



# THE SOWER

True justice is the harvest reaped by peacemakers  
from seeds sown in the spirit of peace. James, 3:18

**Strangers and Guests Catholic Worker Farm, Maloy, Iowa- Number 54 Fall-Winter 2025**

*"O hushed October morning mild,  
Thy leaves have ripened to the fall;  
Tomorrow's wind, if it be wild,  
Should waste them all."* Robert Frost

## Betsy's report from the Farm

This morning, October 23, the sun rose on our first glimmer of frost in the grass, although most of the things in the garden that were looking good yesterday are still doing fine-peppers, parsley, Brussels sprouts, basil and marigolds all look good for late October.

But I need to begin back in July, when our visitors were meeting real Iowa heat! Tom Hauser returned for another visit from New York City, keeping Brian company as I traveled East to Buffalo, New York, to visit my sister, Kathy and our son, Elijah and other friends for a week.

After I got home in August, it was Brian's turn to visit upstate New York as well. After attending the Kateri Peace Conference held each year at the birthplace/shrine of St. Kateri Tekakwitha, Brian spent a few days with Kathy and Elijah before coming home.



**Dottie getting acquainted with Nell, Hilary and Thea**

I reported "no drama" from the chickens in the last issue of *The Sower*, and so, of course, there is now drama to report. Our nine chickens are now down to seven, but the threat this time came from above! A hawk that was probably interested in reducing the sparrows clustering around the house and chicken area began attacking the chickens, but was unable to carry them off after killing them.



**Onions and garlic curing in the rafters**

The alarmed noises of the surviving chickens brought me out to chase the hawk away and it took hours after an attack before all of the chickens would be seen again. Eventually s/he gave up hunting chickens and the shadow sweeping around the yard departed for new hunting grounds.

Most of the garden produced well-for a few crops the dry spells or wet ones came at inopportune times and there were some struggles, but we have enjoyed many of the usual fresh garden treats and canned, pickled, dried and frozen lots of garden bounty for the winter. September was still bringing guests-including Tiffany Martinez from Georgia, whom we knew when she was a high school student, was back visiting family and some of her schoolmates. We had a great time reconnecting with her.

Brian traveled to Northeastern Iowa for the annual Midwest Catholic Worker gathering at Sugar Creek the second weekend in September. Sugar Creek is always a good chance to catch up with our friends and meet new Catholic Workers and hear about new projects and how things are going at the longer standing communities.

At Sugar Creek, Brian met a new friend, Dottie Fromal, who had just returned to the US after a year at the London Catholic Worker and visiting CW houses in the Netherlands. Dottie was quick to pick up the skills of milking the goats and weaving. As of this writing, Dottie is still helping us on the farm and we will miss her when she moves on in a few days.

Sarah Scull, our friend from nearby Creston, was kind enough to bring her parents who were visiting her from San Diego to meet us.

**(Betsy's Report, continued on page 7)**

**'The land belongs to Me and to Me you are only strangers and guests.' Leviticus 25:23**

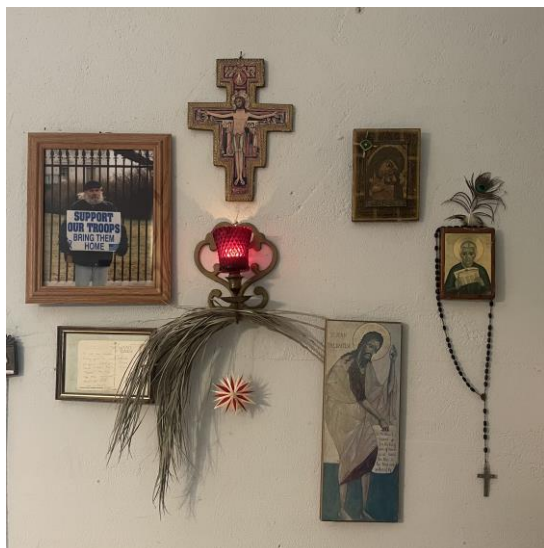
# PRAYING WITH THE CATHOLIC WORKER

by Dottie Fromal

Most of my life I've been afraid of God. When I was a kid, we used to stop at a gas station that was next to a church. I vividly recall looking up out the window from the back seat wondering what that white building was and why it had that tall pointy part in the front. What could it possibly be?

My dad told me that it was where God lives. I took him at his word, and for the next couple of years, I truly thought that God lived inside that church steeple. I always waved to God as we drove by or stopped for gas next door. I imagined when he looked out the windows from the very top of the steeple that he could see the whole world.

I spent hours wondering how God could possibly fit his bed inside that skinny steeple. One day I was sent home sick from school. My dad was annoyed and short-tempered when his day was disrupted to come and pick me up early from school. We stopped at the gas station on the way home and while we were there, I remember looking up out of the window and seeing the church and asking my dad if we could go inside to visit God. He shouted back, "No! We can't go in there. We are not welcome there. God doesn't love people like us." He didn't spell it out for me, but even as a little kid, I knew that "us" meant poor people - white trash in the eyes of many. I never asked him again.



I felt so sad. Over the years, even after I figured out that God didn't actually live in the church steeple, that sadness turned into fear. I was afraid of God. Afraid I wasn't good enough. Afraid I wasn't wanted. Afraid I wasn't loved.

Moving ahead fifty years - I've been living the life of a Catholic Worker, spending time with various communities around the world. Maybe I'm still a bit afraid of God, but I've been learning to trust and learning to pray.

Here at Strangers & Guests, Betsy and Brian start every morning with prayer. It's a beautiful ritual. I've grown to love it this past month and expect I'll continue the practice wherever my Catholic Worker adventures lead me next. They start by reading about the saints of the day in the periodical, *Give Us This Day*. They read the morning prayers from *Work of God*, a Benedictine daily prayer book. There is always a discussion about the saints or the gospel reading or the psalms. Most days those discussions turn into a fascinating story about some part of Catholic Worker history that they have lived first hand.

Brian and Betsy have dedicated their entire lives to the Catholic Worker. This October 30th marks 50 years since Brian walked into the NYC Catholic Worker. Betsy lived at the Catholic Worker Farm in Tivoli, NY. They both knew Dorothy Day and have a lifetime of stories of Catholic Worker adventures.

The life they have built here in Maloy is so inspiring. In addition to raising two children, they have opened their home to many "strangers" and "guests" over the years - giving people a safe place to land for a few days, a few months, and sometimes a few years. The daily farm work tends to heal hearts, refresh weary souls and ignite creative sparks. The goats and the chickens and the cats are





**Prayer for Peace: Dottie, right, with Harry Wills and Martin Newell of the London Catholic Worker were detained by police for their prayers outside the military base in Dülmen, Germany, in June**

very much a part of the family and tending the massive garden is hard and satisfying work.

Living simply and close to the land is beautiful. In my month long visit I've watched and witnessed. I've read. I've looked through old newsletters and scrapbooks. I've taken a thousand photographs and asked hundreds of questions. Betsy and Brian both have super sharp memories and can often reference a book or find a photograph or newspaper clipping to illustrate and example anytime I ask a question.

I feel like I've fallen into a treasure chest of memories- one that they have generously shared with me.

**Throughout it all - the daily prayers, the weaving, the cheese-making, the goat milkings, the chicken feedings, the horseradish digging, the garden tending, the cooking, the washing of the dishes and sweeping of the floors, and most importantly, the company kept and stories shared - my heart has healed in significant ways. I have learned that prayer is powerful, and that God is love, and living your life in a way that matches your values is the best way to live.**

The Catholic Worker is different things to different people. For me, it's a way of living out the Works of Mercy of Mercy as an integral part of daily life. It's a way to build community, love our neighbors and speak out and resist injustice wherever we may find it.

I've been truly blessed to have been so generously welcomed here at Strangers and Guests Catholic Worker Farm.

## From "On Prayer," by Abraham Joshua Heschel

Prayer is either exceedingly urgent, exceedingly relevant, or inane and useless. Our first task is to learn to comprehend why prayer is an ontological necessity. God is hiding, and man is defying. Every moment God is creating and self-concealing. Prayer is disclosing or at least preventing irreversible concealing. God is ensconced in mystery, hidden in the depths. Prayer is pleading with God to come out of the depths. "Out of the depths have I called Thee, O Lord" (Psalms 130:1).

Ω

Prayer must not be dissonant with the rest of living. The mercifulness, gentleness, which pervades us in moments of prayer is but a ruse or a bluff, if it is inconsistent with the way we live at other moments. The divorce of liturgy and living, of prayer and practice, is more than a scandal; it is a disaster.

Ω

It is with shame and anguish that I recall that it was possible for a Roman Catholic church adjoining the extermination camp in Auschwitz to offer communion to the officers of the camp, to people who day after day drove thousands of people to be killed in the gas-chambers.

Ω

Prayer is meaningless unless it is subversive, unless it seeks to overthrow and to ruin the pyramids of callousness, hatred, opportunism, falsehoods. The liturgical movement must become a revolutionary movement, seeking to overthrow the forces that continue to destroy the promise, the hope, the vision.



**Rabbi Heschel with Martin Luther King, Jr., 1965**

# **“In the Face of this Shameful and Culpable Silence...”**

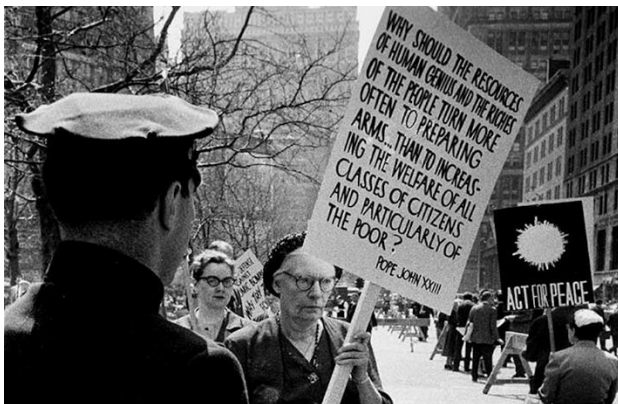
*Pope Francis, Dorothy Day and the duty to resist war*

**Brian Terrell**

The words of Pope Francis when he addressed the Joint Session of Congress at the U.S. Capitol ten years ago in September, 2015, are often cited by Catholic Workers and fans of Dorothy Day:

**“In these times when social concerns are so important, I cannot fail to mention the Servant of God Dorothy Day, who founded the Catholic Worker movement. Her social activism, her passion for justice and for the cause of the oppressed, were inspired by the Gospel, her faith, and the example of the saints.”**

I was in the crowd on the lawn of the Capitol on that day, hearing and watching the pope’s speech broadcast for us on large screens in real time, holding a small Vatican flag that a stranger handed to me. As one who lived and worked with Dorothy Day in the 1970s, it was nice to hear her name invoked along with Abraham Lincoln’s, Martin Luther King’s and Thomas Merton’s.



**Dorothy Day**

I could not help but feel, though, that Dorothy and her legacy were more truly honored by Pope Francis moments later with strong words that have been almost totally overlooked by the media and paid only little more attention by contemporary members of the movement that she and Peter Maurin founded:

**“Here we have to ask ourselves: Why are deadly weapons being sold to those who plan to inflict untold suffering on individuals and society?” Pope Francis answered his own question, “Sadly, the answer, as we all know, is**



**Pope Francis addressing Congress**

**simply for money: money that is drenched in blood, often innocent blood. In the face of this shameful and culpable silence, it is our duty to confront the problem and to stop the arms trade.”**

While the U.S. Congress was a most appropriate venue to confront the arms trade and money drenched in innocent blood, his admonition was not addressed exclusively to the members of congress and other high government officials present there. I suspect that what Pope Francis offered that day was not so much an accusation as the articulation of a universal duty binding on each of us in conscience.

Whether he knew it or not, by holding us all accountable, Pope Francis was echoing what Dorothy Day wrote in her April, 1954, column in *The Catholic Worker* newspaper, “Are the Leaders Insane?”:

**“When it is said that we disturb people too much by the words pacifism and anarchism, I can only think that people need to be disturbed, that their consciences need to be aroused, that they do indeed need to look into their work, and study new techniques of love and poverty and suffering for each other. Of course, the remedies are drastic, but then too the evil is a terrible one and we are all involved, we are all guilty, and most certainly we are all going to suffer. The fact that we have ‘the faith,’ that we go to the sacraments, is not enough. ‘Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me’ with napalm, nerve gas, our hydrogen bomb...I write thus frankly to let our readers know that we realize that we are**

**all involved, that we are not trying to place on the shoulders of others the heavy burdens of knowledge and responsibility and are not bearing them ourselves. This is the greatest of problems today. This problem of war and peace, and involves every man, woman and child in the country”**

**“It is time again to cry out against our ‘leaders,’”**

Dorothy insisted seventy-one years ago, **“to question whether or not, since it is not for us to say that they are evil men, they are sane men.”**

Since Dorothy wrote in 1954 and Pope Francis addressed Congress in 2015, the weapons manufacturers’ and politicians’ money is all the more drenched in innocent blood. The nuclear weapons program that Dorothy said constitutes “mass suicide” has brought us ever closer to the brink of global destruction. Shameful and culpable silence on these matters continues to dominate the discourse, not only in Congress but in the media and in the churches as well.

Some Catholic Workers and students of the movement today regard antiwar protest as optional, as less than essential and some even name it a distraction detrimental to our calling. Some of these critics of the contemporary movement propose that protest and nonviolent direct action had no place in the Catholic Worker’s original vision but is the unfortunate accretion of time. It is sometimes said that those communities today who have little or nothing to say on matters of war and systemic violence, focusing instead on meeting the needs of their impoverished neighbors, building a local economy and praying, have chosen the path more faithful to the spirit of the Catholic Worker and its founders and are quietly revitalizing the movement and returning it to its roots.

Agitation against war and for peace and justice, however, has its roots in the very origins of the movement.

In 1934, a year after the Catholic Worker was founded, Dorothy wrote a letter to a “Fellow Worker” urging them to listen to Catholic Worker co-founder Peter Maurin **“when he tells you to picket with him in front of the Mexican Consulate,”** protesting violent persecution of

Catholics in Mexico. **“Don’t think that it is just a notion of his. We are serious.”**

In 1935, Dorothy participated in a protest organized by the Communist Party in New York where the German ship, *The Bremen* was docked. Afterward, she wrote to the New York City Police Commissioner: **“I am writing to protest against unexampled brutality of a few of the police on that occasion.” “As Catholics we too feel called upon to protest against the Nazi persecution of Catholics and Jews by demonstration and distribution of literature,”** she wrote. **“We feel that we would be neglecting our duty as Catholics if we did not do this.”** Fourteen years later, in her July, 1949 column, Dorothy remembered that event: **“A few of the Communists group went on board the *Bremen* and tore down the swastika from the mast and one of the group was shot by a ship’s policeman. The men were arrested and taken to the 47th Street station and the crowd was after-**

**wards dispersed by policemen’s clubs and fists. Nina Polcyn, Frank O’Donnell and I were in the midst of that, and the violence was all on one side. The next day the men who were arrested announced themselves as Catholic Workers. I wish we had pulled down the swastika.”**

In her 1952 autobiography *The Long Loneliness*, Dorothy noted how

**“one Christmas at the close of World War II, we received a card from the Rochester group saying that they had liked *The Catholic Worker* much better before the pacifists got hold of it. Another letter came from Boston, from an elderly worker who had been responsible for the first house of hospitality in Boston. She reproached me for the extremism of our revolutionary pacifist position...It struck me then how strange a thing it was; here we have been writing about pacifism for fifteen years and members of two of our groups were just beginning to realize what it meant.”**

In her July, 1957, column she reported **“the usual complaint of some of the older readers who also drop in to call, that the (*Catholic Worker*) paper is not what it used to be. Too much stuff about war and preparation for war, and the duty of building up resistance.”**

By this time, the movement’s pacifism had endured significant trials. The top of the fold headline of the Janu-



ary, 1942, issue of *The Catholic Worker*, published after the attack on Pearl Harbor, boldly proclaimed **“Our Country Passes from Undeclared War to Declared War; We Continue Our Christian Pacifist Stand.”** While reiterating the Catholic Worker’s resistance to the war, Dorothy recognized that **“there will be many continuing to work with us from necessity, or from choice, who do not agree with us as to our position on war, conscientious objection, etc. But we beg that there will be mutual charity and forbearance among us all.”**

Some of the men prominent in the movement subsequently entered the military, just as others went into conscientious objector camps. This attrition, along with a significant loss of readership and of donations, caused most of the Catholic Worker houses in the country to close.

In her time Dorothy protested the manufacture of weapons for war, but today it might better be said that wars are manufactured in order to sell weapons. It is clearer now than ever that the poverty in our cities’ streets and the devastated countryside has its roots in the arms trade that Francis and Dorothy deplored. One of the driving forces destroying the environment, we are learning, is war and preparation for war. We know that even a most limited nuclear weapons exchange would murder millions and likely make huge parts of the planet uninhabitable.

If Dorothy’s question, **“Are the Leaders Insane?”** could be reasonably have been asked in the middle of the Eisenhower administration, can we avoid asking that same question in the age of Trump? If in 1954, it was **“time again to cry out against our ‘leaders,’”** can we responsibly stifle that cry within ourselves today? Ninety years ago, Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin publicly marched in the streets in protest of rising fascism in Europe— are we being more faithful to their vision by keeping quiet about fascism rising in our own streets today?

One of the other exemplary Americans whom Pope Francis cited before Congress ten years ago was Martin Luther King, Jr, who in his 1967 speech at New York’s Riverside Church, *Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence*, said **“Some of us who have already begun to break the silence of the night have found that the calling to speak is often a vocation of agony, but we must speak. We must speak with all the humility that is appropriate to our limited vision, but we must speak.”** “A time comes” he noted, “when silence is betrayal.”

In 1954, Dorothy Day wrote, **“It is not for anyone to judge his fellow man on how far he can go in resisting participation in preparation for war,”** and **“each one of us must make our decisions as to what he should do, each one must examine his conscience and beg God for strength.”** In 1967, Dr. King preached, **“Every man of humane convictions must decide on the protest that best suits his convictions, but we must all protest.”** In an article on the front page of the December, 1966, issue of *The Catholic Worker*, Thomas Merton, another American commended by Francis, quoted Albert Camus concerning the silence from the Catholic Church that he perceived about crimes committed during World War II: **“What the world expects of Christians is that Christians should speak out, loud and clear, and that they should voice their condemnation in such a way that never a doubt, never the slightest doubt, could rise in the heart of the simplest man. That they should get away from abstraction and confront the blood-stained face history has taken on today. The grouping we need is a grouping of men resolved to speak out clearly and pay up personally.”**

Pope Francis did not, nor did the notable Americans that he commended, not Dorothy Day, not Martin Luther King, not Thomas Merton (let’s leave Abraham Lincoln aside, for now) prescribe how any one person or community is to resist, what risks they are to undertake, what other good works need to be set aside for the sake of being heard. But all of them agreed that silence or ambiguity in time like ours, however prudent or necessary it may seem, is not an option.

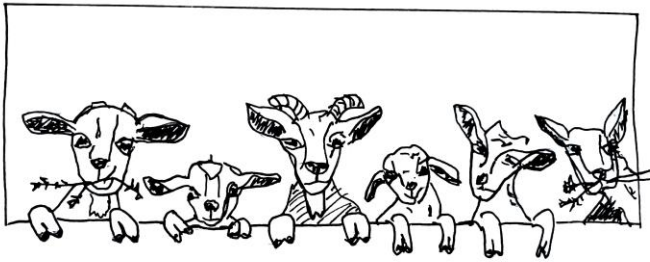
On several occasions in the last years of his life, Pope Francis suggested that World War III had already begun, **“spread out in small pockets everywhere... fought piecemeal, with crimes, massacres and destruction.”** This time of genocide and calculated famine abroad, of mass deportations and concentration camps at home, when schools and hospitals are bombed abroad and plundered for the sake of billionaires and banks here, a time of undisguised racism, calls each of us to respond. Those who bear “heavy burdens of knowledge and responsibility” in Dorothy Day’s words, and have the privilege of association with a movement with so rich a heritage of resistance as the Catholic Worker, have a clear and unequivocal duty to speak out and resist.



## Betsy's Farm Report

continued from page 1

We had a lovely time getting acquainted after "hearing so much about you". Even in September, it was a bit warm for these coastal Californians-they are used to a better regulated climate!



LILY JOAN OFARK ALICE HAZEL THOMAS DAISY  
STRANGERS AND GUESTS CATHOLIC WORKER  
MALOY, IOWA • 2025

### Our herd of goats as seen by Dottie!

In September, Colyn and Hilary Burbank visited from Des Moines with their daughters Nell and Thea and friends, Emily and Jordan. They had nice weather to camp out. We shared some great meals and they got reacquainted with the goats and cats. The project waiting for extra hands was to cut up the dead walnut tree that had been blown over by a windstorm earlier in the year. It provided plenty of fuel for a fire that night and many more campfires to come.

In October, Brian was off to San Antonio, Texas, and from there to Nevada (see his post script) two weeks, while Dottie and I held down the farm and prepared for the annual craft carnival in the nearby town of Clarinda.

October brought us a long overdue visit from Rachael Coffman from Kansas City, one of my most accomplished weaving students who brought me a gift of a hand-woven wool tunic.



## Brian's Post Script



**Catholic Workers vigil for peace at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio**

October 2-5, the San Antonio, Texas, Catholic Worker community celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary by hosting a national gathering! It was a fine reunion of old friends and a chance to forge new friendships to weather the challenges of these strange times we live in.

From Texas, I went further west to join the Nevada Desert Experience's annual Fall event, Justice for our Desert. Our small NDE contingent of activists attended at powwow at the Snow Mountain Paiute reservation, joined friends for a traditional sweat lodge and observed Indigenous Peoples Day by confronting the Nevada Test Site on stolen Western Shoshone land.



# THE SOWER

Strangers and Guests

Catholic Worker Farm

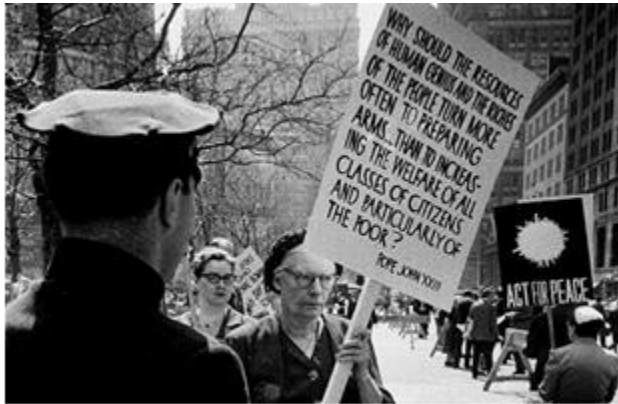
108 Hillcrest Drive

Maloy, Iowa 50836

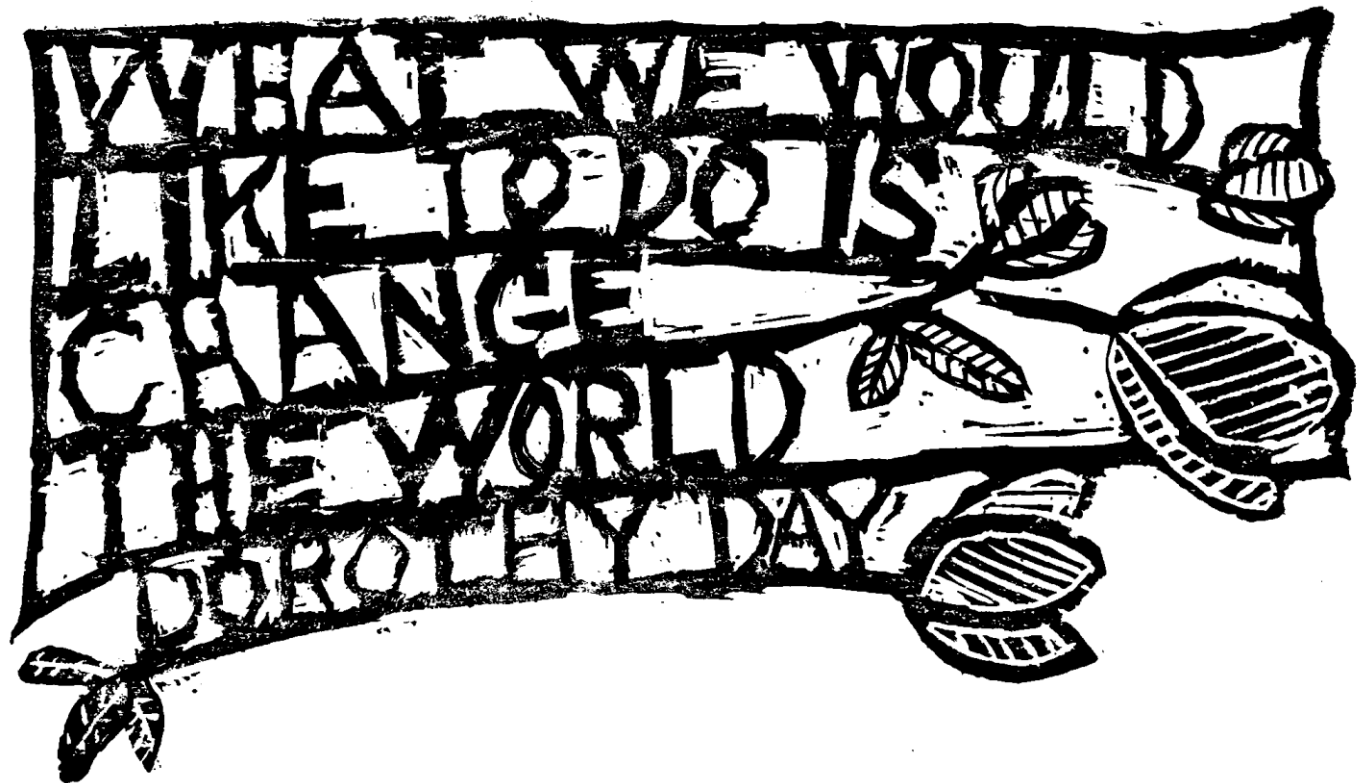
641-785-2321, Brian's cell: 773-853-1886

Brian: brian1956terrell@gmail.com

Betsy: keenanweaving@yahoo.com



"It is time again to cry out against our 'leaders,' to question whether or not, since it is not for us to say that they are evil men, they are sane men." Dorothy Day, April 1954



Dottie Fromal