

= Margaret McKenna =

Sister Margaret McKenna, M.M.S., (born 1940) is an American Medical Mission Sister and anti @-@ militarist activist . Raised in Hackensack , New Jersey , she earned her PhD in the origins and religious thought of Christianity from the University of Pennsylvania . In the 1970s , McKenna began participating in non @-@ violent civil disobedience with the Plowshares Movement , sometimes being arrested or imprisoned for her actions . Her activism has continued through recent years .

In 1989 , McKenna helped to found New Jerusalem Laura , a North Philadelphia addiction treatment center that strives to help people recover from substance abuse without the use of medication , by substituting community service , discussion , and Bible study as routes to recovery .

= = Early life and education = =

McKenna grew up in Hackensack , New Jersey and upon graduating from high school entered the Medical Mission Sisters , a Roman Catholic organization of women dedicated to improving world access to health care . She earned a bachelor 's degree in English from Chestnut Hill College , then a small Catholic women 's college , and a master 's degree in liturgy from Notre Dame University before moving on to the University of Pennsylvania and earning a doctorate in Christian origins and religious thought . For her doctorate thesis , she traveled to Israel for the clarity and solitude .

= = Activism = =

McKenna has been arrested for several acts of civil disobedience since becoming an activist in the 1970s . In 1987 , she participated in a protest over the Iran ? Contra affair during the bicentennial celebration of the signing of the constitution in Philadelphia . In 1988 on Easter Sunday , McKenna and three other Plowshares activists accessed the third deck of the USS Iowa and symbolically hammered on empty Tomahawk missile housings before pouring their own blood on them . At the same time , a banner that read " Follow the nonviolent Christ " was placed on the side of the ship . The group was charged with trespassing , and McKenna was sentenced to four months in prison . In 2007 , McKenna , as well as musician Aaron Weiss , was arrested for participating in a " die @-@ in " to protest the civilian casualties of the Iraq War on the grounds of The Pentagon in Arlington County , Virginia . This event was referenced in the song " Timothy Hay " by Weiss 's band , mewwithoutYou , on their album It 's All Crazy ! It 's All False ! It 's All a Dream ! It 's Alright .

= = New Jerusalem Laura = =

McKenna and modern @-@ day hermit Richard Withers , who were both passionate about Desert Fathers then , asked themselves , " Where is the desert today ? " After concluding that " the desert " was the inner cities , in 1989 , they moved to the Fox Chase neighborhood in Northeast Philadelphia . There , they witnessed the impact of drug addiction on the lives of the residents . In reaction , McKenna and Withers founded New Jerusalem Laura in an attempt to treat drug and alcohol addiction . In addition to New Jerusalem , McKenna helped set up the Peacemakers Reflection Center and the Alternate to Violence Project in her community .

New Jerusalem Laura 's addict counseling methods were influenced by those of One Day at a Time , founded by the Rev. Henry Wells . For the first 60 days of their stay , recovering addicts are prohibited from contacting the outside world , must surrender their cigarettes , and must be escorted if they leave the building . During this time , residents occupy their time with chores , community service , meetings , and Bible studies . Less than half of all people who enter the program remain after the first 60 days . After the first 60 days , residents ' actions are less tightly restricted ; however , they are still required to participate in the chores , Bible studies , and meetings . Residents graduate from the program after six months .

McKenna believes that the reason for the New Jerusalem Laura 's success is the community . " In a recovery community , you can 't get away with [lying] , because it shows , " she said . " It forces

you to be honest . " Nearly 400 residents have graduated from the program since its inception . Of those , close to seventy percent are reported to remain drug @-@ free , well above the results of traditional recovery methods .