



Welcome to Karen House Catholic Worker!

1. What is Karen House?

Karen House has a 40-year history of providing hospitality to people who are unhoused and doing social justice work in St. Louis. We are part of a larger Catholic Worker movement founded by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin that includes autonomous houses throughout the country. Some of us are Catholic, some are not, and we have a diverse space in terms of race, gender, religion and sexual orientation. Our house is big, friendly, and full of life and love.

2. How does Karen House work?

Karen House does hospitality to 15-30 people at any one time, and also provides food, warmth, love and supplies to anyone who comes to the door in need. We are dependent on a network of local volunteers who volunteer, cook meals, and donate money and food. A small intentional community of volunteers runs the house, which includes coordinating volunteers, making consensus decisions together and doing work around the house.

3. What are some of the primary needs of Karen House?

Our major need right now is for more Community Members! As we look to the future, we see the need for some additional people power. Community Members live in the house in our intentional community, helping to coordinate our hospitality work.

4. Tell me more about being a Community Member!

Karen House is an amazing place for people to live out their values. Our intentional community co-creates the hospitality at Karen House, sharing life and work together. Community members typically live at the house and have part time jobs for additional income (because it is communal living, room/board, food, utilities, etc. are all provided). Life at the house is fulfilling, challenging, and never boring! We do this work through the lens of social justice, and so our community members are often involved in other projects as well: organic farming, local LGBT organizations, and local racial justice work, to name a few.

5. What is the process of becoming a Community Member?

The detailed process of joining is outlined on our website. Two initial steps are: 1) Read our Values Statement (on back) and determine if it is a good fit with your values, and 2) Volunteer at the house and get to know what the house is like. We welcome your questions - feel free to contact us directly for more info!

Why do you do this work?

The Values Statement of Karen House

Karen House is a Catholic Worker rooted in the vision of Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day, and the Gospels.

1. We believe in **welcoming** all people and creating a space that feels like home.
2. We believe in **Community**, and in sharing life, work, decisions and resources together. We hope to do small things with great love.
3. We believe in both meeting the direct needs of people **and** confronting the injustices that create these unmet needs.
4. We believe in **challenging oppression at the systemic AND personal level** in an ongoing way. We believe that personal work is central to taking risks and challenging systems of oppression, including racism, sexism, ableism, size-ism, heterosexism, ageism, classism, transphobia, and religious oppression.
5. We believe that our **liberation is tied to each other**, and that we are responsible for one another: "If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together." (Lilla Watson, Aboriginal activists group)
6. We believe in **seeing the face of God** in each person before us, that all creation is interconnected and interdependent, and that the sacred lies in even the simplest acts. We seek to be good stewards of God's creation.
7. We believe in creating a space (and world) where people are **living their best lives**, pursuing their dreams, and where it is "easier to be good" (Peter Maurin). We support each other in our spiritual journeys. We celebrate life, goodness, beauty, and joy. We believe in self-care, courageous acts, accountability, and active engagement with each other as avenues of growth and liberation.
8. We promote political education, manual labor according to our ability, and the "**clarification of thought**" through Roundtable discussions, informal conversations, the work of the house, our newsletter the Round Table, and our website.
9. We believe in **sharing our resources and living communally**. We hope to resist the toxic effects of capitalism and consumerism, acknowledging the differences between voluntary downward mobility for middle class folks, and achieving economic stability for poor and working class folks. We seek to create a house where people can both offer what they have, and receive what they need.
10. We promote bold acts of nonviolence that promote love, connection and justice. We believe that **active nonviolence** as a tool for revolution helps us to avoid replacing one violence with another. We do not promote nonviolence to maintain the status quo, to silence angry or outraged voices, or to dictate to oppressed groups how they should respond to state oppression. Our interpretation of nonviolence includes courageous, risk taking acts – both large and small – that challenge oppression and injustice.
11. We believe that value statements and mission statements are **no substitute** for relationships and face to face interactions. We invite you to meet us, and get to know Karen House!

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