



SAINT PETER'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

FALL 2007

1950 TRUMBULL DETROIT, MICHIGAN 48216 • 313-496-0938

MORE THAN JUST FEEDING THE HUNGRY

By Jeff DeBruyn, Day House

My parents separated when I was fourteen. When I was sixteen it was revealed to me that my mother was a lesbian. This news would be a shock to most people, but its impact on me was especially difficult. You see, I was born and raised on the west side of the state. I attended fundamentalist Christian schools. My relatives were all fundamentalists. Thus, from all directions I was hearing that my mother was a sinner and that she was going to burn in hell. Similarly, this was at the height of the Reagan era and the onset of AIDS. Reagan ignored the AIDS epidemic and his policies and rhetoric were anti-gay. These were painful times.

Even though it was a person I loved who was gay and not myself, I felt terrible. I felt condemned, hated and scorned. I felt different. I remember my confusion. I asked my mother how these people who claimed to be Christians could be so hurtful. My mother's answer was a good one. She told me that the Jesus she worshipped signified love, and that those others were misguided. Her answer provided some solace but much anger remained. My deep love for my gay mother, and the hurt that she and others like her experienced because of the policies and attitudes of the Christian right and the Reagan administration, instilled in me a will to fight for the weak and vulnerable.

I always felt that I would be fine as an educated, middle-class white male but, because of these experiences, I felt compelled to protect others who, through no fault of their own, did not have the same privileges and advantages that I had. My anger led me to law school, because I wanted to fight the HMOs and insurance companies that were denying people the health care that they needed. When I finished law school I realized that I'd become a person that I didn't particularly like. I was not a very loving – or lovable – person. My anger had grown exponentially.

Now, five years later I feel like my values are back in order. I am motivated by love, not anger. Now, I am in a position to protect and care for our weak and vulnerable friends that visit the Manna Meal Community Soup Kitchen.

Manna Meal does much, much more than just feed the hungry. There are multiple biblical bases for the creation and operation of the soup kitchen. The Hebrews in the desert were fed by manna during their 40-year sojourn. We feel we are acting as God's agents in providing free food to people today who are in a "wandering" state, often physically, sometimes mentally. The Bible says the multitudes were given "as much as they wanted." We try to do the same. There are also biblical images of a future Messianic banquet where all will sit down to eat freely. We try to provide a small "preview" of that future event. These biblical bases for the creation and operation of the soup kitchen seem to be about literally providing food for the body. I, on the other hand, want to talk about the food for the soul that is provided by the existence of Manna Meal and its biblical basis.

I am most interested in assuring that our guests at Manna Meal

are made to feel welcome, safe and loved. Isn't that the meaning of Jesus' message? I am a bit of a simpleton when it comes to understanding the Bible, but it seems that his teachings are pretty simple and straightforward. (This reminds me of a time I heard the Dalai Lama give a two hour lecture that was barely comprehensible to me. At the conclusion of his lecture he summed up by stating,

"If you were unsure of the meaning of this lecture, just remember two words: 'be kind'.")

Everyone knows the "love" or "wedding" chapter of the Bible. Paul said: "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy. It does not boast. It is not proud...self-seeking...easily angered...now these three remain: faith, love and hope. The greatest of these is love." It was Jesus' ethos of love and compassion that motivated him to eat his meals most often with tax collectors, prostitutes and other marginalized people. It was this sense of "community" that Jesus preached. It is this understanding of community that we try to promote at Manna Meal.

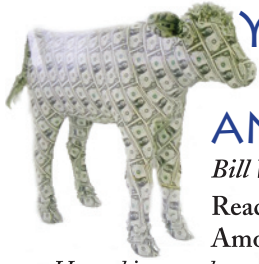
Is this mandate easy? Does it "feel" good? It is not always easy. It is especially difficult when someone you feed and extend your hospitality to continuously defies the dining room rules or urinates or defecates on the floor in the bathroom or carries his tray of food outside, eats and then throws trash on the church property when a trash can is less than 20 feet away. It's not fun when someone defecates between the dumpsters (and I step in it at 8:00 am) when there is a toilet nearby. It is not easy when our guests steal from us, lie to us or hit us. My response to these behaviors is to remind myself that these folks are not in their right mind. (We also impose negative reinforcements as necessary.) I also imagine the sad, painful lives these folks must have had leading up to that point, that would allow them to act in such a way. The world outside St. Peter's is a cold, harsh place for our guests.

Based upon my painful childhood experiences, I feel that I have a tiny, tiny understanding of the scorn, condemnation, shame and pain that our friends – our guests – feel out on the streets. It is my hope that I never contribute to that pain. It is also my hope that by providing a safe place like Manna Meal, we are giving our guests a few hours of peace and maybe a small glimpse of the Kingdom of God.

The soup kitchen began in 1976 out of a storefront on Michigan Avenue. The Catholic parishes in the neighborhood (Holy Trinity and St. Boniface) had homeless people coming to the rectory asking for food. They thought a soup kitchen would better fill this need. The Catholic Worker community had just moved into the neighborhood and agreed to manage it. Six months later, St. Peter's Episcopal Church opened its doors and Manna Meal has been there ever since.

Father Tom Lumpkin has been a full-time member of the Catholic Worker community since June of 1978. Marianne Arbogast joined the community in 1980. I joined in June of 2006. Over the years Marianne and Tom have become co-managers of the kitchen.

As the Corktown neighborhood has become more gentrified, tolerance for Manna Meal patrons has become an issue once again. We stand with the poor, and pray for understanding on both sides.



YOU CANNOT SERVE GOD AND MAMMON

Bill Wylie-Kellermann's sermon Sept. 23, 2007
Readings for Proper 20: September 23, 2007
Amos 8:4-7

Hear this, you that trample on the needy, and bring to ruin the poor of the land, saying... "We will make the ephah small and the shekel great, and practice deceit with false balances, buying the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, and selling the sweepings of the wheat." The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob: Surely I will never forget any of their deeds.

Luke 16:1-13

16. *Then Jesus said to the disciples, "There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was squandering his property. ²So he summoned him and said to him, 'What is this that I hear about you? Give me an accounting of your management, because you cannot be my manager any longer.' ³Then the manager said to himself, 'What will I do, now that my master is taking the position away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. ⁴I have decided what to do so that, when I am dismissed as manager, people may welcome me into their homes.' ⁵So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' ⁶He answered, 'A hundred jugs of olive oil.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it fifty.' ⁷Then he asked another, 'And how much do you owe?' He replied, 'A hundred containers of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill and make it eighty.' ⁸And his master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly; for the children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light... You cannot serve God and wealth."*

You cannot serve God and Wealth. God and Money. Even better: You cannot serve God and Mammon. That's the first quibble of translation that I will take up with our texts this morning.

Jesus spoke of the spirituality of "Mammon" both here and in the Sermon on the Mount. His ministry included a number of instances of naming and rebuking the commercial powers and authorities. The action at the Temple currency exchange was surely one of them. None, however, was more explicit and forthright than labeling money or wealth as Mammon. He literally named it for us. He calls it a god, an idol, a demon. Jesus identifies Mammon's aggression in competing with God for human allegiance. You cannot serve both, he says.

We are deluded to imagine that money is a mere passive medium of exchange, an abstract reference or token of balance. Mammon itself is a spiritual power which acts with a kind of autonomy, directing and controlling, and finally possessing, human life. If we are to imagine and create new economic forms, as I believe we are, we must not be naive in this regard.

Actually, Karl Marx (whom I seldom quote in sermons) had a related idea about money as a spiritual power. He spoke of it in terms of alienation, naturally. Specifically, he recognized the projection of human labor and human life onto money, in such a way that it takes on "life" of its own. (See Franz Hinkelammert, *The Ideological Weapons of Death*, Orbis, 1981). It thereby takes on a religious aura and is made sacred. This is his theory of "fetishism" in which money (or a commodity or capital) is

"personified" and human beings are "commodified." (A familiar inversion or reversal, no?) He even identified it with the Anti-Christ—with the mark of the beast in Revelation 13! He spoke of the prophets of Israel.

Amos reflects a similar notion – the life and labor of the poor is not merely projected, it is stolen. The exchange and the scales are rigged. Their bread is swiped in the mix of chaff.

At 6am day before yesterday the staff of the Worker Center (Centro Obrero) and an undocumented worker made their way to Northville to lie in wait in the parking lot of a local shop to catch the owner and demand wages he was withholding from this worker – primarily because he could. Whether at the hands of auto parts suppliers in Detroit, paying women minimum wage to make video screens for SUVs; or landscape companies or building contractors, undocumented folks are vulnerable to having their pay stolen. Where do those wages end up? Where does the unpaid Social Security and FICA and unemployment go? It ends up in the idolatrous spirituality of Mammon.

This employer has ICE waiting in the wings as a threat of imprisonment and deportation. But this worker had two tenacious women waiting to jump the owner in the parking lot, and scrap like hell (or heaven) demanding justice. On Friday they got it, exacting his wages.

There is categorically no wealth in this country that does not have beneath it and within it, literally and spiritually, 200 years of stolen labor in chattel slavery. All of it is inherently "unjust mammon."

In the parable which Jesus tells, there is an absentee landlord. I believe I know where he lives – Jerusalem. Moreover I have a pretty good guess to which political party he belonged: the Sadducees. They were landed Jerusalem aristocrats with Galilean interests who supported the Roman occupation as good for business, keeping the *pax romana* lid on peasant uprisings.

The owner in the parable has a steward/manager who is an overseer of the sharecroppers who work the land. Why do I say "sharecroppers?" because what they owe is crops. Olive oil and wheat. Get behind and your "bill" (which is to say your bondage) gets bigger and deeper. Next thing you know you are a debt slave, caught in indentured servitude.

Now the absentee landlord gets a report that profits are not high enough; not keeping pace with expectations. The overseer is not squeezing the peasants hard enough, so he calls him in and gives him the axe.

Our translation this morning calls him a dishonest steward, but this is my second quibble. A more precise rendering would be "manager of injustice" (See Sharon Ringe, *Luke*). The former suggests that his violation is of the owner; the latter of those he oversees, the very essence of his position.

Now quickly, before his loss of authority be noised about, the manager of injustice "forgives their debts," as we say in the Lord's Prayer. In effect, he switches his allegiance, or his service, from the master to the slaves. He makes friends for himself among those on the bottom. It is, as noted, a shrewd and kingdomwise move.

We are about to make a shrewd liturgical move. We are going to let go of Mammon and declare our allegiance to God.

If money, if wealth, if mammon has a sacred power, how do we break its idolatrous grip upon us?

Jacques Ellul, of blessed memory, writes of a certain freedom

as the very thing which profanes the sacred power of money:

Now this profanation is first of all the result of a spiritual battle, but this must be translated into behavior. There is one act *par excellence* which profanes money by going directly against the law of money, an act for which money is not made. This act is giving. Individuals as well as authorities know very well that giving attacks something sacred. They know full well that it is an act of profanation, of destruction of a value they worship. (*Money and Power*, 1984)

Where this happens liturgically, albeit too often unbeknownst and unrecognized, is in our Sunday offering. We are accustomed to imagining that money brought to the altar is thereby set apart as "sanctified." Let the profane be made sacred — so go our prayers. To the contrary, says Ellul, exactly the opposite transpires: upon the altar money is desacralized. The alienated projection is withdrawn and emptied out. There is something wondrous in imagining a new economy beginning at the altar, beginning literally in eucharist: the gifts come forward and in the giving a choice is made. For God. (For humanity). We bet our lives on something radically simple — the economy of grace.

Under One Roof

**COME EAT, DRINK &
RAISE THE ROOF FOR
SAINT PETER'S
EPISCOPAL CHURCH
FUNDRAISING DINNER
AND SILENT AUCTION
NOVEMBER 30TH, 2007
CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. PAUL
BARTH HALL • 4800 WOODWARD
AT WARREN • DETROIT, MICHIGAN**

Reasonable Roofing is replacing the roof and gutters on the St. Peter's sanctuary and parish house. Cadillac Glass is replacing the windows on the Leverette house, occupied by Young Detroit Builders. Both are long overdue. By the time you read this, the jobs may be done. Part of the roof cost is covered by a grant from the Diocese; a little more has come in from parishioners and friends. However, we are far from the total cost of over \$50,000 for both the roof and the windows.

To help with these projects, we are having a fundraising dinner and silent auction Nov. 30th at Barth Hall. We will enjoy music by Ange Smith and the fellowship of good friends. Please come. If you cannot attend, please consider contributing goods or services for the silent auction, or sending a special donation to help put a new roof over our heads. Any amount is appreciated. Please indicate "Renovation" on your check.

Send to:

St. Peter's Episcopal Church
1950 Trumbull
Detroit MI 48216.

Look for your invitation in the mail. Thank you!

WHERE TO NOW, ST. PETER?

In recent meetings, St. Peter's members tried to define our vision for the future. We looked at what should stay the same, what change we want to see, and where we want to be three years from now. This is the beginning result of that process. We can roughly sum up the three main aspects of our life as Welcome, Worship and Witness.

1. WE WANT TO CONTINUE:

HOSPITALITY - Welcome all, including the homeless; share fellowship meals, host arts/community events.

WORSHIP and PRAYER - Bible study, music; foster discipleship/spirituality; be a visible sign of community by caring for one another.

ACTIVISM - Support peace and economic/social justice; be present to the city of Detroit; involve neighbors, YDB, Soup Kitchen in our life; get involved.

(Worship and activism at St. Peter's can complement each other. Not everyone is an activist; not everyone is contemplative. But both live by a belief system. Appreciate everyone; honor all the ways that people come to life.)

2. WE WANT TO CHANGE:

MUSIC - Use diverse, simple, lively music; teach and learn new (and old) songs; elicit more participation.

OUTREACH - Invite more members; involve members of the surrounding neighborhoods/streets in our meetings/ministries. Address the needs of this city.

COMFORT - Make physical environment more comfortable; address heating/cooling; cleanliness; wheelchair access. (Physical comfort is an aspect of hospitality.)

3. OUR GOALS ARE:

GROWTH - We would like a congregation of 40-plus people including young people and kids each Sunday, and growing.

DECISION-MAKING should be done as communally as possible; with prayer, shared responsibility, shared knowledge.

BE A CHURCH COMMUNITY known for peace and justice work; worship; teaching ministry.

Bill offered the following prayer for St Peter's (adapted from Thomas Merton):

My Lord God, We have no idea where we are going. We do not see the road ahead of us. We cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do we really know ourselves, and the fact that we think we are following your will does not mean that we are actually doing so. But we believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And we hope we have that desire in all that we are doing. We hope that we will never do anything apart from that desire. And we know that if we do this, you will lead us by the right road though we know nothing about it. Therefore will we trust you always though we may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. We will not fear, for you are ever with us, and you will never leave us to face our perils alone. Amen.

*Christ is the head of this house
The silent listener to every conversation
The unseen guest at every table.
—contributed by Susan Hayward*

WEEKLY EVENTS

Sundays 10:00 AM Bible Study; 11:30 AM Liturgy
7:00 PM Evening Prayer

Monday Evenings 7:30 p.m. Book Study
Reaching Out by Henri Nouwen 8:30 p.m. **Compline**

Tuesday Evenings 7:00 Narcotics Anonymous (downstairs;
enter through red door near parking lot)

M,T,W,F and Saturday 7:00-11:00 AM Manna Meal

CALENDAR

9/28 7:30 pm - Concert for Manna Meal: Julie Beutel,
Trina Hamlin, Celeste Headlee, Rev. Robert Jones - \$12

10/4 6:30-8pm - Deanery meeting - St. Timothy's

10/7 Julie Beutel sings during 11:30 AM service.

10/13 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. - **Detroit City of Hope**
Tried Stone Baptist Church, 1550 Taylor, Detroit, Mi 48206
(313) 871-1878

10/16 6:30 pm - **Detroit City of Hope** Tried Stone Baptist
Church

10/21 **Mark Jenkins** preaches, celebrates

10/22 **Jimmy Massey** and **F.A.M.E.** (Finding Alternatives to
Military Enlistment)

10/23 6:30 PM - Detroit Vision - Tried Stone Baptist Church

10/26-27- **Diocesan Convention** - E. Lansing

11/4 - **Julie Beutel** sings during 11:30 AM service.

11/11 - **Mark Jenkins** preaches, celebrates

11/30 St. Peter's Fundraiser, Barth Hall



CHRIS HOOKER PHOTO

MANNA GARDEN

By *Elisa Herrada Gurule*

On Sept. 14, volunteers Rosann Jager, Elisa Herrada Gurule, Javier Cardenas, Lindsay Turpin, Bill Samuels, Chris Hooker, Meble Tin and Bill Wylie-Kellermann started a new community garden on the south side of St. Peter's parking lot. Dean St. Savoy's pickup truck delivered compost from the Catherine Ferguson Farm. Brooks Lumber provided wood and hardware. Days later lettuce, spinach, collard greens and kale had sprouted.

We hope for a harvest for Manna Meal, the soup kitchen that has operated for the last 30 years at St. Peter's, and to the surrounding community. Some neighbors think Manna Meal would be better off closed; but maybe a better way to discourage blight is to make the community feel a little more considered. Loved, even. To that end, the Manna Garden was born. It is one small manifestation of enormous goodwill. Many thanks to all who came to dig, build, and donate food and energy.

SAINT PETER'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

1950 TRUMBULL DETROIT, MICHIGAN 48216 • 313-496-0938