



SAINT PETER'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

SUMMER 2007

1950 TRUMBULL DETROIT, MICHIGAN 48216 (313-496-0938)

GIVE ME SHELTER

Biblical tradition recalls Israel as a sojourner community in foreign lands, and makes a priority of protecting the alien and the stranger. Scripture also cites sanctuary cities, where people fleeing violence could find refuge. Detroit was a station on the Underground Railroad, and in the 1980s a Sanctuary City for Central Americans. St. Peter's was the first home of the Detroit-Windsor Refugee Coalition (now called Freedom House), and has sheltered homeless and at-risk people.

So, it was natural that on March 10, Walter Coleman, pastor of Adalberto United Methodist Church in Chicago, spoke at St. Peter's about sanctuary. (His church shelters undocumented worker Elvira Arellano, a lay leader in the congregation. The 31-year-old Mexican woman is living in the church office with her 7-year-old son.) Then, on April 28th, Saul Escobar Toledo of the PRD (Party of the Democratic Revolution) came to speak on immigration and globalization.

The *New York Times* cited 221,664 undocumented immigrants deported last year—20% more than the year before. (The goal in Detroit alone was 10,000 deportees.) Immigration and Customs Enforcement says it focuses on criminals but uses indiscriminate sweeps that tear parents away from their U.S.-born children. A recent sweep in New Bedford, MA, left over 70 children home alone after their parents were arrested. Over 3 million U.S. children have at least one undocumented parent.

Who are these people? Coleman characterized undocumented workers as living the family values that Americans mostly just talk about. They work. They send more in remittances (some \$20 billion last year) to their families in Mexico than the U.S. gives to all of Latin America in foreign aid. It is amazing. These are mostly people who are cleaning hotel rooms, picking crops, working on landscaping crews. Most pay taxes, but will never collect the Social Security benefits they pay for. Approximately \$7 billion of their unclaimed Social Security funds sit in U.S. coffers. They can't even file for tax refunds without dreading that midnight knock on the door. And, during recent hearings on the immigration bill, employers made it clear that the U.S. needs migrant workers. One Arizona farmer said despite paying \$12 per hour, he could not get native-born Americans to work his crops. We need them.

How do they get here? Some pay *coyotes* huge sums and risk death in the desert. Elvira Arellano walked through a turnstile.

Why do they risk it? As opposed to the political refugees of the 1980s, today's arrivals are primarily economic refugees, although violence is a factor. Toledo said that 500 PRD members had been killed in Mexico, and gang violence is escalating.

Many jobs went from the U.S. to Mexico to China. Toledo said, "China has become the biggest *maquiladora* in the world." And, for Mexican farmers, NAFTA was a disaster. U.S. corn flooded the Mexican market, driving many small farmers off their farms, into cities, to *maquiladoras* and finally across the border. Then the push for ethanol-based fuel drove up the price of corn, making tortilla prices skyrocket in Mexico.

What can we do? Pay attention to the immigration debate. Outsiders have always been an easy target in hard times (and in Detroit, these are hard times.) Remember that the alien and the stranger are God's people too. Rev. Bill Wylie-Kellermann spoke to the Detroit City Council on May 1, urging that Detroit again become a Sanctuary City. The Council passed an ordinance which essentially separates law enforcement from immigration enforcement. Police making traffic stops or responding to a call for help may not ask about residency status, for example. That is the ICE's job.

Coleman's and Toledo's visits were part of an interfaith conversation sponsored by Latinos Unidos, a Detroit-based community action agency.

KEY QUESTIONS

Rev. Bill Wylie-Kellermann is a year into a 2-year commitment at St. Peter's. While much good has occurred so far, we need your help to discern where we are and what our future direction should be. Please join us Sunday, July 8th at 1:30 for a potluck and conversation. Tell us:

- How would you describe your experience of St. Peter's now?
- What draws you and what drives you away?
- Where do we want to be a year from now?
- What would be the same and what would change?
- What vision do we share for ministry and life together?
- What would make you want a deeper involvement with St. Peter's?

Please come. If you cannot attend, please email your thoughts to bill@scupe.com or mail to St. Peter's.

WEEKLY EVENTS

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

Mondays 7:30 p.m. Book Study *Goatwalkers* by Jim Corbett.
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 Community Meal** (downstairs)

CALENDAR

7/6 – Pastors for Peace Caravan at St Peters

7/8 – 1:30 Potluck and conversation on direction

7/21 – Detroit City of Hope event

7/21 Call to Action - Catholic group's Mary Magdalene service

7/22 – Mark Jenkins presides at 11:30 Eucharist

8/19 – Mark Jenkins presides at 11:30 Eucharist

8/23, 1:30-4:30 PM - Young Detroit Builders Commencement.

WHY WE DON'T CHANGE OUR COMMUNITIES

By Joyce Elferdink

In April I was in a picturesque place—the Kanuga Retreat Center in Hendersonville, North Carolina. I joined 69 others—mostly animated, committed Episcopalians. During our three days together we learned, we ate, we prayed, and we began the process of organizing to do justice. Today I received about two dozen emails from these new partners, all responding to a previous email asking if the email list is accessible to everyone. Not one person asked if our lives are different—and if we have made a difference—because of our Kanuga experience.

Are we doing justice and loving mercy—as we were told to do at the conference? Church people tend to do mercy and love justice. Doing mercy is to be a good Samaritan—staff soup kitchens, help kids who didn't make it in our public school systems, etc. Doing justice is addressing the systems that perpetrate the inequities. If we only focus on acts of mercy, we never really reduce the need, and we can't help all the needy.

We were reminded of the Good Samaritan story. The focus is typically on the Samaritan who stopped to help the victim of a violent act when other “faithful servants” passed him by. However, the victim would surely have preferred to live in a community without such violence. Yes, it was nice that someone cared enough to help, but the beating was still unjust and his wounds took a long time to heal.

Do we want to be shown mercy when we are in need, or do we want to live in a peaceful neighborhood where we have what we need, a place where compassion is the norm? Jesus' example was to do many acts of compassion, but never losing sight of his consuming goal: to transform a corrupt system. Psalm 82 insists that His people “defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed. Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.”

Sam Lloyd, Dean of the National Cathedral, said that social problems cannot be addressed by charity alone. His vision is to help people find their voice. Dean Lloyd urged us to *mind* the gap (i.e., between privilege and poverty), not *close* the gap (put evil out of our minds).

In the workshop on How to Organize in Your Community for Justice, led by Lutheran pastor John Heinemeier, we were given a profile of “resurrection people.” Resurrection people encourage each other, work for justice and invite our network(s) into the life of the church; as well as praying, studying Scripture, tithing, and attending church. He counseled us to release the spirit of power and love given to us by God. When we organize within and among our congregations around issues we will have sufficient power and money to do justice.

One source of money is the business community. Corporations don't necessarily know where the needs are. Telling stories of how people are being affected by our work may unlock the goodness within a corporate culture. In the workshop on Making Common Ground Partners with Corporations, recently retired corporate executive Alex Netchvolodoff shared this thought-provoking point: many corporations donate to charities—but typically only to those that can help build the business brand. That means we must do our research well, identifying a company's motivation to give, and knowing who makes the decision to release resources. We must build long-term relationships with those whose legacy would be enhanced by subsidizing our work. When it is time to ask for money—when the relationships are sound—we would do well to bring our best

storytellers (representatives from groups we have helped) to the table.

Saul Alinsky, the pioneering Chicago community organizer and author of *Reveille for Radicals*, prescribed meeting in small groups (12 to 14 people) to organize for social justice in the 1940s. Alinsky believed in the radical American idea that democracy is for ordinary people. He created the Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council to give indigenous leaders and divided ethnic groups a sense of the wonderful possibilities of citizenship through collective action. The organizing strategy of the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), also founded by Alinsky, is now used effectively in several Episcopal churches represented at Kanuga. The Metropolitan Organizing Strategy Enabling Strength (MOSES), a Detroit faith-based initiative, uses the IAF approach in affiliation with the Gamaliel Foundation, a national organizing institution.

Study Circles, a similar organizing strategy used internationally, consist of eight to 12 people who meet regularly over a period of time to address an issue through guided conversations. The Circle progresses from personal reflections (How does this issue affect me personally?) to broader perspectives (What is the problem? What do others say about this issue? How do we frame it? What is our shared vision regarding this particular issue?) and then to action (What can I do? What can we do?). Challenged to do more than simply call for action from community or institutional leaders, participants consider what they as individuals and as a group can do, then generate action strategies that will become their responsibility. Strategies for action can often be immediately implemented, outcomes measured, and successes shared.

A local organizing body for study circles, the Metropolitan Christian Council: Detroit-Windsor has invited more than 40 community organizations and faith-based institutions to participate in study circles to reduce violence in the Detroit area. There are four levels of participation:

- 1) a steering committee—primary decision-makers who implement and evaluate each facet of the project;
- 2) staff members/volunteers who market and promote the program, assess the productivity of the process, and do fund development;
- 3) host organizations who provide facilitators, invite their members and constituents to participate in study circles, and serve on special committees; and
- 4) study circle participants (open to everyone).

Both organizing strategies assert that ordinary people must be the drivers—not professional organizers or local government. Diversity is also required, including the hard-core poor. Even in our brokenness and weakness, we can negotiate from a position of power through broad-based organizing. During the conference we were exhorted to be in our churches, but to go out to advocacy organizations (similar to being in but not of the world).

After considering all that I learned at the first conference for the Committee of the Seventy East, I return to the title of this article: Why We Don't Change our Communities. I think the answer was given by the dynamic Zina Jacque, pastor of a Baptist church in Chicago. Zina identified three places we encounter on our path to doing social justice: obscure places, oasis places and obstacle places. The obscure places represent the unfamiliar places we have not gone before, which most of us find uncomfortable and often resist. We also tend to avoid the oasis place, where we can be nourished and equipped. (How many keep the Sabbath as a day of rest?). Rest is part of our covenant relationship with God. Zina suggested that we maintain our

state of overwork and constant weariness because we don't trust God; we think we are smarter than God; or we don't believe or fear God (Exodus 31:13).

Obstacle places include mediocre education, bitterness, and the racial divide. In obstacle places God begins to transform us. Since it seems to be the only place He can get our attention, He uses this place to purge us of what may be holding us up from doing our designated work (see Psalm 82).

We could start with an example from two Baltimore Episcopal churches—one wealthy, the other steeped in poverty. They reached out to each other through a joint Bible study where they read passages in three different voices (i.e., gender, race, and social/economic conditions), then discuss how it calls them to immediate action. Members of this Bible study said it was the most powerful study they had encountered. Because of the diverse experiences of members, the Biblical message came alive. And the gap between the congregations of the two churches began to close.

There are many programs and strategies we might use to do social justice work in our diocese, congregation, and neighborhoods. We can participate in and learn from local initiatives and our national Episcopalian partners through the Committee of 70. But first, we must each find our oasis place. When we are refreshed and ready, we may find that we are in an obstacle place and we may notice that we are not alone. That is the moment to reach out to our God-given partners, because we can't do the work of transformation alone.

This is the time to change our community.

LIVING FOR CHANGE HOPE GROWS IN DETROIT

By Grace Lee Boggs • Michigan Citizen, April 15-21, 2007

What is Hope? Where does it come from? Hope emerges, seemingly out of nowhere, when people who have viewed themselves mainly as victims begin feeling that another world is possible and that by acting together they can bring it into being.

Movements begin when Hope trumps despair. That's what happened in 1941 when thousands of unemployed blacks, in response to A. Philip Randolph's Call to March on Washington, forced President Franklin D. Roosevelt to issue Executive Order 8802 banning discrimination in hiring by defense plants.

It's what happened in 1955 when the black community in Montgomery, Ala., responding to the Women's Political Alliance's Call to protest the arrest of Rosa Parks for refusing to give up her seat to a white man, began the successful 13-month bus boycott, which inspired the many movements of the sixties.

It happened in the early 1960s when the Black Power movement began in Detroit. A few individuals and groups declared that it was intolerable for our city to be run only by whites. Overnight, people who had been divided by all kinds of issues began coming together.

That's what's happening now in Detroit.

In response to the call of the Boggs Center to commemorate the 40th anniversary of MLK's "Break the Silence" speech and of the 1967 Rebellion by "Transforming Grief into Hope," people are coming together across race, class, ideological and geographical lines. Over two dozen community organizations have endorsed the event.

On the afternoon of April 21, near the epicenter of the 1967 Rebellion, they said with one voice, "Let's stop the killing! Let's come together. Let's build the City of Hope for our children in

memory of all the victims and survivors of gun violence."

The gathering featured food, fellowship, singing, poetry, speakout and art. Participants will post photos of their loved ones who have died needlessly on a wall of commemoration.

"Grief into Hope" was part of an all-day celebration of P.E.A.C.E (Partnering to Engage and Activate Community Empowerment) beginning at the Center with youth-led workshops and speakout, hosted by Pioneers for Peace. In the evening, from 7-9 p.m., T.E.A.R.S. (Detroit Teens Eyes And Ears) created a memorial collage and held a candlelight vigil.

April 21 was the culmination of the efforts of many organizations and individuals who have kept hope alive over the years by honoring the legacies of our ancestors, marching against crack-houses, planting community gardens, painting public murals, creating youth theatre, and founding an alternative high school.

Last year's decision by community foundations to focus on reviving specific Detroit neighborhoods has contributed to the renewal of hope. Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick's subsequent selection of six neighborhoods to revive was welcomed by grassroots Detroiters who have criticized city officials for focusing too exclusively on downtown development and courting developers.

The recent series of "Shrinking Cities" discussions, workshops and films at the new Museum of Contemporary Art (MO-CAD) and the Cranbrook Art Museum has also contributed by challenging Detroiters to view de-industrialization as a unique opportunity to create a new post-modern, self-governing city.

A poster at MOCAD reminds us, "The crises of state organization and economic development have put the spotlight on self-organization... The 'gaps' made ... by state withdrawal offer possibilities in shrinking cities for the development of social and cultural initiatives of a liberationist nature, which can give rise to viable, socially integrative and culturally ambitious activities."

As Mayor Kilpatrick said in his State of the City speech: "It's up to us. Together, we can grow this city. Together, we can!"

THE ROOF OVER OUR HEADS

Perhaps you've noticed that St. Peter's roof is worn out. A new roof is long overdue. Leaks have stained walls and ceilings. In addition to preserving the sanctuary, we must afford safe, dry housing for Manna Meal and Young Detroit Builders.

In June 2006, St. Peter's treasurer Virginia Hiber and Chris Hooker began the process of applying for a grant through the Diocesan Finance Committee, and getting bids for a new roof.

In January 2007, the vestry hired John Zettner to deal with maintenance issues. With input from Bob Chapman of WARM, John solicited more bids.

On May 10th, Reverend Deacon Sharon Watton, Director of Benefits Ministry, sent word that our request for a \$10,000 grant was approved; and that decision was approved by the Diocesan Executive Council May 19th. That was good news. The grant will pay for at least a quarter of the total cost of the roof. The rest will have to come from St. Peter's.

That's where we could use some help. If you are a friend of St. Peter's, please consider 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.

Thank you!

SUSAN "RUBY" ROHR +MARCH 11, 2007+

Bill Wylie-Kellermann's homily for Ruby's memorial service

As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" Jesus stood still and said, "Call him here." And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart; get up, he is calling you." So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. Then Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man said to him, "My teacher, let me see again." Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well." Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way. —Mark 10:46-52

The above is a fitting story for the week called Holy. It takes place as Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem for confrontation, arrest, trial, execution and resurrection. Amazingly, above the din Jesus hears the cry and calls Bartimaeus out, even as others are silencing him. Jesus calls that obnoxious cry—the demand to be heard, this refusal to be silenced—a form of faith.

This is a discipleship story. He "followed him on the way." Moreover, throughout the Gospel, Jesus' disciples are perpetually blind to his mission, so healing blindness is a summons to all who would likewise follow.

I confess that the story occurred to me in part because of the "crying out." Some found Bartimaeus noisy, annoying and inappropriate. They set out to silence him, but he cried all the louder. Ruby could be noisy and inappropriate, in church or Bible study. All of us had to learn how to listen and receive her, but I also had to learn how to rein her in. Just before her death, she was at the Worker holding forth, but constrained herself: "My pastor is here, so I should only speak for two minutes."

A friend wrote, "Paraphrasing Arundati Roy, there is a Ruby-shaped hole in the universe. She walked around us, testing our humanity constantly with her existence. This is going to be a change in your life, not to have her calling you to bail her out; drive her 'home'. No more Ruby towels in the car. I pray there is a loving God whose outstretched hands catch those thrown from this rough life to a soft landing; into eternal peace."

Susan "Ruby" Rohr grew up Catholic, but had recently attended Trinity-St. Mark's by Woodmere Cemetery. She had been a social worker in the city of Detroit and knew her way around. Even as a street person, she knew how to make things happen. Often at Manna Meal, when people were frustrated with her for hogging the phone, she was organizing this or that

in her life.

She was generous, once famously bringing a taxi full of White Castle hamburgers to the soup kitchen. In the Epiphany pageant she played Elizabeth, throwing out the script and ad-libbing. She organized for it, distributing handwritten invitations, took charge of the food and lit a dangerous number of candles.

She and "Keith," her fiancé, clearly cared for one another and had a relationship that worked. Indeed, she had asked if I would marry them. They lived below Hart Plaza for much of the winter. She joined us in January on the anniversary of Guantanamo prison, for an anti-torture demonstration at the foot of Woodward. Her voice caught the attention of a *Metro Times* reporter who followed her to meet other residents, planning a story on the homeless.

When a cold snap came, Ruby discovered the floating church shelter in Oakland County and began commuting there from the soup kitchen. She also began to go to Pontiac hospital emergency rooms, for issues related to her diabetes or infection.

Ruby and Keith were arrested in Royal Oak, essentially for being visibly homeless. She was released, but Keith was held for "resisting arrest" and outstanding warrants. This left her on her own, and more vulnerable. She was struck by a car and killed when crossing the street alone in the snow at night March 11th.

Like Bartimaeus, throwing off his cloak, Ruby had a penchant for throwing off her "cloak" to the dismay of those around her. The blind man's cloak may have been his sole possession. Jewish law stated that if you held a poor person's cloak as a pledge against a debt (imagine mortgaging your clothes), it had to be returned at nightfall, as this was the debtor's only source of warmth and protection. The cloak also could be spread on the ground, where coins would be gathered. Again, I think of Ruby. In a pew is a pillow that marks the space she claimed among us in morning worship. She also had a habit of making a kind of nest, scattering papers around her chair. It marked her space and set some boundaries.

For Bartimaeus to throw off his cloak was every bit like other disciples "leaving their nets" to follow Jesus.

Now Ruby has shed her earthly cloak. We commend her with love and care into the arms of God. When we invoke the communion of saints and join our voices with them in saying, "Holy, Holy, Holy..." among them will rise the noisy, raspy and brassy voice of Ruby, irrepressible and full of life. Amen.



RUBY AS ELIZABETH.
CHRIS HOOKER PHOTO

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