

● TIME AND FREEDOM

VOLUME 83

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Since 1917, *The Witness* has been examining church and society in light of faith and conscience — advocating for those denied systemic power as well as celebrating those who, in the theologian William Stringfellow’s words, have found ways to “live humanly in the midst of death.” With deep roots in the Episcopal Church, we are a journal of spiritual questing and theology in practice, always ready to hold our own cherished beliefs and convictions up to scrutiny.

Manuscripts: We welcome multiple submissions. Given our small staff, writers and artists receive a response only when we are able to publish. Manuscripts will not be returned.

on the cover

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LETTERS

World Sabbath

On January 22, 2000 we will be celebrating a World Sabbath of Religious Reconciliation — an interfaith holy day — at Christ Church Cranbrook in Bloomfield Hills, Mich. The event has two goals: to create the first holy day to be shared by all religions of the world, and to teach religious leaders how to publicly oppose hate campaigns and religious wars. I think this event is one of the true hopes for the church and all religious institutions as we enter the new century. There will be thousands of peace events around the world over the New Years week-end, but this event is meant to be a continuing and eternal day of prayer and recommitment for peace, justice and an end to religious war. After the year 2000, the World Sabbath is to be held on the fourth Saturday of January. Out of all the millennial hoop-la, this will still be around once the dust settles in a decade or so.

Besides, this is the first holy day specifically designed to be celebrated equally by all religions. In a world filled with religious persecution and war, a day of interfaith repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation is just what God, however we may experience God, calls us to celebrate.

Rod Reinhart
Farmington Hills, Michigan

[Ed.note: Reinhart's World Sabbath project has been endorsed by the Episcopal Diocese of Michigan, a synagogue (Temple Israel of Ann Arbor), the Detroit Muslim Center, the United Religions Initiative, the Parliament of the World's Religions and the National Council for Community and Justice (formerly known as the National Conference of Christians and Jews). Reinhart hopes other religious groups and congregations will take up his idea and hold services or events on 22 January. He has received phone calls from Africa, Australia and Israel about the event, and pastors from four churches — in New York, Texas and California — are planning their own events for the first World Sabbath.]

Science and faith

The Working Group on Science, Technology and Faith was established at the 1997 General Convention to be an educational resource of and for the Episcopal Church. Our mission is to be an educational resource of and for our Church at all levels. We need more members, more ethnic diversity and more dioceses represented.

Become a member — if you are interested in the interactions between science and religion, technology and ethics, etc., whether or not you have training in a scientific or technical field or in theology; if you are willing to lend your expertise and experience for specific projects, as requested; if you are looking for better integration between your vocations as a Christian and as a scientist/engineer; if you want some help in organizing a parish or diocesan dialogue on science and religion.

For more information, write Claire Lofgren, n/SSM, Working Group Membership Director, Society of St. Margaret, 17 Highland Park St., Roxbury, MA 02119.

Barbara Smith-Moran, Co-chair
Working Group on Science,
Technology and the Church

Spiritual growth program

On July 5, 2000, the Community of the Holy Spirit (CHS) will initiate a year-long residential spiritual growth program entitled "Deepening the Center" at its convent in Brewster, N.Y.

Under the direction of a sister, participants will form a community which will live and work alongside the monastic community, and will experience retreats, instruction in bible study, and other aspects of spirituality, spiritual direction, study and rest. Participation in community life and involvement in some aspect of the work of the monastic community are also important elements to the program. There is no charge for the program. Room and board, health insurance and a small living allowance will be provided. Enrollment is limited and highly selective. Women between 20-40

years of age, who are committed to their spiritual growth and are in good health, may apply. Those interested should write by April 25, 2000, to the Community of the Holy Spirit, Attn: The Rev. Mother Madeleine Mary, CHS, 621 West 113th St., New York, NY 10025-7916.

*Pamela Mosley
New York, NY*

Human rights action

SIPAZ (a coalition of organizations supporting the peace process in Chiapas, Mexico, which combines violence reduction and peacebuilding strategies in Chiapas with efforts to inform and mobilize the international community) requests that you take action in protest of the threats and attacks that have been suffered in recent months by the members of Mexico City's Miguel Agustin Pro Juarez Human Rights Center (PRODH Center). Particularly, action should be taken in protest of the kidnapping and violence suffered on two occasions by attorney Digna Ochoa, legal coordinator of PRODH, whose life has been put in grave danger. In addition to letters to Mexican government authorities, we believe it is necessary to undertake other kinds of actions to pressure the Mexican government in a way that calls into question its international image and obliges it to take serious and effective measures to stop the escalation of violence against members of PRODH.

In recent years, the PRODH Center has suffered from repeated periods of threats, harassment, surveillance and other actions that have never been properly investigated by the authorities. Various members of the Center have been threatened with death at different times. In August of this year, attorney Digna Ochoa was kidnapped and held in a car, with her head covered, for several hours during which she was subjected to threats and interrogation. Recently, on the night of Oct. 28-29, she was the victim of an attempted homicide as well as verbal aggression, interrogation and intimidation by unknown individuals who entered her house.

She was subjected to a harsh and prolonged interrogation session about PRODH's work and the activities and personal information of each individual member of the center. The questions were punctuated by

verbal aggression and threats.

They repeated again and again their questions about supposed "contacts" of PRODH in Guerrero, Oaxaca, Chiapas, Veracruz, Puebla and Hidalgo. They also asked her about alleged contacts and safe-houses connected to the EZLN (Zapatista National Liberation Army) and to the APR (Popular Revolutionary Army, active in Guerrero and Oaxaca).

They pressured her to sign blank pieces of paper, which she refused to sign. They also took photographs of her and went through her things. This went on all night and into the morning (approximately nine hours). Digna remained seated on the edge of the bed and one of the men pushed her until she was lying down. They tied her feet and hands behind her back with bandages and an elastic waistband. They placed an open gas tank next to her. Minutes later she managed to untie herself. When she attempted to use the telephone she realized that her line had been cut.

That same morning, Oct. 29, 1999, the door to the main entrance of the PRODH office was found open, and the Legal Defense Department offices, located on the second floor of the building, had been broken into. The window was left open and the desks were in disarray, with papers thrown around. On one desk a folder was placed in an obvious position with the words "PODER SUICIDA" (SUICIDE POWER) printed on it in red. We feel that these developments are quite serious and that they place in danger the lives of Digna Ochoa and her colleagues at the PRODH Center. Hence they call for an energetic response. We know that the Mexican government is extremely sensitive to anything that affects its international image. So it is necessary to act, but it is also necessary to give the greatest possible visibility to those actions.

A. Send letters to the Mexican government, or better still, go directly to the Mexican embassy or consulate in person and present a written protest requesting:

- 1.** That there is an immediate cessation of physical and psychological aggression against the members of PRODH.
- 2.** That the Mexican government should honor its obligation to respect, protect and defend the professional work of lawyers.
- 3.** That the appropriate authorities take the necessary steps to guarantee the per-

sonal security and work of the members of PRODH, as well as all defenders of human rights in Mexico (as established in the corresponding December 1998 United Nations Declaration and the June 1999 Organization of American States Resolution both signed by Mexico).

4. That the security of the equipment, buildings and documents of PRODH be guaranteed.

5. That the investigation initiated in response to these aggressions produce convincing results as quickly as possible.

6. That the government accept the presence of observers and international escorts as a measure of protection for threatened people (as has been the practice in other countries).

B. Send copies of all actions to the Mexican press as well as your local press.

C. Broadcast these facts in print, radio and television media, as well as in all other communications media available. You may write letters to the editor, and send a copy to the Mexican embassy or consulate in your city.

D. Solicit government representatives or individuals or organizations of influence and prestige to undertake personal contacts with the Mexican government or its diplomatic representatives, expressing their concern about these alarming developments.

ADDRESSES:

Lic. Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de Leon, Presidencia de la Republica, Palacio Nacional, Mexico, D.F. 06067 MEXICO.

Lic. Diodoro Carrasco, Secretaria de Gobernacion, Bucareli 99, 1er piso, Col. Juarez, Mexico D.F. 06699 MEXICO.

Lic. Jorge. Madrazo Cuellar, Procuraduria General de la Republica, Paseo de la Reforma 65, esq. Violeta, Colonia Guerrero, Mexico D.F. 06300, MEXICO.

Dra. Mireille Roccatti, Comision Nacional de Derechos Humanos, Periferico sur 3469, 5 piso, Col. San Jeronimo Lidice, Mexico D.F. 100200 MEXICO.

Dr. Samuel del Villar, Procuraduria General de Justicia del Distrito Federal, Ninos Heroes 61, tercer piso, Col. Doctores CP. 06720, Mexico, D.F. MEXICO.

Please send a copy of your letter to Centro de Derechos Humanos Miguel Agustin Pro Juarez A.C., Fax (int-52) 5535 68 92. ●

Deadlines

by Julie A. Wortman

FOR PEOPLE IN MY LINE of business, working on deadline is a way of life. Plenty of people have time-specific goals to achieve, of course, but journalists and editors seem to exercise special ownership of the concept, expecting that when they talk about being “on deadline” people they encounter will somehow understand the particular urgency of the situation and will be willing to rearrange their calendars to fit in a last-minute interview, say, or postpone their own urgent dealings to give the publication’s timeliness a priority.

I try to act casual about it, of course, but it is absolutely true that for me editorial deadlines are deeply serious — sacred, almost. Sacrosanct. Inviolable. You don’t ever miss one. Ever. The stories must be completed, the art collected, the issue laid out and proofed and the print date honored, come hell or high water.

So I was dumbfounded this past year when a writer sent me a regretful e-mail only a couple of days before his story was due stating that, owing to a death in his family, he was bailing on the assignment. Perhaps dumbfounded is too flimsy a term. I was non-plussed. Then irate. Then frantic, as I wondered how, at this late moment, I was going to fill the hole this insult to the journalistic code left in the issue.

Needless to say — but at the time it seemed miraculously — we in very short order were able to find another way to approach the topic, perhaps a way that was even considerably fresher. My nervous system got more of a workout than I would have hoped for in pulling the new piece off, but I have to confess that the results were very satisfactory.

I say this now, in part, to force myself to admit publically that good things can come out of unmet deadlines, though I shudder as I form the words (I’m writing on deadline, of course, so I’m understandably on edge). But I also wish to offer my belated apology to the

errant writer at the center of my tale. He missed his deadline because life — in the form of death — had intervened.

Time is not, as we in the journalism trade so easily suppose, absolute. Or sacrosanct. But most of us in this culture mourn its passage, denounce its wasting, fear its finalities — and feel prevented from allowing life to intervene on its demanding schedule because we accept that “time is money.”

The commodification of time is a sad inheritance from the industrial revolution, I’d guess. But our modern, post-modern or extra-modern lives seem to take it for granted. My time is valuable, we all say, but we know bone-deep that our time is beyond price. Few deathbed reflections involve the wish that more time had been spent on the job.

Unless, of course, the work is vocation. And the time-consuming demands of it contain satisfaction when met. Satisfactions of the most basic kind — ones that nurture self-respect, the common good,

creativity. Work that is worthy requires time carefully spent and justly compensated — but, also, freedom from time spent working. This is a critical freedom, in fact, one necessary for recalling our relationship to the larger life and to give us a chance to reflect on where we and our communities are headed and whether the course we’ve set needs adjusting.

More and more, I’m glad to say, people at every point of the economic spectrum seem to be challenging the time-is-money mantra of this culture. The assault comes from an infinite variety of venues — from living-wage campaigns, simple-living experiments, the re-invigorating of hand craftsmanship and right-livelihood business enterprises.

And, painfully enough for people like me, it must also come from questioning the tyranny of deadlines. ●

Julie A. Wortman is publisher and co-editor of *The Witness*, <julie@thewitness.org>.



Imagined Dolphins by Jackie Beckett

No time, no space

by Peter Russell

THE TWO GREAT PARADIGM shifts in science this century have been Einstein's Theory of Relativity and Quantum Theory. The conclusion of Special Relativity Theory is that any observation, any measurement of space and time, is not absolute. We think that space and time are fixed — the distance from here to that wall is 40 feet, and that's fixed. What Einstein showed is that somebody zipping through this room at half the speed of light would measure that distance at 35 feet. And that isn't an illusion — distance really is different at different speeds. Time is also different at different speeds. If someone could travel at the speed of light, space would contract to zero and time would stop completely. This is interesting, because if light travels at the speed of light, then, as far as light is concerned, there is no time and there is no space. We think space and time are real, but as far as light is concerned, space and time don't exist. What Einstein showed is that light is the absolute, not space and time. The speed of light never varies. However far or

fast you go, light will always pass you at the speed of light.

Light is the absolute also in quantum physics. Quantum physics says that if you increase the energy of a system, it doesn't go up smoothly, but in jumps. A quantum is an amount, the jump. Each jump is exactly the same. Every single jump of energy is an exact number of quanta. Moreover, every photon of light is an identical quantum of action. Every interaction in the Universe above the atomic level is mediated by the exchange of quanta, by photons. So you can say the whole Universe is inter-connected by light.

Did I hear somewhere, "God is light; in the beginning there was light; let there be light?" I also find it interesting how we use the word "light" for the life within us. We talk about the light of consciousness, the inner light, seeing the light, being illumined. It isn't dark inside. Just as everything in the physical world really comes back to light, everything in our experience is, in a sense, a manifestation of the light of consciousness. So, "God is light" starts having truth not just

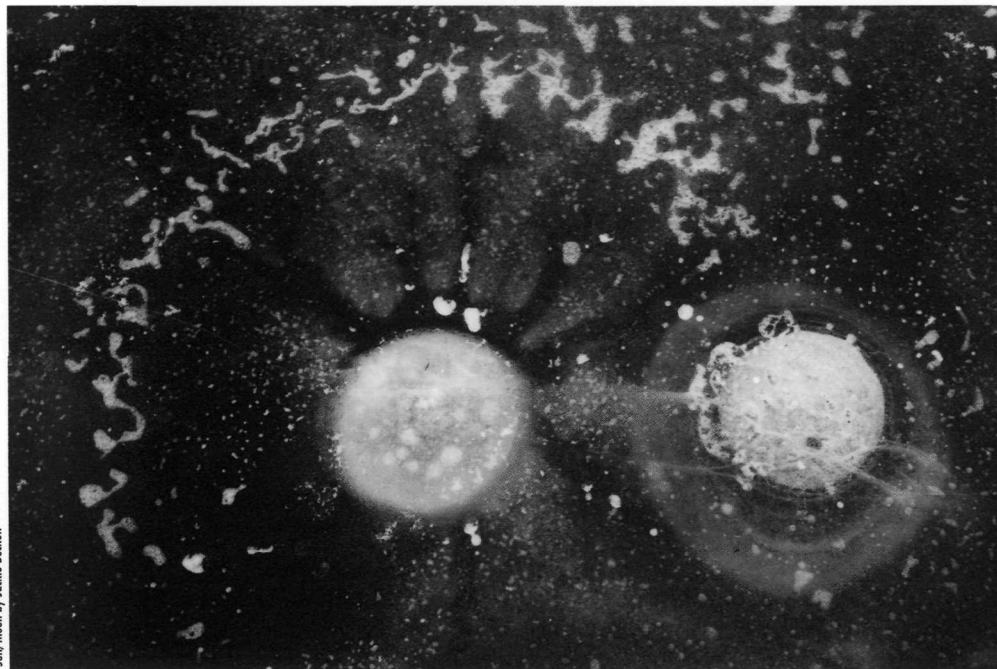
in terms of the physical world, but also in terms of our experience of reality. They become more and more fascinating, these parallels.

It is part of nearly all cultures that in the deepest states of consciousness, one realizes a sense of union. In Eastern philosophy, it's often said "Atman is Brahman." Brahman is the universal essence of everything. Atman is the essence of your own consciousness. So the essence of consciousness is the essence of all creation; is "God." Some yogis and very high saints talk about the whole universe being me, or the being within me. Perhaps they are people who, through deep meditation, through lots of inner work, exploration, clarifying their minds, have come to realize that it is all a creation of consciousness, that everything knowable is, in a sense, within them.

It's interesting that you can say the "F" word on television today, and you can use the "L" word, love, in business, but the word "God" is very taboo still. What science has done is to say we can take an idea and we can experiment with it and see what happens. The experiment which I would like to suggest — and it's one to play with — is to take the hypothesis that God is the essence of consciousness, and that consciousness is primary, and that the mystical statement "I am God" means that I am-ness is God-ness. Then say, "Supposing that is true, how do I live my life?"

I believe that when we really understand consciousness, and consciousness as the source of everything we know, we will begin to start forging that bridge across to God. ●

*Peter Russell is a scientist and futurist. His books include *The Global Brain and Waking Up In Time*. A longer version of this piece first appeared in *Timeline* (3/4-1999), a publication of the Foundation for Global Community in Palo Alto, Calif. Jackie Beckett is a senior photographer at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City.*



Sun/Moon by Jackie Beckett

Psalm 103

Bless Yahweh, O my soul.
 Bless God's holy name, all that is in me!
 Bless Yahweh, O my soul,
 and remember God's faithfulness:
 in forgiving all your offenses,
 in healing all your diseases,
 in redeeming your life from destruction,
 in crowning you with love and compassion,
 in filling your years with good things,
 in renewing your youth like an eagle's.
 Yahweh does justice
 and always takes the side of the oppressed.
 God's ways were revealed to Moses,
 and Yahweh's deeds to Israel.
 Yahweh is merciful and forgiving,
 slow to anger, rich in love;
 Yahweh's wrath does not last forever;
 as our guilt and our sins deserve.
 As the height of heaven over earth
 is the greatness of Yahweh's faithful love
 for those who fear God.
 Yahweh takes our sins away
 farther than the east is from the west.
 As tenderly as parents treat their children,
 so Yahweh has compassion on those who fear God.
 Yahweh knows what we are made of;
 Yahweh remembers that we are dust.
 The human lasts no longer than grass,
 lives no longer than a flower in the field.
 One gust of wind, and that one is gone,
 never to be seen there again.
 But Yahweh's faithful love for those who fear God
 lasts from all eternity and forever,
 so too God's justice to their children's children,
 as long as they keep the covenant
 and remember to obey its precepts.
 Yahweh has established a throne in the heavens
 and rules over all.
 Bless Yahweh, all angels,
 mighty in strength to enforce God's word,
 attentive to every command.
 Bless Yahweh, all nations,
 servants who do God's will.
 Bless Yahweh, all creatures
 in every part of the world.
 Bless Yahweh, O my soul.

— from *Psalms Anew: In Inclusive Language*, Nancy Schreck, OSF, and Maureen Leach, OSF, Saint Mary's Press, Christian Brothers Publications, Winona, Minn., 1986. *Psalms Anew* has been created for those who love to pray the Psalms alone or in communal prayer and are committed to the use of inclusive language. Fine arts photographer **Paul Caponigro**, whose work appears throughout this issue, is widely acclaimed as a contemporary master of the medium. He lives in Cushing, Me.

Paul Caponigro—Pan Ascending, Kerry, Ireland 1993

FREE TIME FOR

by Arthur Waskow



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“WHAT EVER HAPPENED
TO THE EIGHT-HOUR DAY?
WHEN DID THEY TAKE IT
AWAY? ... WHEN DID WE
GIVE IT AWAY?”

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, I went to a folk-song festival in Philadelphia. Many of the singers sang labor songs of the 1930s, civil rights songs of the 1960s, peace songs of many decades. The audience sang along, nostalgia strong in the air.

Then Charlie King began singing a song with the refrain, “What ever happened to the eight-hour day? When did they take it away? ... When did we give it away?”

And the audience roared with passion. Not nostalgia. This was our lives, not something from the past.

I was startled. Suddenly I saw that my own sense of overwork, of teetering on the edge of burnout, was not mine alone. Something was hovering in the air.

Juliet Schor of Harvard wrote a book about it: *The Overworked Americans*. She showed that the promise made to us 30 years ago — that the new computer technology would give us more leisure time — had been betrayed. Most Americans worked longer hours, under more tension, than they had one generation ago.

Other studies followed. Some of them pointed out the increase in temporary workers, part-time workers — suggesting that Schor was mistaken. But it has become clear that “underwork” and “overwork” are in fact closely related. Corporations that seek to keep workers “part-time” and “temporary” so as to pay them less and avoid providing medical or pension benefits drive

A F R E E P E O P L E

workers into finding extra jobs, just to keep hanging on by their fingertips to a barely adequate income. The underwork breeds overwork.

And conversely, the overwork of some — 12-hour days, 60-hour weeks — reduces the numbers and the quality of jobs that are available to others. Overwork breeds disemployment.

Indeed, the overwork, overstress reality runs across class lines. From wealthy neurosurgeons to single mothers making minimum wages at fast-food stop-ins, tens of millions of Americans are overworked.

So — who is to say it's "overwork" if people choose to do it? Anyone who really feels burnt out can just slow down, no? Any malaise that people feel is just a result of their own choices, no? And of their refusal to face the consequences of their own choices, no?

No.

Treating overwork as a private, personal life-choice and a sense of burnout as a result of internal confusion and incompetence is like — very like — saying that women who felt discomfited and disempowered, ill at ease, in the 1950s were simply choosing their lifestyle and their discomfort. Many of those women felt themselves to blame for their unease. For many, it took Betty Friedan to put a name to their lives, and to show that it was a systemic and political structure that was oppressing them. And that they could do something about it.

I think we are in much the same situation today. There is an economic and cultural system that is driving most Americans into overwork. There are deep human needs for rest and reflection, for family time and community time. That system is grinding those deep human needs under foot. And that system can be changed.

Who says there are such human needs?

For all the traditions that take the Hebrew Scriptures seriously, there is a teaching: For the sake of remembering and taking to heart the grandeur of Creation and for the sake of freeing both ourselves from others' pharaonic power and others from our own oppression, we make "not-making": we celebrate Shabbat. (The word is usually translated into English as "Sabbath," but that is really mere transliteration; the word comes from the Hebrew verb for pausing, ceasing, calmly sitting.)

In Exodus 20: 8-11, the reason given for the Sabbath is to recall Creation; in Deuteronomy 5:12-15, it is to free all of us from slavery. In Jewish tradition, it is taught that these seemingly two separate meanings are in fact one. Meditate on them, and we can see them that way.

And we are taught not only the seventh-day Shabbat: there are also the seventh year and the seven-times-seven-plus-one year, the 50th year, the Jubilee (another mere transliteration, from "yovel": translator Everett Fox renders it as "Home-bringing"). (Lev. 25 and 26: 34-35, 43-45; Deut. 15: 1-18)

These year-long observances that the Bible calls "shabbat shabbaton," "Sabbath to the Sabbatical power," "deeply restful rest," are times of enacting social justice, and times of freeing the earth from human exploitation, and times of release from attachments and habits, addictions and idolatries.

Indeed, in these most radical socially revolutionary passages of Torah, the text never uses the word "tzedek" — justice — but instead the words "shmitah" and "dror," which mean "release." What Buddhists today call "non-attachment." The deepest root of social justice, according to these biblical passages, is the profoundly restful experience of abandoning control over others and over the earth. And conversely, the

deepest meditation intended to free us from our egos cannot be experienced so long as we are egotistically bossing other human beings or the planet.

Not that the tradition of Shabbat taught this restfulness and utter non-attachment was the only path to walk. The tradition taught a rhythm, a spiral of Doing and Being in which the next stage of Doing was always to be higher, deeper, because a time of Being had preceded it. And in which we could bring a fuller, more whole self to the Being because we had Done more in the meantime. In which both Doing and Being were more holy because we had integrated them into a life-path.

Already in 1951, in the aftermath of those grotesque mockeries of triumphant Making — the Holocaust and Hiroshima — Abraham Joshua Heschel (who later marched alongside Martin Luther King against racism and the Vietnam War) wrote in *The Sabbath*: "To set apart one day a week for freedom, a day on which we would not use the instruments which have been so easily turned into weapons of destruction, a day for being with ourselves, a day of detachment from the vulgar, of independence of external obligations, a day on which we stop worshipping the idols of technical civilization, a day on which we use no money, ... on which [humanity] avows [its] independence of that which is the world's chief idol ... a day of armistice in the economic struggle with our fellow [humans] and the forces of nature — is there any institution that holds out a greater hope for [humanity's] progress than the Sabbath?"

Christianity, Islam, and Rabbinic Judaism all reinterpreted these biblical teachings in their own ways. But all of them, as well as Buddhism and perhaps all the world's other spiritual traditions, taught the necessity of periodically, rhyth-

mically, calming one's self for inward reflection, for time to Love and time to Be.

Who can — and will — do something about the denial of these needs, the subjugation of human beings and the earth to the pharaonic notion that Shabbat is a waste of time, that tireless work is the real proof of one's worth?

You might think the labor movement would do something about it. After all, the eight-hour day that now seems lost to many of us was the result of labor struggles beginning in the 1880s: "Eight hours for work, eight hours for sleep, eight hours for what we will!" Similar in meaning was the slogan of women Wobblies, garment workers who were members of the IWW, Industrial Workers of the World: "We want bread — and roses too!"

And there have indeed been some recent stirrings of interest in the American labor movement toward curtailing overtime — often in the hope of opening up more jobs for the unemployed. In Europe, especially in Germany, unions in several industries have won a 35-hour week. But in America, anxieties among workers about making more money in the short run have so far drowned out most of these wistful desires for more rest.

What would it mean for the different religious communities to undertake the effort that their own traditions teach?

Over the past year, a network of Jews, Christians, Muslims, and Buddhists, initially brought together by The Shalom Center, have been examining these questions. They have been developing a statement called "Free Time/ Free People," and circulating it among a broader group of religious leaders and activists. Over the next several months, the Free Time committee intends to bring the statement to public attention to encourage the religious and spiritual communities themselves to enrich their own offerings of "sabbath" rest and release in many forms, and to begin developing specific policy proposals that would carry these teachings into the world of economics and politics.

Indeed, the religious communities are in a position to do two things at once:

Reawaken in their own members the wisdom of restfulness, willingness to open



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more of their own time for Being and Loving, and the richness of prayer, meditation, chant, and ceremony that can make this real; and take action in the world of public policy to free more time for spiritual search, for family, and for community.

For the sake of this second sphere, there is every reason for the religious communities to reach out to the labor movement, the environmental movement, to groups that seek to nurture the family and "family values," to women's organizations.

Indeed The Shalom Center and the Free Time committee took part in the recent conference of the National Interfaith Committee for Workers' Rights, held in Los Angeles while the AFL-CIO met there as well.

The Free Time committee intends to urge American political, economic, and cultural leaders:

- to reduce the hours of work imposed on individuals without reducing their income;
- to strongly encourage the use of more free time in the service of family, community, and spiritual growth;
- and to make work itself sacred by securing full employment in jobs with decent

income, health care, dignity, and self-direction — jobs secure enough and decent enough to let workers loose their grip on fear and seek Free Time.

The creation of Free Time could be accomplished in many different ways. One of them, however, is profoundly and strategically important: making more time available for face-to-face neighborhood and community volunteer activism.

Such a beginning would free volunteers to put new effort into grass-roots democratic change and grass-roots communities and institutions, like our congregations themselves. It would make possible more grass-roots effort to achieve Free Time.

And it would give new breathing-time to many overworked and many ill-worked people to once more meet their neighbors, renew their own selves, and rediscover their deepest visions of a sacred world. ●

Rabbi Arthur Waskow directs *The Shalom Center*, <www.shalomctr.org>. He is author of *Godwrestling — Round 2 and Down-to-Earth Judaism*. For more about *Free Time/ Free People*, contact *The Shalom Center*.

International delegation to Washington to save Mumia!

by *Baldemar Velasquez*

A rally of close to 10,000 unionists and activists was held in Paris on October 15, 1999, to build support for the Open World Conference in Defense of Trade Union Independence and Democratic Rights (OWC), which will be held in San Francisco on February 11-14, 2000 (contact <owc@igc.org>). The Paris rally, held at the Palais des Sports [Sports Palace], was chaired by Baldemar Velasquez, president of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC/AFL-CIO) and co-chair of the Labor Party in the U.S. One of the focal points of the Paris rally was the fight to free Mumia Abu-Jamal. Lybon Mabasa, president of the Socialist Party of Azania (South Africa) and Tetevi Norbert Gbikpi-Benissan, president of the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Togo, proposed to the rally and its keynote speakers that they promote an "Open Letter to Bill Clinton" demanding that he intervene and direct the Justice Department to conduct an immediate investigation into the violation of Mumia's civil rights at the hands of the Philadelphia police in an effort to strengthen the fight to stop the execution and win a fair trial.

According to Jim Lafferty, executive director of the Los Angeles chapter of the National Lawyers Guild, Clinton cannot commute Mumia's sentence, but he could direct Janet Reno and the Justice Department to conduct an investigation of the Philadelphia Police Department to determine if Mumia's civil rights were violated. "It is important to point out that the Justice Department over the years has conducted a number of investigations of the Philadelphia Police Department," Lafferty says. "It has been disclosed that the Prosecutor's Office was systematically training its subordinates in how to make sure that not too many Blacks would serve on a jury. As a result, it is estimated that as many as 300 to 400 cases might have to be retried. There is a

long list of violations of Mumia's rights by the Philadelphia courts and the police. One of the issues in Mumia's trial is precisely the exclusion of Black jurors."

THE INTERNATIONAL Committee to Save Mumia Abu-Jamal has selected the date of January 12, 2000, for an international delegation to Washington to demand justice for Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Our goal is to bring together in the nation's capital leaders, luminaries and well-known personalities who support the demand for a new trial.

We have written an "Open Letter to Bill Clinton," which we are circulating widely. The text of the letter reads: "Mr. President, We call upon you because you have the power to prevent an irreparable injustice: the execution of Mumia Abu-Jamal.

"The Supreme Court of the United States has just rejected without any commentary the appeal submitted by Mumia Abu-Jamal's lawyers. Whatever our country, our nationality, our political, philosophical or religious opinions, or the color of our skin, we the undersigned are staunch defenders of human rights and justice. Mr. President: You know that any objective examination of the conditions of Mumia Abu-Jamal's trial shows that his elementary right to a fair trial was denied to him. In such conditions, his execution would be but an act of legalized murder.

"You have the power and duty to prevent this. In the name of justice, to which all citizens have a right, we call upon you with a sense of urgency and ask you to use the powers of your office to prevent the execution of Mumia Abu-Jamal and to ensure him the conditions for a new and fair trial."

The "Open Letter to Bill Clinton" and the proposal for a delegation have received enthusiastic support the world over. Our aim

is to assemble in this delegation members of the Congressional Black Caucus and Hispanic Caucus, as well as other legislators, trade union leaders from this country and abroad, leaders of the civil rights movement, clergy, political leaders from other countries (such as members of the British Parliament), Nobel Prize Laureates, and, of course, spokespersons for the Mumia movement.

The proposed plan for this event is to hold a well-prepared news conference in Washington, D.C., on January 12 with a broad array of national and international speakers. At the conclusion of the news conference, those assembled would march as a group to the White House and to the Justice Department to deliver the Open Letter, together with lists of all signers, and to make a statement.

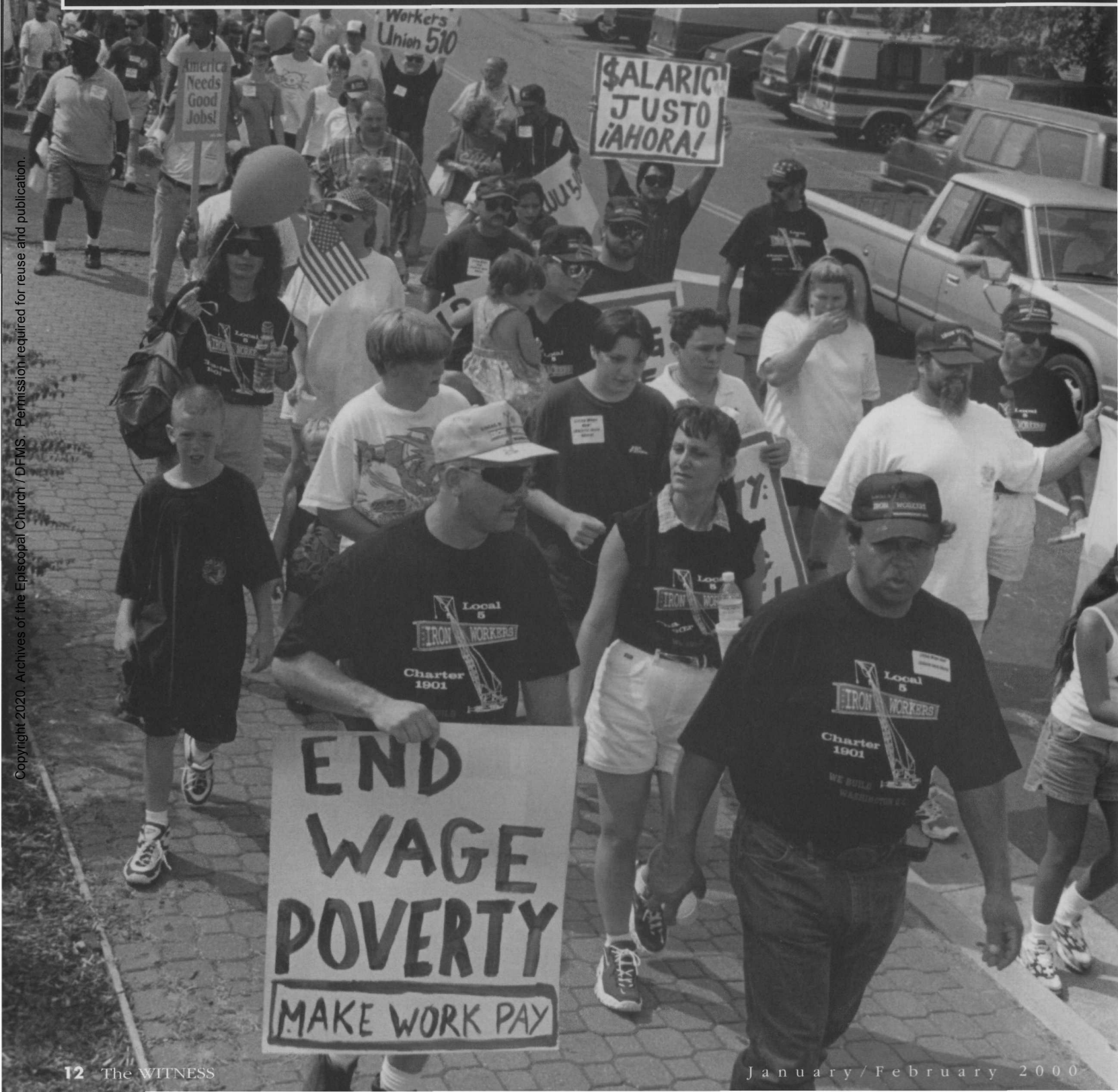
An all-out campaign will be waged to get agreement from the White House and the Justice Department to receive our delegation. We are proceeding with the expectation that if the delegation is sufficiently broad, it will be received by top-ranking officials.

I call upon all supporters of democratic rights in the U.S. and across the globe to help us gather hundreds of thousands of signatures in support of the "Open Letter to Bill Clinton." Let us serve notice to Bill Clinton that the eyes of the world are on his administration and that Clinton must use the powers of his office to ensure the conditions for a new and fair trial for Mumia. ●

Baldemar Velasquez is president of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC, AFL-CIO) and Convener, International Delegation to Washington. For a list of the initial members of the International Committee to Save Mumia, and for the list of new sponsors in close to 70 countries to this date, contact <cimumia@wanadoo.fr>.

PUNCHING BACK

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Fighting for a living wage

by Camille Colatosti

TWO YEARS AGO, Altagracia Perez, rector of St. Phillip's Episcopal Church in South Central Los Angeles, joined Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice (CLUE), a group that helped to pass a living wage ordinance in Los Angeles. This ordinance, like the more than 35 that have been passed by municipalities across the country, creates a minimum wage based on what workers need to provide for their families. Perez wanted her parish to be a part of this important movement.

Her congregation, a historically African-American congregation with a growing Latino population, "had been working a lot internally." The older, African-American members and the newer Latino members were "seeing how we could, together, build ourselves into one community."

The living wage campaign was important, says Perez, "because this is an issue that directly impacts the neighborhood and congregation. Without a living wage, one's quality of life is compromised and this includes institutions in the community — including the churches.

"The older members of the church — lots of them — belong to unions and so were able to buy houses and support their families. This campaign enabled them to make a connection with others."

As Perez explains, "Some of the Latino members of my church are the working poor. They won't benefit directly from the living wage ordinance because the folks in my parish are poorer than that. Their jobs aren't as good as ones with companies that contract with the city. Many do factory piecework. But the Spanish-speaking mem-

bers understood that this would benefit people like them."

Perez continues, "As a church, we're called to work with the poor. As churches we usually spend all of our time doing the service work. In L.A., the gap between rich and poor is tremendous and it doesn't need to be. We do service work. We have an after school program and a soup kitchen, but it would tap all of our energy and resources to provide resources that would be unnecessary if we had a more just system.

"The Bible calls on us to cry out against the injustice of the powerful against the less powerful. Making connections among ourselves and with others, working with unions and other organizations, helps us make a big impact."

Richard Gillett, the missionary for Social Justice with the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles and a leader of CLUE, agrees.

He, too, speaks of the benefits of "making connections."

"The solid and sustained participation in this campaign of the mainstream religious community — Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, and Muslim — is concrete witness that the Christian right cannot presume to speak either for the whole Christian community or for other faiths. It indicates that the enduring religious traditions that sustain our major faiths can, if evoked, speak effectively on behalf of those who have been marginalized and dehumanized by the economic machine of modern-day capitalism." The campaign was a model of community activists, religious leaders and labor leaders working together to bring about justice. The coalition received grants from foundations,

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— Franklin Delano Roosevelt



Bishop Frederick Borsch speaks at a rally at LAX (L.A. International Airport) supporting living wages for up to 10,000 workers at the airport. Also featured are Madeline Janis-Aparicio, who headed the LA Living Wage Coalition, and Kent Wong, Director of the UCLA Labor Studies Center.

labor unions, and Roman Catholic, Protestant and Jewish groups, with which it hired staff. The group developed well-researched data on the impact of the proposed ordinance on workers and businesses, and then they formed CLUE.

Gillett explains in the July-August 1997 issue of *Tikkun*, "This was an example of the involvement of top religious leadership." The Episcopal bishop in Los Angeles, Frederick Borsch, as well as a prominent rabbi and a Methodist bishop wrote a joint opinion piece supporting the ordinance for the Los Angeles Times. The American Jewish Congress, Catholic Cardinal Roger Mahoney and the Muslim Public Affairs Council as well as other religious bodies also supported the ordinance. "But the chief work was grassroots," says Gillett.

For Thanksgiving, church members organized children to decorate paper plates that were mailed to the mayor and city council. In Perez' church, children decorated plates in the after school program and at coffee hours. "We had a living wage presentation that was at a children's level," says Perez. On the plates, kids asked that the council sup-

port the poor. Some kids wrote, 'Please pass this law.' Others, who were older, wrote more sophisticated things, such as, 'It's hard to feed a family of four with a minimum wage job.'

In December 1996, a group of CLUE members visited each city council person's office singing "living wage carols" — holiday carols adapted with lyrics promoting the living wage. For the New Year, coalition members sent cards saying, "Ring in the New Year with a living wage."

On the day of the vote, says Gillett, "coalition supporters were packed to the walls of the council chambers." The vote was unanimous in support of the living wage.

What is a 'living wage'?

"A living wage," explains Gillett, "is connected to federal poverty lines. If you use that measure, you have to ask, what does it take to bring a family of four to the poverty line? The answer is that someone in the family needs to work full time for \$7.51 an hour, but the poverty line is so atrocious that to think that a family of four can get by on \$16,459 a year makes no sense. A living

wage should be double what the federal minimum wage is right now (\$5.15 an hour)."

Gillett continues, "To understand the severity that even the federal poverty line represents, consider that in Los Angeles, an average two-bedroom house rents for \$855 a month. After the rent is paid, a family of four at the poverty level has only about \$450 a month left for all other expenses: food, transportation, clothes, health and other basics. Fully 35 percent of all workers in the city have incomes below the poverty line. And the working poor in Los Angeles are getting poorer: from 1979 to 1989, low wage industries here grew by a whopping 40 percent."

Gillett believes that it takes \$11 an hour in California to have "a bare bones budget." Nevertheless, the Los Angeles living wage ordinance set a minimum wage of \$7.51 an hour for employers that pay health benefits and \$8.76 an hour for employers who do not. The ordinance also requires that employees have 12 paid days off a year, protections from retaliation if they choose to unionize and some job security provisions.

The Los Angeles ordinance, like most that have passed in more than 35 other municipalities across the country and are pending in at least two dozen more, applies to employers who do business with the city. That is, employers who receive city contracts of \$25,000 or more or who lease city land must comply. In addition, the Los Angeles ordinance goes beyond many of the other local ordinances by mandating employers who receive tax abatements and other incentives from city government also to pay a living wage. In 1997, Los Angeles gave more than \$250 million to companies in the form of subsidies and incentives.

While the number of workers who benefit from the city ordinance is small, approximately 7,600, each living wage campaign leads to the next. The campaign in the city of Los Angeles made the recent passage of a living wage for Los Angeles County possible.

"Furthermore," adds Gillett, "there might be an opening here for religious groups to use future living wage campaigns as vehicles to broaden discussion of the responsibility of business to the community beyond that of providing a livable wage."

Working poor

Last year, 7.3 million American families were officially designated as poor, that is with incomes below \$16,459 for a family of four. In over two-thirds of these families, at least one person was working. At \$5.15 an hour, the federal minimum wage, a full-time worker earns \$10,300 a year, below the national poverty threshold for a family of two. A family of four with one wage earner working for minimum wage falls nearly 40 percent below the line. Contrary to popular misconceptions, 70 percent of minimum wage earners are adults.

Robert Pollin, professor of economics at the University of Massachusetts and co-author with Stephanie Luce of *The Living Wage: Building a Fair Economy* (New Press, 1998), explains that this family would receive an earned-income tax credit, food stamps and Medicaid, "but the need for such programs to support a full time worker's household only underscores the fact that \$5.15 an hour is not close to being a living wage."

The real value of the minimum wage, explains Pollin, is 30 percent below what it was in 1968, even though the economy is 50 percent more productive. In fact, if the minimum wage had kept pace with inflation, it would be \$11.07 right now.

The living wage movement has, as Pollin describes it, been "strategically astute. It has emerged primarily at the level of municipal politics because organizers correctly assessed that their efforts have a greater chance of success when they attempt to change municipal laws rather than those of states or the federal government, where business has a great capacity to use its money and lobbying clout. Various local campaigns are gaining strength through building national connections."

In May 1998, the first national living wage campaign training conference was held. Organizers from 34 cities came together to discuss strategy and consider ways to coordinate their work.

The Association of Community Organizations (ACORN) serves as a national clearinghouse of information, and hosts a web page dedicated to the subject, <www.livingwagecampaign.org>.

More than 35 living wage ordinances have

passed since the initial one in Baltimore in 1994. New York, Detroit, Chicago, Los Angeles, Portland, Oregon and more all have living wage ordinances on the books, and most follow the Baltimore model: firms holding service contracts with the city are to pay a living wage, usually between \$7 and \$10 an hour, with health benefits and paid days off. "If private firms want city contracts," says Pollin, "they must pay their workers substantially better than the sub-poverty wage of the national minimum."

As Pollin explains, "A single mother working full time at \$7.70 an hour," the living wage in Baltimore, "would thus be able to live with her child above the poverty line. However, a family of one jobholder, one homemaker and two children would still be in poverty."

The living wage ordinances, then, are a major breakthrough but they are not enough. And some of the newest campaigns recognize this. In Denver and Houston, activists advanced more ambitious proposals but they were defeated at the polls. If passed, they would have required all employers with 50 or more workers to pay a living wage.

A similarly ambitious ordinance is being proposed for Santa Monica's coastal zone. "Some of the wealthiest companies in the world are making money off the city's investment in the coastal zone," says Madeline Janis-Aparicio, the director of the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy, the organization that spearheaded the living wage coalition in Los Angeles. "We are pushing the envelope further."

But "pushing the envelope" encounters greater resistance from business. In Santa Monica, the business community is already boasting a \$750,000 war chest to fight the ordinance. Employers claim that they will lose money and will have to cut jobs. Such claims, says Pollin, are exaggerated at best.

Assessing the impact of paying livable wages

To illustrate the minimal impact that living wage ordinances have on employers, Pollin takes the Los Angeles example. This raised the pay for 7,600 full and part-time workers. A full-time worker receives, on average, \$3,600 more a year under the living wage

than he or she did with minimum wage.

The living wage in Los Angeles affects about 1,000 firms, which, together, produce about \$4.4 billion in goods and services in a year. The living wage costs about \$24,000 a year per firm, or \$24 million a year all together. This amounts to only 0.5 percent of their annual budgets, hardly a debilitating sum, says Pollin.

While the living wage directly benefits about 7,600 workers in Los Angeles, it also indirectly benefits approximately 28,000 more, says Pollin. "There will be pressure to increase wages for workers who now earn more than \$7.25 in affected firms. There will also be pressure in non-affected firms to increase wages in order to compete for workers." To account for this, Pollin figures an additional one percent per each company.

"This should have virtually no impact on city budgets," says Pollin. "If companies with contracts raise prices to cities, other companies will come in and compete with lower offers."

A study by Mark Weisbrot and Michelle Sforza of the Preamble Center for Public Policy confirms this. Weisbrot and Sforza interviewed business owners in Baltimore. As the study concludes, "Owners were positive about how the living wage law affected bidding." The living wage "levels the playing field," preventing companies from reducing wages in order to put in a low bid.

Temple University Professor of Economics Andrew J. Buck also analyzed living wage ordinances in Baltimore and Los Angeles. In addition, he reviewed studies of other cities, and examined a proposed living wage for Philadelphia. He found no evidence that adopting a living wage hurts cities. In Baltimore, taxpayers pay about 17 cents per person annually for the living wage ordinance. In Philadelphia, Buck concludes that "economic benefits offset any increased cost to the city. By earning higher incomes, the city's lowest wage workers can afford to pay taxes to city hall and are less likely to use public assistance."

When workers earn more, they buy more. There is also lower job turnover, increased productivity, and higher morale.

Local living wage ordinances are tremendously popular. In November 1998, for

example, more than 80 percent of Detroit voters approved the living wage there. This was the first living wage ordinance to pass by voter approval rather than legislatively. Unable to convince the Detroit City Council and meeting resistance from Democratic Mayor Dennis Archer, the Metro Detroit AFL-CIO circulated petitions to put the initiative on the November 1998 ballot. But politicians and business leaders are not giving up easily. Now the Michigan state legislature and Republican Governor John Engler are proposing a Michigan House bill, HR 4777, to prevent local units of government from creating laws which “overlap, duplicate or conflict” with state legislation. If passed, this bill would prevent municipalities from creating living wages that exceed the minimum wage. Likewise, cities would be unable to pass environmental protection ordinances or even smoking bans that exceed state standards.

Ultimately, there will need to be a national living wage. Pollin argues that the minimum wage should be raised to at least \$7.25 an hour and, better, \$11 an hour — in keeping with productivity increases.

Madeline Janis-Aparicio agrees. She explains that activists must focus on the living wage not as an end in itself, but as a stepping stone to a larger goal. She states that the goal of the Los Angeles living wage campaign was, of course, “to directly affect the lives of workers who are getting a raise but the campaign is also a tool to build a movement for worker justice. We have a long-term approach.”

Keeping this idea in mind, explains Philip Chmielewski, an associate professor of Christian ethics at Loyola University in Chicago, we see that “living wage ordinances challenge the currently favored model for revitalizing the urban fabric — a model that depends on tax abatements for businesses, enterprise zones and industrial development bonds.”

Living wage advocates hope to build a “new” economy. In using that phrase, says Janis-Aparicio, “we try to capture some of the language of the other side. They mean ‘team’ workers. We mean an economy based on the values and principles of bringing up the bottom, and providing a decent standard of living for those on the bottom, as well as respect.”

Working in coalition with religious organizations is fundamental to this long-term approach, says Janis-Aparicio. “We believe that if we are going to create a movement for economic justice we have to have the moral arguments connected to economic arguments. We believe that we need this to build a mass movement. It’s really powerful when faith-based issues are linked to economic issues.”

A theology of work

To many, building a new economy is essential work for people of faith. Gillett explains, “We must understand and recover a basic biblical truth. People don’t engage in work in order to serve the economy; the economy of any country should exist to serve the people.”

He continues, “The theology of work is to recognize that the activity of human work has a religious dimension. That sounds very strange because very few have found that work has any connection with religion. But people who engage in work of any kind are supposedly, according to the Old and New Testaments, participating in the upbuilding of the human community. They are stewards of what God has given us.”

An important document on this subject, says Gillett, is *On Human Work*, an Encyclical of Pope John Paul II, written in 1981. Human life, the document says, “is built up every day from work. From work it derives its specific dignity.” And the church “considers it her task always to call attention to the dignity and rights of those who work, to condemn situations in which that dignity and those rights are violated,” and to promote authentic progress.

As the Encyclical suggests, and Gillett explains, “Inherently, work should have a creative and even a moral dimension. But the great preponderance of work either has no necessarily moral human dimension or it is degrading. Perhaps to very few people — teachers, nurses, doctors, writers — to very few people does work feel creative. To the vast majority it is a way to make a living.

“The industrial revolution, among other things,” continues Gillett, “made work a degrading activity for so many people, but this isn’t the way it is supposed to be. We need to think about work as having some kind of divine dimension. At the least, people who work should have respect and be

accorded dignity in what they do. We need to bring work to a place where people can earn a decent living.”

In 1997 the Episcopal Church’s General Convention passed a resolution on the theology of work. The resolution called for a report, on which Gillett has been working, to be presented at this year’s convention in Denver. The report will call for action on three levels: parish and personal, community and public policy.

Gillett explains, “At a personal level, a lot of parishioners can, at their place of business, if they are in a position to do so, pay a living wage to the people who they hire. We’ve found that living wages should be paid to full- and part-time people. If you hire someone to work in your home, pay him or her a living wage and pay social security.”

Those working on this report may also request action by the church’s pension fund.

“In particular, we may request a meeting with the Service Employees International Union, to get the assistance of the church pension fund to settle a longstanding labor dispute of low-wage janitors in Washington, D.C.,” Gillett says.

We must make a real commitment to the working poor, says Gillett. For, as Bishop Borsch explains, “People of faith are called to ensure that everyone receives fair compensation, participates fairly in life, has enough to eat, adequate health care and the right to organize.”

As church activists like Gillett, Perez and others have been noting, many in government and society expect churches to compensate for economic disparities in this post-welfare era. But, as Perez suggests, churches need to realize that they have to do more than feed and clothe the poor — they need, also, to help transform society.

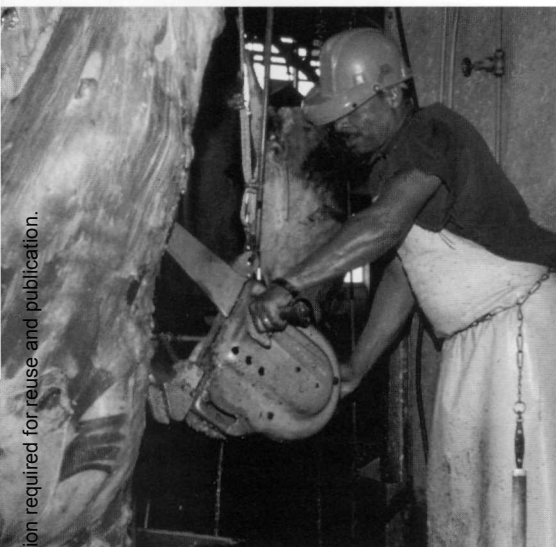
“Charity work is important,” concludes Perez, “but justice is better than charity.” ●

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ON THE LINE

Resisting work-faster oppression

by Jane Slaughter



MEAT PROCESSING COMPANIES — slaughterhouses — prefer not to give plant tours. This past summer at IBP, the world's largest processor of beef and pork, company spokesman Don Willoughby remarked to *The New York Times*, "People like to visualize the cow out in the pasture and the steak on the plate, but they really don't want to visualize what goes on in-between."

What goes on in-between is disturbing not only for the hamburger customer but also for the workers who kill the cows and cut their meat off the bones. In June 1999, at IBP's plant in the tiny town of Wallula, Wash., a thousand meatpacking workers pulled a month-long wildcat strike to protest their working conditions. The company policies that leave workers cut and crippled, the strikers made clear, are also what cause unsanitary — disgusting — conditions for consumers.

Who takes these nasty and low-paying jobs? Workers at — pardon the expression — the bottom of the food chain. The workforce at Wallula, as throughout the meatpacking industry, is almost all immigrants, mostly Mexicans, but also Salvadorans, Laotians, Vietnamese and Bosnians. A majority are women.

Speed is the main cause of both worker injuries and massive violations of U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) food safety rules. Management continually urges workers to work faster. Maria Martinez, who was elected chief union steward in a landslide when workers became fed-up with their do-nothing, Anglo-led Teamsters local, says, "The working conditions are so bad due to the speed of the chain. They get carpal tunnel, they pull their back, they pull muscles on their shoulders."

Of direct concern to consumers is the fact that the speed of the line leaves little time for hygiene. Workers place their cut meat on small tables. "When the line is so fast you can't keep up, you stack it," she explains. "And if it falls on the floor you don't want to take time to go wash your meat, because every second it gets stacked up more."

Even worse, says line steward Melquiades "Flaco" Pereyra, when a worker cuts into a hidden abscess, pus squirts everywhere, and there's no time to do more than wipe face or meat with a paper towel. "The company loses money every minute the chain stops," said Pereyra, interviewed in Spanish.

Another cause of injuries, Martinez says, is falls on floors made slippery by fat, blood, or the hosing down at the end of the shift. "If you fall on your butt you mess up your tailbone," said Martinez. "We have two men in wheelchairs now. The worst part is, once you're hurt they'll find a way to get you out the door."

Pereyra and Martinez work in the processing department, where meat is cut up into salable units. They say that workers in the slaughter department have similar complaints. Their hands — and thus the meat — become contaminated with cow feces and pus. When cows are not slaughtered properly, workers must skin them alive. "They kick," says Martinez. "The people that cut off the feet have had their fingers cut when the cow kicks their clippers."

In 1996, the last year for which numbers are available, the Wallula plant was cited for enough USDA violations to place it in the worst 5 percent of all meat and poultry plants. One hundred seventy-six violations were "critical" — of the type likely to cause contamination that would make consumers sick. Of the 544 largest plants, Wallula was in the worst quarter.

"On June 4," says Pereyra, "we went to work like every day. A *compañero* was taken to the office for stacking his meat, because the speed of production was very fast." Other workers gathered at the office to support him. When Martinez asked the superintendent, "What's the problem?" he responded, "They have 60 seconds to return to work, or they're fired. You're all fired."

Most of the shift walked out in protest. Although later that day management rescinded the firings and begged the workers to return, they stayed out for a month, pressuring for a new union contract with better pay and the right to stop the chain to correct unsafe or unsanitary conditions.

In the end, the workers gained none of the safety improvements they had sought, but, remarkably, the IBP workers were not disheartened by this setback. They vowed to take over their local — in which they are the majority — in the next election, and to continue pressing for cleaner and safer conditions.

Recounting what they'd learned, Pereyra said, "We got to know each other. We're more united than ever in the history of this local. We lived for a month on strike. We made the world realize how this company was treating the workers and also the public. Because our strike wasn't just for money, but to protect the workers and to protect the public, the consumer." ●

Jane Slaughter is a labor writer who lives in Detroit, <Janesla@aol.com>.

Following a thread of silence into a place of no-time

by Rosanna Kazanjian

THERE IS NOTHING PRACTICAL about weaving dishtowels. Measured in minutes and hours, spinning yarn is an expensive way to make a sweater. Handmade socks are an outrageous project when the supermarket sells them in the household aisle for \$2.50. Nevertheless, this slow paced economically absurd activity takes up a large part of my time these days. I spin and knit and weave with a passion that totally surprises me. In fact, the cre-

ation of these homey products has become a spiritual practice.

I am rapturous about every aspect of the process of making yarn: the sheep, the grassy pastures, the smell of lanolin, the feel of wool fiber in warm sudsy water, the smell of damp, drying wool, the tangle and untangling of tiny threads and the twisting into usable yarn, holding the fluff of fleece and the triangle web that releases the threads into the twist, plunging my hand into a bas-

WITHOUT PRICE

ket of clean, combed fleece ready to spin, holding a lap full of soft skeins of yarn.

This passion is tactile. My hands take the clue from the fiber as I shape, tease or structure it. I am engaged in an ancient language without words. As I follow this thread of silence I come to a place of no time and no sound — a space for my own personal language of touch and smell and sensation.

Randall Darwall, a talented contemporary weaver, says this about our culture: “In regard to verbal articulation, the reading and writing public of today is enormous[ly advanced]. But we have certainly grown increasingly insensitive in our perception by touch, the tactile sense. Our tactile experiences are elemental. If we reduce their range, as we do when we reduce the necessity to form things ourselves, we grow lopsided. We are apt, today, to overcharge our gray matter with words and pictures ... with material already transposed into a certain key, preformulated material, and to fall short in providing for a stimulus that may touch off our creative impulse, such as unformed material, material in the rough.”

As the external fabric takes shape, I connect to the unformed material within. I am discovering hidden aspects of myself. Following the long thin threads inward, I am being changed and these changes are silent friends leading me home.

Is it outrageous to call this a spiritual practice? Is it presumptuous to believe one can encounter the Holy through fiber and warp and weft?

I think of the beautiful linens and vestments fashioned over centuries by women of the church. What prompts such detailed, loving stitchery? Is there a longing for God so strong that no stitch is too fine, no fabric too dear, no effort too great because what they are really doing is clothing the mystery

and it is their spiritual practice? Are the silk and linen threads wordless connections to God? Perhaps theirs is a tactile love affair with the Holy. I know that when I have handled exquisite vestments or fine linens I am deeply moved, transported. Is it possible

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that the anonymous women who bring the fabric to the sacristy know as much about the Mystery as those who raise the chalice at the altar?

I am beginning to learn that I may, if I am patient, experience God (however named) through the silent, wordless, timeless space created by this ancient craft. How surprising to find the Holy in a basket of newly washed fleece, or in the miracle of fabric appearing

on the loom from separate threads of weft and warp!

As touch and silence become my teachers in this spiritual practice of fiber-making, so does time. My previous notion of time has shifted, its value, its insistent edge, its guilty insinuations. The newer understanding lets me engage in a relatively time-free space as I spend long hours slowly putting fibers together, spinning, knitting or weaving.

Time comes in many forms — the tracking of seasons, the noting of moon cycles, the rising and setting of the sun, the ticking of the minutes, the time it takes for a cake to rise, time spent, time wasted, time to get up, time to die, time watched so closely that there is no time to notice life.

So much of my life I have asked time to tell me who I am. The ticking of the clock has been a constant dictator whispering orders just below my consciousness. In our culture time has become a false god to whom many of us have sacrificed all the subtle nuances of mystery in order to be “on time.”

But of late, I have fallen into time in a new way that only now I see has been a life journey and this slow-motion, impractical business of making fabric is my current teacher.

Glancing back I see my life as a collection of stories, a simple staggering toward the Holy. The most constant thread always has been some deep longing to know the sacred in everything, to be able to respond to the mystery in all things with respect, compassion and love. In the staggering there has been great falling down and falling short. There have also been precious times when doors of awareness opened.

When I was young, very young, I would wander through the woods of my beloved Colorado mountains fully in the world around me and fully connected to the world

within. The hours of solitude, where time was not a companion, were simple, uncomplicated moments of being very present. One particular day I was sitting next to a small stream when I heard a great crashing coming toward me. My heart beat so fast I definitely thought my time was up. Then through the bushes burst a fawn. The fawn stood frozen. I sat frozen. I looked straight into its eyes and saw what I now name God. I have carried that sacred moment inside me all my life. A small doorway opened to an experience for which I have never ceased to hunger, moments of total attention to and absorption by the Holy.

Later, in the middle of my life in a different woods, in Bethel, Me., I was obediently following the directions of one of the trainers in a personal growth lab. The task was to spend 24 hours moving in slow motion. I was a woman in a hurry, a hungry learner on the move, so this assignment was torture. After a few hours of resistance, feeling silly, trying to slow down my frenetic dance with life, I fell into the blessedness of a walking stride that felt like being in the zone. I glanced to my right and saw that I had a walking companion, a bird. We were walking at the same pace. Time shifted down, down, down, into a whole different rhythm. Time flowed like a thick river of oil. I fell in love with my escort and our shared cadence. My tiny teacher opened a door to a faintly remembered experience of tempo below the manufactured tempo of the invented life. I found myself once again in a moment of total absorption with the Holy.

Though I did not know it then, it was my introduction to the Buddhist practice of walking meditation. The same resistance I felt to slowing down on the bird walk rose up in me when I was instructed to engage in walking meditation. Only when I again experienced, after some time of feeling silly, that deeper tempo did I recall the long ago walk with my feathered companion. Then I remembered myself and the resistance dropped away.

In this latest love of my life, fiber work, the resistance is gone. Each day I can hardly wait to get to the practice. The release into the no-time space of weaving, or spinning or carding and combing, helps me cross that border between distraction and attention, which in turn introduces me to the empty space of mystery.

In this fiber-making, spirit-spinning process there have been many tangled mishaps. There have been failures, time thrown away to mistakes, warps ruined. There are imperfections in finished pieces that I can't just let be, I have to point them out and apologize for them. And this, too, is my teacher. I have discovered marvelous new textures and effects through mistakes. I am learning to let go of control and preconceived notions of how a piece will look and let myself enjoy the surprise of the unexpected. I am learning to forgive myself, to be more tender and accepting of what I am and what I am not.

This practice of working with my hands in a timeless space takes me, without words or sounds or expectations, home. I am not in a hurry and once again I am beginner, yet again, always a beginner. I am serving my novitiate in black lamb's wool and

gray Shetland and brown Merino, and white Churro.

I am simply following a long thin thread, without sound, through touch, outside the usual constraints of time, accompanied by a hungry longing into the absorbing presence of God. ●

Rosanna Kazanjian is an Episcopal priest and is part of the Greenfire Retreat House staff and community in Tenants Harbor, Me. Photographer **Tim Seymour** lives and works in Camden, Me.

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Running out of time

by Bill Wylie-Kellermann



Richard K. Fenn, *The End of Time: Religion, Ritual, and the Forging of the Soul* (SPCK/Pilgrim Press, 1997).

RICHARD K. FENN is a sociologist teaching at Princeton Theological Seminary. He is also an Episcopalian — so it is little wonder that his writing occasionally echoes the *Book of Common Prayer*. He has authored a number of other books, including *Liturgies & Trials* (Pilgrim, 1982), which treats the liturgical character of courtroom trials (and vice versa) including Catonsville and Karen Ann Quinlan, not to mention Cuento and Nemikin (ECUSA employees subpoenaed for information about the whereabouts of Puerto Rican nationalists with whom they ministered and in which connection *The Witness* resisted government seizure of its own files). Little wonder this current volume is dedicated to Robert L. DeWitt.

The End of Time concerns what might be called “temporal panic,” the individual and

social anxiety that time is running out. Fenn argues that when a variety of rituals, cultural and religious, fail to replenish the store of time as a social construction, fascist tendencies spill out into movements exploiting that generalized dread.

Fenn presents a scheme and typology mapping social systems based on their degree of differentiation from environment and their level of internal integration. On this basis he identifies four primary functions of ritual. “Rituals of transformation” rely on resources within the social order, and are particularly concerned about the transformation of youth into adults and the dead into ancestors. “Rituals of restoration” make up for lost time by renewing an idealized or mythic past. “Rituals of aversion” are largely military in example and avert disaster by psychic imposition of martial discipline. Finally, “rituals of purification” purge social pollutants and enemies from within.

The examples by which these are illustrated range across history and the planet: New Guinea Highlanders and Argentine *desaparecidos*, “Crusaders” and “witches,” Nazis and Millenarians, the Jesus movement and Roman-occupied Jerusalem. Church history examples run as a thread through the text. Hence, “the Church promulgated the doctrine of purgatory, which gave to the dead time to purify themselves ... and, to the living, opportunity to satisfy unfulfilled penances and obligations of the dead. ... It may also have been a means of buying time ... for the Church itself.”

Just as the book was coming to completion, the Federal building in Oklahoma exploded. Fenn argues that the militia movement and its counterparts ought not be treated as isolated extremists, however conveniently bracketed, but as the public shadow, the sign of deepseated and widespread rage or resentment.

Under conditions where time is not only

commodified, but its price is rapidly escalating, “corporations and communities compete with each other for a larger share of the individual’s time,” demanding sacrifice as normative. The velocity of information and the instantaneous fluctuation of global markets hugely expands the time pressure under which both state and corporation operate, passing these pressures on to individuals whose psyches are expected to “come up to speed,” to synchronize with the culture.

Fenn would argue that the explicitly fascist eruptions (he looks at everything from Branch Davidians to Pat Robertson) are part of a larger cultural response to the assault of “running out of time.”

“To remove aliens, cut welfare and lower taxes are the outward and visible signs of fascist tendencies in American society. ... More intractable forms of pollution or degeneracy call for the restoration of a time of relative innocence or vitality.”

His solution largely concerns psychic space. (He acknowledges at the outset to writing on the boundary of sociology and psychoanalysis). Social dread is a pervasive contagion because in the barrage of images, “not only family members and close associates but the specialized co-workers, the homeless on the street, distant consumers, and the victims of terror and famine in other countries, take up psychic space in the mind.”

Intolerance of these presences can lead to the “fascist state of mind,” a “delusional narcissism,” killing the inner enemy. His remedy, a crucial one, involves embrace of the “other,” both inner and outer.

It would be, I suppose, a pleasant irony to say the least, to resolve in psychic space, this problem in time. ●

Bill Wylie-Kellermann is book review editor of *The Witness* and director of the M.Div. program for the Seminary Consortium for Urban Pastoral Education in Chicago, Ill.



TIME TRAVEL

When three hands bridge an abyss

by Robert DeWitt

“YOUR LIFE STYLE will change now”, the doctor had said in giving me the diagnosis of Bobbie’s Alzheimer’s. He recommended I get a paperback entitled *The 36-Hour Day*. And he was right. Our lifestyle has changed in many ways. And still is changing month by month, as the disease proceeds down its one-way street. Alzheimer’s does not march, like a soldier. It moves quietly, like an Indian scout, sliding stealthily from one vantage point to the next, not in straight lines, doubling back, then streaking to the next point of vulnerability. The only thing about it which is predictable is that finally it will inevitably reach its goal, which is death.

Help, it is said, often comes from unexpected sources. I have been both surprised and relieved to note how helpful it has been to me to try to write down these impressions of how I feel about my experience with Alzheimer’s.

Elsewhere I have mentioned my surprise at finding how therapeutic it can be for Bobbie to do tasks and chores of which she is capable — doing, in place of “being done for” by someone else. Reading in the Alzheimer’s literature, and conversations with some qualified others, have been strategically helpful. But the on-the-job training has been basic — the core curriculum.

*Come with me early, come with me soon
Come with me while you may
Life is so fleeting, life is so swift
Life is so brief a stay*

*When I was young, when I was lost,
When I was blue, you came
Fresh as spring water, fresh as new snow
Fresh as a word that’s true, you came*

*So come with me early, come
with me soon*

Come with me while you may

*Life is too fleeting, life is too swift,
Life is too brief a stay*

LATE ONE AFTERNOON Bobbie interrupts my setting the table for supper. “Here”, she says, bringing three more place settings. “You will need more plates. The boys will be here, and I saw Mother upstairs a bit ago, and she said she would have supper with us.”

The “boys” are now in their 40s, living with their own families in their own houses nearby. Bobbie’s mother died some 30 years ago.

The days grow shorter this time of year, especially in the latitude of Maine’s Penobscot Bay, and on one of its outermost islands. Continental America is here reaching out toward Greenwich as far as it can, anxious to start the day. But off to such an early start, it is sooner spent. Four-thirty in the afternoon is approaching night. For an elderly couple playing host to Alzheimer’s disease, this pause between the dark and the daylight is definitely not “The Children’s Hour” as Longfellow’s poem saw it. More often it is a time for the Invisibles of our imaginations to become palpable people, ones to be reckoned with, even claiming a place at the table. Late afternoon is commonly referred to in Alzheimer’s circles as the time of the “sun-downing syndrome.” For the patient with that disease, perhaps partly due to fatigue, reality tends at twilight to lose some of its firmness, and phantasms can come crowding in, tensions increase.

It is not just Bobbie’s mother who shows up at this witching hour. Also her father, my parents, my brothers (I have three), and also (says Bobbie) my wife, and a host of others who are nameless and invisible — they all can be at our house singly, or in groups. I marvel again and again at Bobbie’s prevailing equanimity in the face of this crowded household over which she presides. She

finds “them” just as intractable and unpredictable as do I, even though she “sees” them in a manner I do not. I note she often mutes her voice in speaking to me of them, lest she be overheard. And just the other day she said of our daughter Kathy, who lives hundreds of miles away, “She is around here a lot, but I don’t see much of her.”

There is another aspect of this fluidity of reality, as seen by Bobbie, which has been manifesting itself for some time now. She asks me, out of the blue, whether I “have thanked them.”

“Thanked whom, for what?” I reply.

“Why, the people that own the house, of course, for letting us stay here.” When she says that I feel ejected from my own home, as though the bank had foreclosed on my mortgage — or as though some owner of the house I had been renting had suddenly sold it out from under me to some new owner. Bobbie is not that worried or threatened. She finds it a very nice house, frequently speaking admiringly of appointments, and of this or that furnishing, sometimes even saying, “This looks just like our house!” But she was schooled in the social graces by her mother, and a house guest always expresses appreciation to the hostess.

“No, I haven’t,” I confess, “but I will.”

Bobbie’s “Invisibles,” however, are not only friends and family visiting in our home — or whoever it is who really owns it. Occasionally there are also foreboding, nameless others who lurk just beyond the fence. Sometimes they drive right up to the fence and get out of their cars. Bobbie is as ignorant as I of why they are there or what they want. They never come to the house — at least not yet; but there is always the apprehension that they might. We know absolutely nothing about them, but there is something inherently threatening in their anonymity, their silence, and their encroaching on us. Often Bobbie draws my attention to them, looking out the window. I see nothing. No one. At first I was foolish enough to get the binoculars — even to go out to the fence with her, hoping to demonstrate to her that there was no one there. But ever and

again they come, these unknown Invisibles.

Another factor so familiar to many caregivers is the patient’s recurring urge to go “home.” For Bobbie this means her child-

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hood home in north Jersey. One time I remember was in October. The weather was good, the foliage in northern New England as breathtaking as usual. Daughter Becky now lives in Saratoga Springs, and that is not far from the Adirondacks, where some close friends of ours live. It seemed a good combi-

nation of visits to justify a three-day trip. So off we went, Saratoga being some 400 miles from our Maine home, a nine-hour trip. On the way Bobbie seemed increasingly tense, and began to speak of wanting to go to her childhood home in New Jersey. I tried to distract her with other topics, but without success. When we arrived, our seeing Becky again was overshadowed by Bobbie’s still wanting to go “home.” She was not about to be distracted by a visit with Becky nor with our Adirondack friends. She wanted to go “home.”

I realized I had to accommodate her concern; but also knew it was unwise to make a return trip of another nine hours without a break, since I would have to do all the driving. So I insisted we would have to spend the night at Becky’s, then we could leave in the morning. Reluctantly she acquiesced; but the following morning she had but one objective — New Jersey.

Becky and our Adirondack friends had no difficulty accepting our abrupt departure. They understood. But I confess to a lot of anxiety on that return trip. Several times she observed that we did not seem to be heading toward New Jersey. Nor were we. But suppose my dissembling did not work, and she insisted on going to New Jersey? To a house no longer standing? To a community where now she knows no one, and no one knows her? But her memory disability spared us, her concern eased, forgotten, and we made our way home to the Island without incident.

Many times since then in the process of doing post-supper chores I have been surprised by Bobbie’s appearing from upstairs with an incongruous assortment of clothing, toilet articles and bedding, and announcing that she has to go “home.” She states this as a matter of fact, as though we had both known it, but that I had somehow forgotten. There is no mistaking her intention. She is determined to do it, with or without my help.

After two or three experiences of this I learned that she was not about to be influenced by such considerations as that

there is no mailboat at that time of night to take us to the mainland. At that time she is incapable of being a part of my world, so I must enter hers. So I tell her I will go with her. Putting on such overwear as is appropriate to the weather, armed with a flashlight and carrying the aforementioned luggage, we make our way out to the garage and clamber into the Model A Ford.

The starting of the car seems a signal to her that the tension can cease, that all is and will be well. I bear in mind that going home meant to her, five or ten minutes earlier, a long trek of 10 to 12 hours by car to New Jersey. But now she is relaxed, talkative, while we negotiate the bumpy, glooming road which traverses the perimeter of a small island 30 miles off the coast of Maine! We have really a very pleasant time, as our auto trips together typically have been over the years. We chat casually about this and that, complain about the road, exclaim about the moonlight or lack thereof, hold hands (my right, her left) as any right-thinking couple would do.

Indeed, there is one such night that stands out in my mind.

During the day preceding, Bobbie had seemed a little more distant from reality than usual, though not appearing anxious or stressed. Supper went well, and at about the usual time between eight and nine she went upstairs with the little dog, presumably to retire. I followed her up to be sure her bed was made (she typically makes and unmakes it several times each day), toothbrush found, and the other bedtime routines attended to. She seemed very casual about it all, except I noted she insisted on going into the guest room to retire — where she had never before slept. But once there it did not seem right to her, and she was obviously very confused. When I led her back to her own room it became evident that going to bed was not what she wanted. I could not understand her responses to questions of what she did want — her words and thoughts were too incoherent, probably to her as well as

to me. Although she did not mention “going Home,” that seemed to me the best interpretation, based upon past experience.

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BEING A PART OF MY WORLD,
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WE MAKE OUR WAY OUT TO
THE GARAGE AND CLAMBER
INTO THE MODEL A FORD.

So I helped her put her shoes back on, found a warm coat for each of us, got the flashlight, called the dog. Out we went to the garage and got into the car and started off down the road. In all of this she seemed most willing to come along, but showed evidence of not knowing where we were,

whose house we had just left, nor where we were going nor for what purpose. Several times as we travelled along that familiar Island road she repeated she had “never seen this before,” and my explanations of our whereabouts were met with polite disbelief — or incomprehension. I reached with my hand for hers as we drove along, and she responded warmly. As we continued riding it became increasingly evident to me that she indeed did not know where we were, and probably not who I was. We were living in different worlds, and her only contact with my world were those two hands — three, because now both of hers were holding mine. And it was palpable to me that how her wandering alone in a strange and unknown world could be endured was at least in part attributable to those three hands reaching across an unfathomable abyss, the only point of contact between two people each living in a world unknown to the other.

That contact, however, is not a fixed fact but a flickering reality, coming and going. More usually on these night rides, having gone as far as seems reasonable, perhaps four miles, we turn around and retrace our steps. When we approach our driveway, she indicates I should turn in there. We drive into the garage, get out of the car. As the flashlight guides us through the dark to the house, she thanks me for “being so good to her.” I don’t really know what was going on in her beleaguered mind. What I make of it is that an appreciative soul is expressing thanks for being taken at her word, for someone seriously sharing with her the strange new world in which she finds herself. ●

Robert DeWitt and his wife, **Barbara De Yoe DeWitt**, live on *Isle Au Haut, Me.* DeWitt was *Bishop of Pennsylvania* from 1964 until 1974 and then editor of *The Witness* from 1974 until 1981 (he is profiled in TW 5/98). This article is excerpted from his forthcoming book, *Ebb Tide*, presently seeking a publisher. **Paul Caponigro** is a fine arts photographer now living in *Cushing, Me.*

O N D E A T H

by Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

“We may never pass
this way again...”

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Jackie Beckett—“Ascension”

I HAD THE MISFORTUNE to finish high school just as this song peaked in its popularity in my small Michigan town. At an all-school assembly, it was announced as our class' song and I fled. A friend tagged along. She knew that my father had just died — in New York City in 1974. I was glad for the company but also frustrated that she seemed self-absorbed, “I've never been this close to death before”

“Yeah, well, get a grip,” I wanted to yell. Or, had I known it then, I could have quoted Julie Wortman's favorite Emerson line, “Life is real; life is earnest.”

So now I'm about to turn 43 and have a high-grade cancer in my brain. I spent the whole last year struggling to digest the news that the seizures I had Labor Day weekend in 1998 were caused by an anaplastic glioblastoma. I fought believing that it was actually cancer until there was no other conclusion. Until that moment, I kept thinking, “Unhuh, I won't join that club 'til I have to. I'm not the cancer-personality type!”

Since then my partner Bill and I have read more than anyone wants to know about the theories on cancer, the composition of cancer, the treatments for cancer. I was quickly overwhelmed — even on the lack of agreement about what cancer is. And then there is lots of literature on how to develop the right attitude, how to grip something in this world so strongly, that dying is not an option. Some people refuse to

die because they have kids to raise. One farmer-type said, “Nope, I got to get home to my garden.” Doubtless some people live for their pets or the view or their neighbors. Perhaps they simply want to praise God in some particular way.

Recently I was sitting at my kitchen table talking with my 13-year-old. It's easy to forget that she's 13. She is extremely attentive and has always had a mind like a 35-year-old. She's good on details and usually right. It's hard when parenting her to try to recall that she is a child and needs to be protected like a child.

So, there I was, having an insight and she was my companion. I said to my own kid, “You know, I've been thinking about time. While it matters whether I die at 42 or at 82, in many ways it doesn't matter at all.”

Ever so gently, testing what I could bear, she said, “Mom, do you want to hear some reasons why it does matter?”

As it crashed in on me that I was having this conversation with the very last person in the world who should hear my philosophizing, I nodded. She told me that if I live to be 82, I would meet our grandchildren (should the girls choose to have any). I would have time to walk in the woods.

She tailored the list to the things I love, with a strong but gentle bias toward my being there as our kids grow up. At the same time, she managed not to put pressure on me. She was artful — as usual. It's challeng-

AND TIME

by Bill Wylie-Kellermann

ing parenting a child who is often older than you. (Lydia does have her faults, not to worry. And meanwhile Lucy is a bundle of joy and challenges of a different type. Lucy is much less likely to tell you what's on her mind. You have to notice. And she'll notice you notice! Both girls are smart and loving in radically different ways.)

But, despite my regrets for announcing my great insight about death and time to my oldest child, the thoughts remain true.

Daniel Corrigan preached at my Dad's installation as rector at the Church of the Advent in Boston in 1960. I've heard that he leaned forward with a twinkle in his eyes and said, "Sam Wylie is my best friend — and I don't care if he lives or dies!"

It's the great tension of our faith. What is it we are about? Are we living or dying? Does it matter?

Knowing some of the stats on cancer, I look around rooms now and wonder. If it's one out of three, who else shares this ailment? How can we help each other? What worldly things need to change? Which factories close? Which pollutants get screened out of smoke? How can we learn to walk in beauty and trust, while also fighting back? To model what it means to be an elder, yet also be effective at bringing change? And most of all, how can we praise God without ceasing in this time-bound world? ●

Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann is co-editor of *The Witness*, <jeanie@thewitness.org>. Photographer **Jackie Beckett** is a senior photographer at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, <foto@amnh.org>.

"I looked at my watch once more. It was time to go to the hospital. I laughed about that. I had no time left: I had all the time in the world."

IT IS PERHAPS NO COINCIDENCE, that William Stringfellow began to brood theologically about the matter of time as he faced the exigencies of life-threatening illness and the approach in 1968 of radical surgery. When, providentially and against all expectation, he awoke from the operation, he had been rendered a complete diabetic, thoroughly dependent on an elaborate regimen for day-to-day survival, a strict timetable of multiple mealtimes and insulin injections.

"The peril of death is concealed in the issue of whether a person with such health necessities is so obedient to time as to become enslaved to it, allowing the whole of existence to be regimented," he wrote. "Such a person ... becomes a chronic victim and morally dies. Then the very procedures commendable for sustaining life become radically dehumanizing and the actual state of the person is the moral equivalent of death."

Some years latter, at a public forum in Michigan, a friend of mine asked Stringfellow to identify some marks of resurrection. The questioner was astonished when the first thing Stringfellow named was "freedom from bondage to time." He mentioned the ailments and his refusal to be dominated or tyrannized by the strict regime, however necessary. He also mentioned the monastic rhythm and freedom of his homelife with Anthony Towne on Block Island, to which he'd moved following surgery, for healing and recuperation. As he wrote:

"There is little idolatry of time on the Island. In fact, the prevailing spirit of the community is somewhat contemptuous of time, having more a sense of history than destiny, and the style of life there implicitly ridicules the ethics of mainland society which makes people slaves of time."

Many recipients of his and Anthony's hospital-

ity over the years there, will attest to its healing character, the easy respite from the time-driven realm. They called their home "Eschaton" — the end of time.

Stringfellow expected that end imminently. In his view, the consciousness of imminence was normative in the biblical witness and the earliest Christian community. Admittedly, the notions of destroying death and the abolishing of time so tax language and thought as to push temporal categories beyond the capability of human vocabulary. Hence Scripture speaks, he said, "in marvelously versatile and appropriately diverse ways of the Second Advent: prophetically, metaphorically, parabolically, ecstatically, sacramentally, dogmatically, poetically, narratively — in every tongue or style or syntax or idiom available."

As far as Stringfellow was concerned, to expect the end at any moment, to hope for it, and to live in its anticipation implied a biblical ethic and politics. Or at least a radical freedom from which to improvise the other two.

In fact, it was to the loss and confusion of this consciousness that Stringfellow attributed the church's dependency upon political principalities and other institutions of power. In time it was a quick descent into ecclesiastical anxieties about survival, into elaborate false hopes and Constantinian arrangements, into collaboration and complicity with empire, into reliance on Death itself.

Conversely, living in the imminence of the Eschaton, living in freedom from bondage to time or necessity or any form of death, "That is the only way, for the time being, to live humanly." ●

Bill Wylie-Kellermann is editor of *A Keeper of the Word: Selected Writings of William Stringfellow*, Eerdmans, 1994.

Free Burma

In the November/December 1999 issue of *Utne Reader* Dan Orzech reports that efforts to model the campaign to bring democracy to the people of Burma on the anti-apartheid movement of the 1980s has hit a snag.

“Like the anti-apartheid campaign, the Burma movement has used divestment and purchasing laws to pressure an oppressive regime into political reforms,” Orzech writes. “More than two dozen U.S. cities and counties have passed Free Burma purchasing laws. One of the first of these measures was enacted in 1996 by the Massachusetts state legislature.

“But a recent court decision threatens to pull the rug out from the Free Burma laws — and lots of other laws at the same time. As a result of a lawsuit brought by the National Foreign Trade Council (NFTC), a Washington, D.C., lobbying group, a federal judge ruled in November 1998 that the Massachusetts Burma law was unconstitutional. A U.S. Appeals court upheld the decision last summer.”

The author of the Massachusetts Free Burma law is state legislator Byron Rushing, an Episcopalian who provided strong leadership in persuading the Episcopal Church’s General Convention to declare its support of the anti-apartheid movement through divestment. “If this court decision had happened 10 years ago,” Rushing said, “Nelson Mandela might still be in prison today.”

The state has announced it will appeal the case to the U.S. Supreme Court.

“The Burma purchasing law itself is pretty simple,” Orzech says. “It adds a 10 percent penalty to bids for state contracts from companies that do business in Burma. And it seems to be accomplishing its objective of cutting off financial support for Burma’s brutal military regime. A number of companies, including Apple Computer, Eastman Kodak and Hewlett-Packard, pulled out of Burma soon after the law was passed.”



But, Orzech notes, “some multinationals are concerned that the Burma law is only the beginning. Already, a few cities have passed similar purchasing laws focused on places like East Timor, Tibet and Nigeria.”

Labor and environmental groups are also worried — that the appeals court decision may be upheld. Affected could be environmental purchasing preferences now on the books in 48 states that involve such matters as: recycled content, alternative fuels and ink and sustainable forestry standards; at least 43 “Buy American” or “Buy Local” laws; laws that enforce the MacBride Principles; fair labor standards laws for goods purchased by cities and states.

Asks Orzech: “Does the Massachusetts law violate the U.S. Constitution? ‘Private individuals and corporations can base their purchasing decisions on their own moral standards,’ says Professor Robert Stumberg of Georgetown University’s school of law. ‘Will the Supreme Court bar states from doing the same thing? I doubt it.’”

Unjust in the much

Unjust in the Much: The Death Penalty in North Carolina, edited by Calvin Kytte and Daniel H. Pollitt (my uncle), collects talks from a 1998 symposium of North Carolinians involved in fighting the death penalty. You don’t often hear grassroots voices like these in the death penalty debate — local lawyers, clergy and activists talking simply and from their own experience about poverty and racism, about police who persuade retarded people to make false confessions and about court-appointed lawyers who show up drunk to trial. Such abuses have caused the American Bar Association to call for a moratorium on the death penalty, but *Unjust in the Much* (the title is from Luke 16:10) also argues for opposition on principle. Order the book from Geoffrey Mock, 1008 Lamond Ave., Durham, N.C. 22701; <geoff@dukenews.duke.edu>.

— Katha Pollitt, *The Nation*, 11/15/99

Lenten Reflections

The Coming World War: Forty Reflections on Themes of Peace and Justice with Jeremiah for Lent. By James G. White. \$6.00 to Mark Stone Press, 1826 2nd Ave. #132, New York, NY 10128.

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Scripture Conference at CDSP

Jan. 20-22, the Church Divinity School of the Pacific in Berkeley, Calif. will sponsor Healing Leaves: The Authority of the Bible for Anglicans Today. The conference will take a close look at the role Scripture plays in the life of the Anglican Communion. Presenters will offer a perspective from southern Africa, examine the effect of increasing diversity on interpretation, learn what the Bible says about the nature of work, and explore how we can see the Bible as a source of hope. Jan. 18-19, CDSP will also offer a pre-conference class. Lectures will review the role of Scripture in the Anglican tradition, the dialogue of scriptures with other traditions, and issues of biblical authority emerging from the 1998 Lambeth Conference. For more information or a registration form, call 800-353-CDSP.

Students 4 Justice

In the Denver public school system, some students are learning more outside of class than inside. While researching Nike's exploitation of Third World workers, students discovered that one of the company's corporate strategies was "bro-ing," the practice of using urban culture to sell high-priced products to youth of color. The students, who were primarily white, middle class and suburban, decided they needed to involve others in their efforts.

"When they realized that they were not necessarily the best messengers, they stepped aside so youth of color could lead," says Soyun Park, an organizer with Students 4 Justice, an 800-member multiracial organization.

The group is taking on not just Nike but the local school district as well. Some schools do not have enough desks, so students sit on the floor or on stacks of newspapers, says Elsa Bañuelos, an organizer and a student at West High School. The buildings are deteriorating, with rat holes, broken light fixtures and dangling ceiling tiles. Textbooks are older than some students' parents and there are not enough to go around. Bañuelos also objects to the heavy military recruitment, especially for minorities, in the schools.

Students 4 Justice activists investigated the extent of school neglect and analyzed school budgets. Then they approached the school board. As a result of the group's testimony, West High School was moved to the top of the list of schools to be painted. Meanwhile, students raised \$2,500 for trees and shrubs.

"If you can voice your complaint about Nike, you can voice your complaint about your school, the treatment you get in a department store, anything," says Janet Damon, an organizer with the group and a student at Metro State College of Denver.

— Lisa Durán, *The Progressive*, 11/99

Bono rocks on debt

In a recent *Nation* editorial (12/6/99), David Corn comments on U2 rock star Bono's lobbying efforts on behalf of Jubilee 2000, the international coalition of religious and non-governmental groups working to win forgiveness of the crushing debt of the poorest nations. In June the industrial nations agreed to a U.S.-led proposal to relieve up to \$90 billion of \$127 billion owed by 33 nations, but without Congressional action nothing will happen.

"Bono's two-day rush through Congress — organized by the U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops and the Episcopal Church — was a blur," Corn writes. "He thinks he may have briefly met House majority whip Tom DeLay, but he isn't sure. Bono did have sit-downs with House speaker Dennis Hastert, majority leader Dick Armey and Senators Mitch McConnell, Paul Coverdell and Ted Stevens. Most of the questions he faced concerned the gold matter — lawmakers from gold-mining states fear that an IMF gold sell-off would depress the market price. 'But,' he notes, 'they clearly were concerned, because there is support from the conservative side and the religious right.'"

Corn says Bono turned to the issue of debt relief "when he was shopping for a way to use his celebrity status to do good. In the mid-1980s he had participated in LiveAid, which raised money to fight famine in Africa, after which he and his wife worked for a month in Africa. 'I became interested in the structure of poverty,' he recalls. 'There's an intellectual and moral absurdity in a country like Niger spending more on debt payments than education and health-care combined.'"

Working at right livelihood, 24 hours a day

by Marianne Arbogast

WHEN ANN AND JACKIE Perrault-Victor pledged their lives to each other in a commitment ceremony a year-and-a-half ago, they also pledged to follow a common spiritual path based on the Buddhist precepts, one of which is Right Livelihood. But their groundwork for living out this precept was already firmly established: Two months earlier, they had celebrated the Grand Opening of their joint business venture, Avalon International Breads.

Seven hundred people showed up to offer support for the new organic bakery located in one of Detroit's toughest neighborhoods, the Cass Corridor. For the Perrault-Victors, this validated the staggering commitment of time and energy it took to establish the business. For months on end, 100-hour work weeks had been the norm.

"For that first year-and-a-half or two years, the physical nature of the work was just unreal," Jackie says. "And the hours we were working — we were starting production at 3 a.m. We just gave up, after about three weeks, the notion that we would ever do anything else with our time. Basically, we just had to check out in the same way that new parents do — everything else takes a backseat. You can't parcel out time for something like this — you either give yourself over to it completely and unconditionally or you don't do it."

"It's our total life, still," Ann adds. "We're peeking out a little bit more at a life for ourselves, but we're small business owners, and that's the story of a small business owner."

But for Ann and Jackie, Avalon Breads was much more than a way to earn a living. "It was our passion," Jackie says. "I felt this was all my political beliefs and all

my ethics as well as my very practical vision for the kind of world I want to live in, and if we could make it work here, it could be a bit of an example — or at least I could feel that I used my life to do something that made a difference. And we knew when we had the Grand Opening that something was definitely happening here. We had 700 people show up and we had bread out and we had people from the suburbs talking with homeless people, and it was like, we did it! This is it!"

Like breadbaking itself, the founding of the bakery took time. In the summer of 1996, the Perrault-Victors apprenticed themselves to a group of bakers working in northern Michigan. They learned breadbaking and bakery management from the ground up, returning to Detroit with new expertise and a lot of enthusiasm but few resources.

"We didn't have any capital to start, really," Jackie says. "So we wrote about 300 letters to friends and family and people we had been involved with in the community, asking them to be 'bread dough starters.' They would pre-purchase bread, and they could redeem their 'bread dough' for bread once we started, in combination with cash."

"They turned us on to other people who gave us larger amounts of money, too," Ann says. "There's a group of 10 women that helps womens' businesses open, and they loaned us \$10,000. And the Zen temple in Ann Arbor, where we attended a class by Geri Larkin [author of *Building a Business the Buddhist Way*, which is dedicated to Ann and Jackie Perrault-Victor], has a right livelihood fund — they gave us \$2,000 dollars."

Gradually, the women raised enough money to obtain a bank loan, wrote a business plan, found and remodeled a

space for the bakery in a former art gallery, and purchased an oven. In their mission statement, they spelled out their understanding of right livelihood.

"For us it meant three things," Jackie says. "It meant having a business that was gentle and healthy for the earth. It meant having a business that was in right relationship with the community around us. And it meant having right relationships with our employees — paying good wages, providing benefits, profit-sharing."

It was the third principle that put them through "spiritual boot camp," she says.

"The thing that caught us out of left field was that third one — trying to figure out this thing about being bosses, but doing it in a different way and being compassionate and keeping our hearts open. It was unbelievable discipline to — no matter what happened — always keep our hearts open, sometimes even while creating a very difficult boundary, like letting someone go who doesn't perceive themselves as having choices. Or having someone steal from you."

The neighborhood, where they live as well as work, also presented them with challenges. Twice last fall, they were held up at gunpoint.

"In this neighborhood, with the amount of homelessness and people on the street, if you don't pay attention you just get hard," Ann says. "You have to make the choice of keeping your heart open, getting to know people."

The Perrault-Victors count the diversity of people surrounding them as a benefit of their work. They now employ 13 people, including a baking staff of African-American men and a handful of young anarchists from a nearby community.

"Our midnight baker is a very devout Muslim, and on his résumé he said his

goal was to find work that would allow him to further his religious studies," Jackie says. "You would think, what would an African-American Muslim have to do with Jewish-Christian-Buddhist lesbians? And yet the fundamentals of our spiritual outlooks are very close. And he really gets the subtleties that we don't say about why we're doing what we're doing.

"Then we have these young anarchist kids — they're a great group. They're anarchists, so they don't believe in waiting for someone else to tell them what to do. We have gay and straight, we have college-educated people and people without their G.E.D.s. It's a wonderful mix."

The spirit in the bakery is companionable and easygoing. Customers from the neighborhood, which includes Detroit's cultural and medical centers as well as Wayne State University, chat or read papers while sipping Equal Exchange coffee with their Poletown Rye, Leelanau Cherry Walnut, Brioche, or one of the day's selection of pastries. Most, perhaps, can't imagine the level of commitment needed to maintain the serene ambiance.

"Training employees is really difficult," Ann says. "Just the physical handwork — you don't even get good bread knowledge 'till after a year."

"We do naturally leavened bread, a very traditional way of baking — it's something between a craft and a science, really," Jackie says. "There are recipes, but nothing's ever exactly the same, because temperature changes, humidity changes, moisture content of the flour changes. Organic flour changes as the weather and the rains change."

The choice to use organic flour is a matter of justice as well as health, Ann explains.

"Organics are more expensive for a reason. They profit-share with people all the way down the line, to the person who's pick-



Ann and Jackie Perrault-Victor at Avalon International Breads, located in Detroit, Mich.

ing the grain, the person who's milling the grain. It's a different way of distributing wealth."

These days, the staff works on shifts round the clock to produce each day's breads and pastries. "We're trying to put together some good training procedures and develop managers, so we're at a different point now," Ann says. "The big break was, Jackie took me to Paris for my 40th birthday in September. We prepared our staff to run the place by themselves and they did it."

They now take two days off each week, and longer breaks as needed.

"Sometimes I need to go away for a few days to a meditation retreat or a yoga retreat," Jackie says. "Ann goes horseback riding. We have to plan that in or it does not happen."

Ann is now able to devote some of her time to overseeing the renovation of a century-old house, as well as working with the Detroit Women's Coffeehouse, a forum for women artists which she has produced for the past 20 years. And she and Jackie plan to begin a family together.

It takes vigilance to avoid getting caught up in an unnecessary momentum, Jackie says.

"Now that our business is working, of course, the next impulse is grow, franchise, get bigger, change. At first, part of us said, we should do this, but then we just looked at each other and said, to what end? We

don't want more money. We live very well and the idea for this was not us becoming rich and powerful. It is everything we can do to put the brakes on and say, what we have is enough.

"We're providing a livelihood for people and we are moving people and we are working with people we never would have had the opportunity to meet. I think we are making this neighborhood a little richer. And there's no better way to change the economy in terms of the environment than have a business that uses organic products and supports other businesses that use organic products."

Having previously spent much of her time doing political organizing around nuclear disarmament and Latin American issues, Jackie sees her work at the bakery as "the other side of the coin.

"With one, you're spending your time engaging with the powers-that-be in Washington, hoping that they're going to change their minds, that they're going to make a difference. With the other, you try to make a difference. Whether they change their minds or not, you still have an opportunity to change the way peoples' lives are. It's really how you choose to spend your time, addressing which part of that wheel." ●

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