities.

The efforts of these people and communities intersect with a subterranean power, like the mycorrhizal network connecting trees, which some botanists have referred to as the “wood wide web”. Each of us gathered here today feeds from and feeds into this network, this community of communities, this web that holds us together and sustains us. When we gather at Agape the web becomes uniquely visible. What joy.

*Jim Robinson, member of Agape’s Soul Board and Mission Council, teaches Theology at Iona University.*



Ann Rader with Freedom Farm children.

## Fruits of the Spirit and Struggling to Find Hope

by Reba Korban

This year’s Francis Day began with glorious weather as Mark and I headed from our home in Vermont to Agape, looking forward to connecting with old friends and meeting new ones in a supportive community while discerning: How to respond to these extremely challenging times.

When we arrived, Brayton was speaking about how certain people are considered a threat to our National Security. It seems all it takes is intelligence, confidence, conviction, and a commitment to peace...a sobering thought to begin the day.

After a while, we were asked to break into small groups, which for me was a welcome change, and when I happened to end up in one of the smallest small groups, I felt especially blessed.

After pulling our chairs closer together, we were asked by our adept facilitator: “How we were supporting ourselves spiritually in these turbulent times?” In answering this question, we were split along generational lines. Those of us, including myself, in the older generation, spoke about having an especially difficult time finding hope, while our younger counterparts expressed that they, in fact, felt quite hopeful. We all pretty much agreed that

spending time in prayer helped sustain us. For us older ones, that meant meditation and silence. For our younger ones it was being involved in college sponsored faith ministries.

After lunch we gathered again into our same small groups, and this time we were asked: “Are you involved in any activities that you find particularly supportive?” We answered:

“talking to people, participating in rallies, singing, and group activities that focused on helping people.” College students spoke enthusiastically about a variety of inspiring activities.

The time we spent with so many thoughtful, intelligent, committed, and peaceful people, made Brayton’s words come back to me. Mark and I acknowledged that in some of our conversations during the day, those traits, or “fruits of the spirit” could end up leading some of us to prison or detention centers. If so, we’d be in good company. In the meantime, for me and others like me who are struggling to find hope, what comes to me is how much support we all have. We came to Francis Day seeking support, and we found it in each other, and perhaps that’s also where our hope will be found.

*Reba Korban is a life-time resister, who lived at Koinonia Farm in Georgia. Reba and Mark exemplify a life dedicated to gospel nonviolence.*



7 year-old Easton playing the harmonica.

## “Yes, they are your grandparents.”

by Emily Spicer Hankle

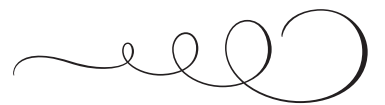
As we headed home from Agape’s St Francis day our middle child, 7-year-old Eleanor, asked about Suzanne and Brayton, “Are they our grandparents?” Although the answer might be, no, not by blood, not in the way our society thinks of how we claim people as family, I gave a resounding YES. YES, they are your grandparents, yes, everyone at Agape today is our family.

Our three girls know that Agape is a place where we find roots, peace, song, baked bread, new friends, art projects and peach trees. This Saint Francis Day was no different. Our family arrived to consume baked goods and grand smiles. We found a fire lit both on the logs and under the feet of those gathered to act for resistance.

Motherhood has taught me how to bilocate, at least in my mind-- a conversation in front of me while my eyes find the two-year-old’s head to make sure she is in a sight line. However, the enveloping love, grace, compassion, and care that wrap around me when I walk up the drive to Agape, allow me to breathe in peace like no other place.

I found myself able to sit in a small group with others and talk about how our different life experiences brought us there, but our same shared vision of resisting hate, violence, division, tyranny, and genocide move us in the same direction. As I walked into Francis House to sit and regroup with the girls, someone was playing the piano in the main room.

I heard the murmurs of people outside; the sun was streaming onto the couches; the girls were happily finding their moment. People were entering to share stories and food. I thought “YES” this is community. This is how to resist. We come together as family to share in our common kinship with each other, so that we can go out into this world we inhabit and see kinship in others. This is how we resist, by being family to each other.



# Above and Below the Soil

by Edgar Hayes

Do you remember what God manifested in the Creation Story? There were trees, stars, the sun and moon, water and light, animals and sea creatures, humans and land, seeds from trees and flying birds. In everything that was formed, God said: “It is good”. All of Creation was brought into existence for a purpose. Each purpose was fashioned for working in harmony, each, connecting to another, and for giving glory to God.

This Creation Story expresses the epitome of community and symbiotic relationships. When we inhale oxygen from the trees, this exhalation sustains our lives. When the trees inhale, the carbon dioxide from our exhalation, this sustains their life.

The sun gives light and heat and is a source of vitamin D and creates a food source for plants through photosynthesis. We were created to use the plants as a source of food. The moon’s proximity to the earth changes the tides and we cannot live without a fresh water source. All working together in harmony.

Yet somewhere along the timeline, a severance to our connection with God created a disconnect from the harmony of Creation. Our human-to-God relationship is fraught with people who think they are gods, people who’ve created their own god to control, folks misrepresenting God, and people who just don’t know God at all.

Our human-to-human relationship is still plagued by the need to dominate the other, rather than to live in community. Our human-to-the-rest of creation relationship is coarse with the misunderstanding of the word “dominion,” which has led to polluted waters, polluted air, polluted animals, polluted soil, polluted food, and a polluted us. How different might the world have been if we understood the Creation passage to mean: steward Creation, care for Creation, or live in harmony with Creation.

Can this cycle of violence against



the earth and one another be turned around? What examples are there for youth and young adults to see and analyze to change the trajectory of the future? Or will it be the same business as usual spiraling into destruction?

Let’s start with teaching young folk about the complexities and beauty of the soil. The soil is where various bacteria, fungi, roots, decomposing material, nutrients, bugs... you name it. (It screams of diversity).

The fungi form a network called the *wood wide web* where resource and information sharing take place. If a tree

of one species needs nutrients, it sends out an email on the web. Another tree of a different species with an excess of resources may receive the message and send out its abundance to the tree in need. (This speaks to caring for those in need).

The sun changes the chlorophyll in plants to glucose to share with the fungi connected to the roots. The fungi in turn grabs and shares nutrients where the plants’ roots can’t reach. (This speaks to the symbiotic, communal nature of the soil). This picture is a vision of where we want to go, back to the begin-

ning. So where are we now?

Just centimeters above the soil where [hu]man seems to be in charge, dominion draws us nearer to destruction. Instead of community, we have bootstrap mentality. Instead of diversity, a sense of monoculture drives agriculture, business, government, religion, education, science, history. If we juxtapose scenario with the Creation story, it becomes the total opposites of what God intended, and that is because the god, created by humans, created it.

The god, Whiteness, does not believe in community or shared responsibility to one another. This god takes, devours, and never gives back, wanting us to assimilate to this god, forgetting our soil. To forget our soil is to forget your roots. To forget our roots is to disconnect you from our ancestors.

When I speak to college students, I ask them “Where do you come from?” The usual answers of New York, Queens, Harlem come first. I ask the question again. “Where do you come from?” I’ll then ask, “Where is your soil,” followed by “Where are your roots?”

I remind students that we come from the soil. Our ancestors knew the soil, so they knew community, the land and the symbiotic nature of Creation. I challenge them to re-member their soil and that in re-membering, they are putting themselves back together again.

My thoughts to them are: “You are reconnecting with who you are and the purposes for which you were created. You are understanding and shedding the lies about Whiteness and White centeredness. So, take the time to learn about the soil. In doing so, you will also learn more about yourself and where you stand in the world. Do you want to associate with the god of Whiteness or the God of Creation. It is my hope and prayer that you choose the latter.”

*Edgar, and his wife Ann Rader, are co-founders of Freedom Farm Community, Agape’s sister community, in Middletown, NY. ([www.freedomfarmcommunity.org](http://www.freedomfarmcommunity.org))*

## Take the Log Out of Your Own Eye

By Andre C. Wiederkehr

So simple: Love your neighbour as yourself, not one or the other. But how do you live that out, here, now? So complex.

I cycled from my apartment through the cool greyness of the first day of October 2020 to the local government office and waited, alone amidst a bleak line of people, quietly sure of what I was doing. I pushed my driver’s licence across the counter, asking to have it cancelled and replaced by a photo card. On the other side of the glass, a weary woman glanced at me for less than a second: “Uh... you realize this means you won’t be allowed to drive anymore, right?”

A few minutes of forms certified me to be of uncertain viability in modernity, and I was back outdoors, soaring on my bike with a great sense of relief. One complicity lighter in the world. A bit freer from the violence of fossil fuels.

If not the gas car, then what? Electric vehicles bring their own broken ecology and human injustice. I generally don’t accept rides in others’ vehicles or use public transit either (on the occasions it’s even available). Efficiency is better, but it’s the same tech, not system change. A bicycle runs on an energy source I feel good about, but the machine itself still troubles me. I can’t whittle a bike chain with my pocketknife. It’s the compro-

mise I choose for now.

Is it possible to be socially healthy for a lifetime within this kind of self-limitation? Am I useful enough in my community? What will I do if I ever have little kids, or when I’m 80? In just a few generations, luxuries (and entrepreneurial gimmicks) have become necessities. People have travelled by foot, animal, paddle, and sail for most of human history. What’s so different now is our context.

We have come to live much farther from the people and places that matter to us, have inflated expectations about the scale and specialization of our work, expect a lot of high-consumption discretionary time, and have lost a lot of practical cultural diversity (the stuff that comes when most people are peasants adapted to their landscape). There’s no perfect point in the past, yet it seems to me we’ve moved in a mostly unhelpful direction. The systems for living our lives (far beyond just transport) have gradually become monstrously violent in how we relate to other humans and the rest of creation. I don’t see the transition from feet to cars as a loving one.

We’re not individually responsible for these changes. As a culture, we’ve gone so far down the path of vast, violent, extractive, capitalist ways of living that trying to opt out is an unfairly big burden for any one little person to take

on. When I talk to people troubled by the times, I hear the refrain that we are helplessly entangled in systems that we know are problematic. It seems to me the big corporations that drive those systems aren’t about to change, no matter how much we call them on the sins they set us up to participate in.

This summer I spent time with a man who is moving away from money, or at least from transaction, trying to live in and build up a network of practical request, gift, and reception among humans and with other creatures. He’s trying to be a loving neighbour. But it’s very messy; he likes to say, “There’s no escape hatch for modernity. What harmful power is within our capacity to relinquish?”

At my first St. Francis Day here at Agape, I mostly heard a call to resistance to an evil that is outside us. What most encouraged me, though, were the hints of a spirit of non-cooperation – living differently, trying to stop complying with harm. A wise elder, reflecting on her activist work, told me that her son criticizes her for only working on destroying existing oppressions, not constructing a better way forward.

I agree resistance is needed, yet I am troubled by just how little of this creative non-cooperation seems to be happening. Where are the individuals or communities who are trying to grow all their food, or make all their clothes, or build and run

their homes, or move around in ways that aren’t unjust or destroying creation?

It’s a simple principle: Take the log out of your own eye, or you can’t help anyone else see clearly. So complex to live out.

I believe radical attempts to opt out of problematic systems by building alternatives come with personal costs. The most morally sobering cost is that it limits you from doing a lot of other worthwhile things, from being a loving neighbour in other ways. Around the fire at St. Francis Day, a wise peer reflected that the choice of whether to have a smartphone depends on what you want to do with your life.

A little like risking arrest for civil disobedience, it’s probably best as a personal choice or discernment. In my experience, when people are pushed or pulled along by others, it brings a lot of pain and fear. I’m in a phase of trying to be careful. But another refrain I hear is that we need to stop being so individualistic. It’s too much to bear alone.

Are there ways we can help each other to creatively non-cooperate? Is there a communal path that holds together the elements of challenging each other to go further while holding grace for variations in how people choose to live?

*Andre Wiederkehr is a member of the Mennonite Church, Canada, who interned at Agape.*

# I Let Love Lead the Way: A Letter from Prison

by Christopher Tetrault

Being sentenced to 15 to 18 years in prison is not an easy pill to swallow, but I must swallow it. On the brighter side, it is time spent praying, fasting, meditating, and studying the Bible. Souls need saving, so why not do exactly that, lessening violent tensions between rival gangs and corrections officers. I stand true to my faith that I have often compared to “a Zen onion.” So many layers.

You had mentioned in your letter, Brayton, that there is difficulty in giving one’s life over to a common good community because it’s not very American and the young people are so confused and depressed by the world. We adults have given them the impression that joining an intentional community is just too much of a leap. They are preoccupied with survival.

I might change that around and say that “the American way,” one that people are conditioned to believe is the best way to live, is based on capitalism, a rat race that has people running around until retirement. Retiring, they then enjoy themselves and the fruits of their labor. It is all a lie. Life is not about “the American way” but about love and establishing a connection with God and each other.

We get confused and depressed

because we get too busy and we are not meant to be busy all the time, but to be busy only sometime, and to enjoy ourselves all the time. This seems like too much of a leap because people are accustomed to “the American way,” the capitalistic rat race, running around to pay rent, bills, to buy food, more clothes, a better car, buy more shoes--buy more, buy more, buy more, pay more, pay more, more. We need to take a step away from this rat race, and ground ourselves in prayer and meditation (why the Agape Hermitage is so important). To speak out against “the American way” is counterculture, counter government, pro-love, pro-unity.

I am a self-professed Christian-Hindu. To most, I am a Christian. I keep it simple to reach the masses. To explain the difference between polytheism and polymorphic monotheism loses a lot of people. Simply put, one God, many faces.

I was a teenager, meditating by a waterfall when I had a vision of Jesus. Two weeks later, I had a vision of Buddha. At the time, I had never known who Buddha was, but my psyche (I use the word “psyche” in the Greek sense of the word) knew it was Buddha and that there is more to God than just Jesus Christ. God is love, and love can take many forms.

Being locked up for almost 5 years, I have helped Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, Wiccans. Given a sentence, I gained deeper understanding of God. That last sentence was a weird series of conversations ending with “meet God where God is.” We who are locked up crave some sort of divine communication, protection, direction. Many of us convicts want to know who God is. I don’t mean the sort of God people want as they use their faith/scripture to justify their sins and to judge and condemn others. My role as a pastor/teacher (I have gone by many titles these past five years) is to teach unity and community, peace, and love, not condemnation.

Something people have ostracized me for is “studying multiple religions” and “being a fake Christian,” for caring a Bible and a Bhagavad Gita. It is not always easy meeting somebody where they are at, especially when they’re angry and confused. But when I let love lead the way, by compassion, by mercy, by forgiveness, by grace, often the angry, confused one comes to the winning side.

Winning hearts and saving souls have their rewards which come with serious baggage: false accusations, threats of violence. Then, all I can

do is pray because I am not sure I will make it out alive. I never retaliate. I always stand in truth. Eventually, the bullies respect me for my ways of pacifism. I have often thought of “What would Gandhi do?” as I look at his picture on my cell wall.

Underlying all this is hope which can be defined as “a confident expectation of good, rooted in the trust that the future can bring renewal, healing or transformation.” Hope is a source of resilience that helps people to rise after disappointment or failure. Hope is fuel for action, motivating people to work towards change. It is a protest over despair by my refusing to let cynicism define the horizon. Hope can be both personal and communal, nurtured inside individuals and multiplied in groups, deeply relational within strengthened communities. Hope is not a denial of reality, while pretending that pain and grief do not exist, “naïve optimism” as I call that. I have hope for a better future.

Whether your faith be rooted in Krishna, Rama, Christ, God, Allah, prophet Muhammad, Siddhartha Gautama, Amida Buddha, Lao Tau, or 5 elements, be sure that you have a firm foundation and love and you will do great.

*Christopher Tetrault, an inmate in MA State prison.*

## Linda Jenkins writes:

Since returning from 3 months in Palestine last year, I’ve been giving talks that have become a kind of ministry, now under the care of North Sandwich (NH) Friends Meeting where I have been a member since 1983.

The presentations, “Pilgrimage to Palestine, Pilgrimage to Home: A Report Back” “includes what I learned from my Indigenous hosts on Line 3 in 2021 and how Palestine struggles resemble theirs. Please email Linda Jenkins: light reveals2prevail@proton.me

## Fr. Emmanuel Charles McCarthy on Veterans Day, Nov. 11

Veterans Day, a Congressional Act, states that November 11 is “a day to be dedicated to the cause of world peace and to be thereafter celebrated and known as Armistice Day and a legal holiday. So, what is a veteran that he or she should be

honored with a national holiday? A veteran is a human being, male or female, living or dead, who learned how to kill human beings and some voluntarily or involuntarily kill other human beings.

Jesu taught and lived “Love your

enemies,” at the cost of his own life Jesus, by his words and deeds in the gospels authorized no one for any reason to substitute homicide for love. Learning to kill other people is the antithesis of the way of peace that Jesus proclaimed in the gospels.

## NEW BOOK BY JIM ROBINSON: PRE-ORDER

Agape Mission Council and Board member, Jim Robinson’s book, *Beyond Factory Farming: A Contemplative - Prophetic Approach to Food*, is now available for preorder through all major booksellers. The book is being published by Orbis.

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### CHRISTIANITY | from page 1

ganically changes us as we go to school and learn to compete to win, experience the prejudices of our socio-economic class and race, noticing who has what material advantages. We prize and envy the famous movie stars, sports heroes. Then, we may even begin to envision our own ego-centered dreams of becoming “successful.”

This whole childhood formed self-understanding could take us to living a life as if God were dead or irrelevant in the face of our world-conditioned desires. Maybe I believe faith in God is something inherited from my parents’ lineage, but even they didn’t seem to rely much on God.

The society around us and within us is what we know: vanity, wealth, power-politics and fear of not having enough.

Our faith formation since childhood, if we had a significant amount, still may survive. But it would have to be strongly and convincingly modeled, for it to stand up to the popular culture’s blaring allurements through media, phones, music and movies. These societal values become our “God” in America. Gradually, we organize ourselves away from the One God, in Jesus, and turn from ultimate things. We settle for being someone who competes to survive, convinced we need advantages and privileges over others before they have a chance to dominate us. Our politics follows this dreaded fear of being dominated, taken over, by foreign governments and their armies.

If we are aware enough to see we are suffering and yearning for a new consciousness to show us the transforming truth about ourselves, this awakening will yield “a complete change of our minds.”

Having found our way back to Jesus, in exchange, we will find ourselves at odds with a society grounded in want, the false security of wealth and a national defense budget that upholds them.

This life of getting and spending does not deliver ultimate meaning but only addicts us to more anxious suffering. Pain can be a grace, a signal to turn back from our false selves, our acquisitiveness and fear-driven ego self, to our true self in Agape love. When we awaken, we begin to know who we are in truth—children of a loving God, loved into existence, born with the capacity to discern God in Jesus and come to know God’s plan for us in this life.

Our dissatisfaction becomes a sign of God’s voice beckoning: “Do not love the world or the things of this world. The desires of the world are not of God.” (1 John 2: 15-16). I ponder this state of mind and

consider the millions of end-of-life stage Christians still seeing their eternal destiny in pension plans and saving accounts, various forms of financial preparedness, instead of “letting go.”

This revelatory moment is profound, and letting go allows worldly desires to grow dim, and God’s love to dominate. We may fight this need for ongoing conversion, saying that “this is not possible, not realistic, I am too old for this.” But it is God alone Who is “Reality.”

Do we hear Divine Voice? “Do not love ‘the world; love Me; I am the God of love’”? The sweetness of God’s beckoning for us to return is found in the song, “Hosea” inspired by the words of the prophet and sung by the Benedictine Brothers of Weston Priory. “Come Back to me with all your heart; don’t let fear keep us apart. Long have I waited for your coming back to me and living deeply, our new life.”



Sabah Kader, right visiting Sister El Maclellan 30 year member of Agape’s Mission Council who assisted Sabah and his children.



80th anniversary bombing of Hiroshima sponsored by Campaign Nonviolence Springfield attended by Agape, PaxChristi MA, Peace Pagoda and Just Faith.

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## News Notes

*Draft Cards are for Burning*, is a documentary that chronicles the life of internationally known artist and peace activist, long-time friend of Agape, **Tom Lewis**. Filmmakers Collaborative is responsible for supervising the fiscal management of the project. Please send donations to: [www.filmmakerscollab.org](http://www.filmmakerscollab.org). or contact Paul Gingras of Worcester, [gingras.paul@gmail.com](mailto:gingras.paul@gmail.com), lead collaborator for the film.

**Longtime allies of Agape, Samantha Ashmankas, nee Leuschner and Brian Ashmankas** recently welcomed their daughter into the world. **Miriam Dorothy Ashmankas** was born on October 28th, 2025, at 11:02pm. She is named for the ancient prophetess Miriam and the modern-day prophetess Dorothy Day!

**Jeanne Allen, Pax Christi, Boston, is going on a Pilgrimage to El Salvador for 45th Anniversary commemoration of 4 churchwomen’s martyrdom**, 11/28-12/6, also to meet with women deported back from the US, and human rights and environmental defenders. 12/2 memorial service) <https://forms.gle/HphV6kahuhR-wR9cC7>.

**Mike Moran**, editor of the Pax Christi, MA newsletter, long-time supporter and friend of Agape, received a Special Recognition banner, honoring his tireless and faithful service to the peace community.

**Veterans for Peace activist Jack Gilroy** is looking for venues in MA for the play: *Reap What You Sow-Don’t Lose Heart!* which offers a Catholic theme on the meaning of Just War as a debate among family members one of whom is a veteran, Contact: 607-239-9605.

## In Memoriam

**Bob Tyer, age 84:** Bob never missed a Just Faith Border Crossing when the Catholic peace community of Springfield, MA came to Agape. His delightful smile, affable manner, and service to soup kitchens and outreach centers resulted in a posthumous Pax Christi, MA, peace-makers award in October.

**Mary Robinson**, beloved mother of Jim Robinson, Agape community member, was born to eternal life on Oct. 28, 2025. Suzanne and Brayton joined Jim’s family and friends from Catholic Worker, New York, and other peace communities on behalf of all at Agape.

**Bill Slavick, 97**, friend and Agape supporter with his wife, Ursula, for over 40 years, was a co-founder of Pax Christi Maine, whose erudition, service and prophetic voice captured decades of the peace movement in numerous publications.



## CALENDAR

**December 6, 5:30 pm:** Advent Vigil, Agape’s oldest tradition; bonfire, reading from the prophets, chanting Advent songs, lighting Advent wreath. Vegan potluck to follow.

**December 13**, annual Agape caroling with Catholic Worker friends at The Mustard Seed, Lutheran Nursing Home, Orthodox Nursing. Call Agape to join.

**February 8, 2026:** Celebrate the Feast of St. Brigid. Join this midwinter Celtic feast with poetry, prayer and song. Vegan pot-luck to follow.



Donovan and Chris Agape regulars from Ware stacking wood.



Easton and friend frolicking at Francis Day.