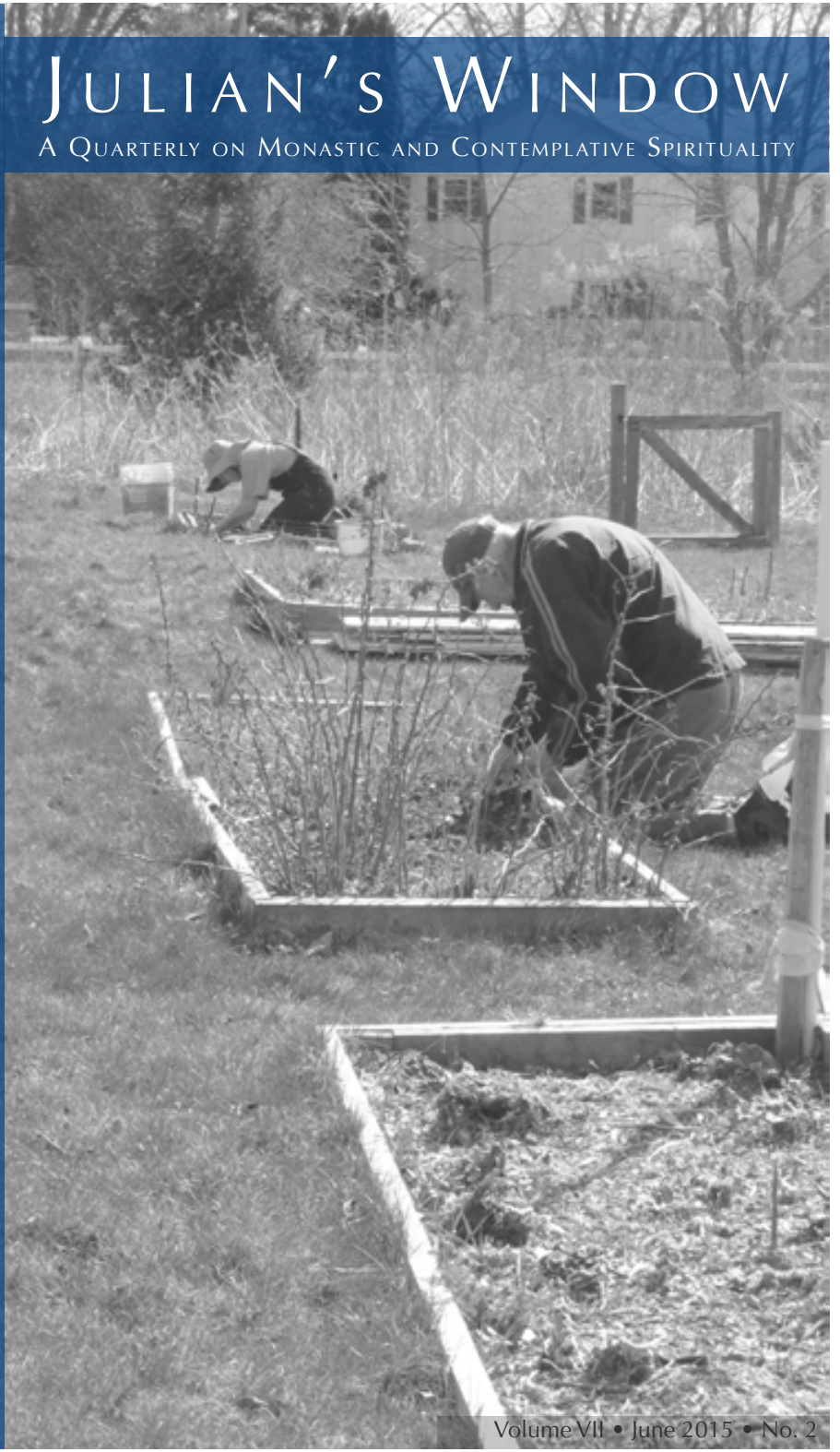
Julian's Window

A Quarterly on Monastic and Contemplative Spirituality

The Order of Julian of Norwich



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The Order of Julian of Norwich

is a contemplative Order of monks and nuns in the Episcopal Church. Our aim is to renew the spiritual life of the Church in three ways: first by a renewal of the contemplative monastic tradition, second by supporting a vibrant community of affiliates who are a bridge between the monastery and parishes, and third by occasional works of mission in publishing, spiritual direction, and hospitality. For more information on the Order, please see our website at **www.orderofjulian.org,** through which we publish articles on the spiritual life and liturgical resources.

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In the Light of Easter

Mthr Hilary OJN

Appearing suddenly among his disciples as they were huddled in an upstairs room on the evening of his resurrection, Jesus could have said any number of things: He could have taken issue with the disciples' unbelief, their past unfaithfulness, their collective cowardice and their various betrayals. He could even have exacted restitution. But Jesus does none of this. Of all the things Jesus could have said to his disciples, what he did say was "Peace be with you." He showed himself to them, his wounded hands and side, and repeated again, "Peace be with you." Though the events of the last three days had added nothing to the disciples' credit, nevertheless Jesus places no blame. For the disciples in the upstairs room there is no divine wrath but only forgiveness and the assurance of God's peace. "When it was evening on that day…and the doors where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them." The disciples in Jerusalem were hid within the same chaotic void of darkness and desolation over which the Spirit had brooded in the beginning of creation.

But now the impossible happens: in the upstairs room Jesus appears and says to his disciples, "Peace be with you." And he breathed on them and said "Receive the Holy Spirit." Jesus reveals himself and the eyes of the disciples are opened — not to shame but to hope beyond all expectation.

With the resurrected Jesus come among his disciples, so has come the Eighth Day, the beginning of the new creation. Taking away our shameful humiliation, bestowing forgiveness and peace, Jesus is recreating humanity in the image of himself, the Crucified One. Jesus is even now opening our eyes to the wisdom of his own humility, and through it granting us the hope of life. T S Eliot says "The only wisdom we can hope to acquire/ Is the wisdom of humility: humility is endless."

Echoing Julian of Norwich, in this word of peace Charles Williams says, "All is most well; evil is 'pardoned' — it is known after another manner; in an interchange of love, as a means of love, therefore as a

means for the good…pardon is no longer an oblivion but an increased knowledge, a knowledge of all things in a perfection of joy. It is the name now given to the heavenly knowledge of the evil of earth; evil is known as an occasion of good, that is, of love. It has been always so known on the side of heaven, but now it can be known on the side of earth also."

"Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." We are now Jesus's Body in the world, wounds and all, bearing his peace, bearing his Spirit; we are to be Jesus the Father's Word spoken into the world at the right time. We are sent by the same Jesus who, while we were yet sinners reconciled us to God by killing death, nailing our sins to the cross in one great act of forgiveness. "I am working, and my father is working; I always do what I see my Father doing."

Peacemaking, forgiveness with eyes wide open, is to be our standard mode of operation, the way of divine reconciliation in the world. *"Evil is known now after another manner, as a means for the good."* The Spirit has gathered us into one co-differentiated body, as St Maximus the Confessor says, like the co-differentiated Trinity. This new body must move and act from the energy of co-inherent, coordinated love just like the Trinity. "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." If we would be one body, we must act in forgiveness, setting free and seeking always to make whole that which was broken. In fact the radical implication of that terrible clause in the Lord's Prayer is that our own salvation depends on it: "Forgive us as we forgive." When God the Holy Spirit undid the confusion of the Tower of Babel on the feast of Pentecost, the Spirit created a body which must travel to God together if it is to travel at all.

We who have been freed from fear and strengthened with hope by the Holy Spirit of Jesus are called by the same Spirit to new discernment. We are called to consider with new eyes of love and of mercy this body into which Jesus by the Spirit has grafted us.

For almost fifty days now the aftereffects of the resurrection have been spreading out like the ripples from a stone thrown into the middle of a pond. We have been witness to the widening circle of an entirely new life making its way through the world, and to the implications of that

new life as ripple after ripple begin to wash up over our feet.

Jesus says to us today, "Love one another as the Father has loved me and as I have loved you; I no longer call you servants, but friends…I appointed you to go and bear fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and your joy may be complete."

We are to love one another with a love as strong and costly as that between Jesus and his Father, shown not only by words but by deeds. John reminds us here of the word of the Father to Jesus at his baptism, at the beginning of his ministry, "You are my son in whom I am well pleased." This mutual love is borne out in action to the last measure, by Jesus in his crucifixion and by the Father in raising Jesus from death. So John says to the Church, already buffeted by internal dissent and external persecution, "This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not with the water only but with the water and the blood."

And what are we to make of Jesus's words in the gospel, "I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name." How are we to know what to ask for? What is it that is at one and the same time both our own deepest desire and the joyful will of God?

We don't get a slip of paper every morning with what we should ask for written on it, but in the apostle Peter we are given a model of how it is found out. It was "while Peter was still speaking" to the people gathered in Cornelius's house that "the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word." We do the best we can with the light that we have at

the moment. It is by the exercise of love while rooted in our present circumstance that we come to know things. Wisdom worthy of the name is arrived at only by experience.

And then we must be prepared for what happens next: “The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles.” As the ripples of resurrection life insistently wash up over our feet, the pain of enlargement it causes must be borne by us, the friends of Jesus, to whom in the intimacy of the family table he has disclosed the deepest purposes of his heart. This love is not exclusive to us and only for us. This is no small, private joy we are being brought into, but one that in its fullness leaves nothing and no one out. “Oh God” we say, “them too?” Yes. Them too. Jesus asks of his disciples — of us — a trust in him and in the Father that loves and persists through any manner of intervening birth pangs. Real love is messy.

This is how we find out how God’s desire for the world and joy in the world can become the matter of our own asking, by sticking close to Jesus where we are, in the midst of our present circumstance, however painful. So it is we have prayed today: “Pour into our hearts such love toward you that we, loving you in all things and above all things,” may know and do your will and obtain your promises, which exceed all that we can desire.

Seeing More Truly

Sr Cornelia OJN

The first reading for our Votive of St Julian is Isaiah 46:3-5 where God says to the house of Israel: "even to your old age...even when you turn gray, I will carry you" — a selection which highlights Julian's "sure trust" in God's caring and merciful love for us.

When Margery Kempe visited Julian in 1413, Julian would have been 71 — gray-headed under her wimple. Her counsel to the 40-year old Margery was that of sure trust and *compassion,* a quality grown through a lifetime of humble learning. But there is another potential aspect of old age, one that will accompany spiritual maturity at any age: *dispassion*. This quality is vividly portrayed in Enid Dinnis's 1920s novel *The Anchorhold* (whose anchoress is meant to convey Julian's personality). That anchoress has become in her old age a book-binder. One day she is asked to bind a manuscript of her own *Revelation*, which long ago she had told at her window to a young priest seeking her counsel, and who eventually dictated them to the present customer. The story is told so quietly but compellingly that the reader has to ask: "Did she stop and read what she had experienced? Was she amazed? Was she annoyed?" But the only response to the reader's instinctual questions is the anchoress's concern about the binding, reminding her customer not to force the pages apart too soon. The passage is a brilliant evocation of dispassion or *apatheia*, which is expressed most clearly in concern and charity for the other.

Both a fullness of compassion and dispassion are qualities of spiritual maturity, and do not grow out of spiritual "experiences" but of the slow and patient work of self-forgetfulness. And perhaps more than any other tool in the kit, the habit of trust, even joyful trust when one has no such inclinations, can pry our attention slowly by slowly off of ourselves and our "progress" or lack thereof, and set it surely on the One we believe loves us.

Julian doesn't use the term "cheerful trust" — "certain trust" [*seker trust*] is her phrase. She does speak of "mirth" in Ch. 72: that it is a "cause for mirth because the Lord our Creator is so near to us and within us and we in Him." And in Ch. 81 that we should "live in our

penance gladly and merrily because of His love...and fix our hearts on the transition — that is to say, from the pain we feel into the bliss that we trust." In a recent article Ruth Burrows OCD wrote: "Though we may not be able to throw off a feeling of sadness, we must assume a quiet, unobtrusive cheerfulness" rather than being gloomy, bad tempered and morose. "Unobtrusive cheerfulness" is a very fine way of putting the characteristic demeanor of Julian.

A person who is unobtrusively cheerful has a presence which others nonetheless notice and feel drawn to. Margery Kempe certainly felt drawn to Julian's counseling to her, believing that she had touched directly on her problem of tears, explained it clearly and offered the remedy Margery needed. Perhaps it is the unobtrusiveness which is the key to the attraction, especially in our own very "up-front" culture: "this person is very quiet but looks as if she would really listen and not talk about *herself* all the time." Such a person can be trusted to listen and care, while looking quietly pleasant too, since she is indeed a *cheerful truster* herself.

The habit of such trust is deceptively simple; only Julian's calm assurance of God's loving mercy fills her own text, but she could only have gained that by dispassionate meditation — as indeed she tells us. She is a kindly listening counsellor (as Margery Kempe wrote) and her *Revelations* are without a doubt a brilliant "spiritual classic". But in comparison with other classics, she doesn't have much to say in detail about how to *become* spiritual: what path to follow, what ladder to climb step by step, what stages one will go through. Trust in the everlasting love and mercy of the Blessed Trinity, and in the Jesus whom she saw. Set beside John of the Cross's *Ascent of Mt Carmel* / *Dark Night of the Soul* (much later of course) or Guigo's *Ladder of Monks* (earlier) or *The Cloud of Unknow*ing (her time) — Julian has little of their sort of advice to offer — except for her reflections on

"seeking" and "beholding" in prayer. "The seeking with faith, hope and love pleases our Lord....Seeking is as good as beholding during the time that He wishes to permit the soul to be in labor."

In the Short Text (Section 22), Julian tells how "our Lord opened my spiritual eyes and showed me my soul *in the midst of my heart*...as large as it were a kingdom" where "sits our Lord Jesus...." In Chapter 24, Julian's spiritual understanding is directed to the wound in Christ's side and "there He showed a fair desirable place, large enough for all mankind who shall be saved to rest in peace and love" — that is, *His heart* where "dwells His endless love that was without beginning and shall be always". In Chapter 67 (repeating the Short Text) our soul is His most familiar home because "He made man's soul as fair, as good, as precious a creature as He could make it."

All this love and glory in the midst of our heart? In that globular "thing" which one sees pulsating in a CT scan? Whose action sends the blood throughout our body, registered on a digital screen via an arm cuff? It is hard sometimes to get such images out of our modern minds. Or rather it is hard to combine such images with what we feel in Chapel (and indeed during our daily tasks) — that our heart *is* our soul, a wondrous city, and that Jesus is there, actually there — and that we can feel that just as surely as we feel the beat of our physical heart.

Every evening in chapel, at the end of Still Prayer before Evensong, we pray Julian's famous prayer: "God of your goodness, give me yourself; for you are enough to me, and I can ask nothing that is less that can be full honor to you. And if I ask anything that is less, ever shall I be in want, for only in you have I all." Every Affiliate of the Order speaks this prayer during the ceremony of admission. It is a familiar prayer indeed.

And it easily becomes rote. Like the "Our Father", once we hear the cue, the words spill out and it costs a real effort of mind to realize what we are actually saying. Sometimes God of His goodness will actually do that for us and the sudden meaning in our "mind's eye" illumines us. Sometimes we have to speak with inner determination. And sometimes we will hear someone's story which lights up our mind like prayer: the pilot of a reconnaissance plane, flying high and fast over the Pacific, decided to turn off the lights on his control panel so as to see what the stars really looked like and he was overwhelmed by their extraordinary brilliance. YES!

So we can take a familiar prayer and realize that it says: "...to be like our Lord perfectly, that is our true salvation and our complete bliss" and if we don't know how to do this, our Lord will teach us for his own delight.

What Doth the LORD Require of Thee?

Patricia Nakamura AOJN

I hold a book of some 1470 pages. All the wanderings of Israel, the fulminations of Paul, even the odd dragon, are here.

Yet an entire life's prescription is set out in two contiguous verses, a single question, tucked into the middle of the 10th chapter of Deuteronomy, for the morning of this year's February 27th.

In this old, rather battered, King James it reads:

"[W]hat doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord…"

Question and answer, clear as ice, unequivocal, unambiguous. It sets out no details, no complications; only fear the Lord, love the Lord, walk his ways, keep his commandments.

After all the drama of the golden calf and its wild orgy, of poor Moses staggering down the mountain under the weight of stone tablets only to smash them in disgust, the Lord "of heaven and the heaven of heavens…the earth also with all that therein is" gives us a question that almost seems to appeal to native sense.

And for answer, four active verbs: *fear, love, walk, keep*. Simple things; we do them every day. No details, no negatives. Yet consider what a tall order it is.

"What doth the Lord thy God require of thee?"

Only — everything.

On Being Loved

Sr Therese OJN

God so loved. These are three words possibly the hardest to take in of all the verses in John's gospel. They simply cannot be compared to anything else. They drive commentators to frantic analysis of grammar or audience or the issue of judgement. Anything to avoid having to consider or to accept the awful implications of being loved in relationship, with all they carry of real passionate involvement, or even, (horror of horrors) the possibility of feeling or emotion.

And to believe in this love is not an abstract intellectual project. This is about a living relationship. To believe is to trust, the way the most loving and trustful relationship trusts, to make oneself receptive and vulnerable — to surrender oneself — to let God love oneself as He longs to. What this love, this staggering gift needs, is a correspondingly complete vulnerability, a willingness to receive, a willingness to be loved. And each disicple has such a vulnerability to offer, some more deep and miserable than others; yet it is easier for the disciples to believe in a personal judgement than in this offer of personal and intense love, simply because they do not really believe they are worthy of love and so do not love themselves completely. Yet this is everything, for where vulnerability is offered, transformation is possible. That is where eternal life begins.

The disciples of Jesus who choose to accept such terms for transformation have even greater challenges before them than the anguish such transformation will cause. They must bear fruit of this love. This means a persistent missionary effort to all those closed doors in themselves that still harbour their old idols, perhaps now dressed up in Christian clothes. God will not banish or destroy anything and neither should Jesus's disciples; what will not accept new life or the scandalous love He offers, what wants to persist in its own rightness, will tear itself away.

They should not be discouraged, or go back to refusing to love those parts. This absolute, gratuitous, irrational love is also persistent, gentle and patient. Even if they will not have mercy on themselves, God still holds it out.

Julian's Notebook

Reflections on the *Revelations*

To be a very devout young person (as was Julian) is not all that common, and Julian sees in the sixth shewing that such a person's reward from God is "excellent and wonderful." Most people begin to realize their devotion to God nearer to middle age and even make changes in their lives to reflect this: going to church more often, offering their time and energy to various good causes, even going so far as to enter ministry or take up the monastic life. This increase in devotion brings with it a basic satisfaction but even more an awareness of one's failures to please God by living according to His word — the light of the gospel begins to show up one's sins against love of God and neighbor. This was *not* what we had in mind when we began this project.

But it is God's loving teaching of us and giving us the opportunity to learn to live in His ways.Very gradually, "the more that the loving soul understands this graciousness of God, the more it prefers to serve Him all the days of its life." And over the course of that life, it finds this service leads to vaster things than could ever have been imagined in the beginning, or even during the long years of quiet labor when "nothing" seemed to be happening.

Julian puzzled over the marvelous example of the lord and the servant for 237 months without solving its mystery. Her Rule of Life, her counseling and the vagaries of daily living no doubt drew off some of her energy. Now, twenty years afterwards — in her fifties — she receives some good advice: "Go about the task methodically and in great detail — start at the beginning and go on until you get to the end."

Each of us can bring into the monastery a puzzle which we think we can explain away, only to find a few months later that such a result simply could not be true and so have to start all over again. Divine advice can work practical wonders — but divine advice can also say "let it alone." It takes courage to let go of something that cries out for explanation, but trust in God's loving concern for us eases the fear. Julian got her parable explained, but had to trust that "sin is behovabil" — and we, centuries later, get to read both her accounts.

Book Notes: *Silence: A User's Guide*

Silence: A User's Guide. Volume I
Maggie Ross
Cascade Books. 2014
ISBN: 978-1-62564-796-2
pp 233

Those of us who admire and respect Maggie Ross, the Anglican solitary, are not surprised to find that her newest book is rife with iconoclasm and persuasive challenges to much of what is generally accepted (or acceded to) in the spiritual lives of Christians and in the life of the Church today.

That today we are bombarded by noise in every possible form has become a jaded commonplace, but this book is not merely about silence as the opposite of noise, but of the practice of silence as a requisite for holistic knowing and spiritual maturity, once an intrinsic part of Christian theology and since suppressed. The first half of the book defines and describes the author's understanding of silence and depicts its authentic practice and place in the life of the early Church. Central to the "work of silence" are the two epistomologies essential to a balanced mind — Ross particularly brings out their relation to the literary arts — though one of these epistomologies is almost lost to Christian theology. Ross also looks "at some of the words in circulation that are currently used and misused to discuss the texts frequently cited in the contemporary fashion for the study of so-called spirituality." One chapter is spent analyzing, describing and dismembering the elements in contemporary life and culture that inhibit, deny, or destroy even the possibility of that silence which is the author's subject. The second half of the book continues this critique historically, assessing "a few of the most significant moments and tendencies" — and their effect on the Eucharist in particular — that have virtually eradicated the practice and theology of silence from the life of Christians.

The book is not by any measure easy nor an entertaining read. It requires deep and serious thought and struggle and hard intellectual work on the part of the reader, but in its candidness and uncompromising convictions it reveals more about the true spiritual life of Christians than almost any other current book. And one reads it always with the consciousness that the author is not merely presenting a proposition, but is making a solid defense of the life, practice, and insights she herself shares with serious and aspiring contemplatives across the world.

Community Notes

In Wisconsin winter has—somewhat incredibly as ever—given way to spring. Many of you have noticed that we were finally able to get our Shop online in March and are beginning to sell our 'Soapus Dei'.

Much bigger news, however, has been more surprising than the seasons, if in its own way just as logical. In the last several years the monks and nuns at Julian House have been coming to an increased clarity of understanding about our Order's particular vocational charism — that we are to be awake and present in the heart of the Church, beholding the face of Jesus as Julian did through prayer and contemplation, alive to and on behalf of the Church and the world. As a natural outgrowth of this ongoing discernment (and, it seems to us, by the strange and surprising leading of God) in the past year we found ourselves asking whether our "adapted family home" monastery on a small plot in the middle of an increasingly busy suburb is the best place to live this vocation out. It is a monastic truism that it is the monastic life itself that forms people as monks and nuns. It is also true that the monastic life is itself formed, in part, by the container into which it is poured, the environment in which it is lived.

We realized that, after years of doing everything we could to improve our house and property and make it more suitable for monastic life, we had come to the end of realistic improvements. Waukesha has grown faster and larger than we can provide enough outer 'desert' for our life, and Summit Avenue (Highway 18) is now a major thoroughfare to the interstate. Following a process of discernment about possible options for the future, we have decided to relocate. Our new home will be in the North Woods of Wisconsin on a large tract of land, halfway between Wausau and Green Bay, in the Diocese of Fond du Lac. In future years we anticipate finally building a monastery to suit.

The official acquisition of the new property is in July. After that time we anticipate moving a little bit at a time, with final relocation pending the sale of our property in Waukesha if not sooner.

We are deeply grateful to those who have supported us here and made it possible for us both to make helpful changes to this property as well as to make the leap to one better suited to our mission, which we fully expect to be permanent.

Clockwise from top: If you have it, you must fix it: Full Spectrum Solar doing repair work on one of the solar panels • Br Barnabas and cake at his birthday this spring

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