



## Small resurrections

by **Jim Haggerty**

Lots of stores on Delaware Street in our town of Walton, N.Y. are shuttered. Delaware Street is our downtown business avenue, but the busy traffic seems just to pass by on the way to larger towns like Binghamton and Oneonta. One bright spot last year, however, was the opening of a local coffee shop called “Molto Espresso,” an apt name, we think, since the owner is a music teacher in our high school. The coffee shop offers beautiful wood floors, comfy chairs next to tables, stools at the counter, and above all, friendly workers who warmly welcome visitors. Young people with few venues to hang out in cluster there after school to socialize or use their computers. Older people play cards, read a newspaper, or just visit, and lots of individuals drop in, recognize a familiar face, and share a latté or tea. We need such places.

Our modest coffee house and other such places like this are small antidotes to rampant depression among young people and a comfort to many aging folks who face declining health or loneliness. They are also fine venues to plan adventures.

I often meet at Molto Espresso, which we now call “our office,” with fellow conspirators to plan a couple of exciting projects. One such project is bringing musicians to town for concerts at our historic theatre and for workshops at our local library and schools. At a recent meeting, a fellow volunteer shared some pictures he had taken of visiting musicians working with school music students. The photos captured the sheer joy of some of these students as they discovered they could do something they thought was impossible -- make music come alive by using their ears and hearts, and not just by reading notes. He also commented on how working with other volunteers on this project is one thing that makes living in this community so special.

In another exciting project, volunteers are interviewing older musicians and their relatives about the rich history of music and dance in this area, for example, in house parties and square dances, where people would come together to help each other and make their own entertainment. For over a hundred years, this area experienced a deep connection between music, dance and an agricultural way of life. This has all been weakened by industrialization, the decline of small farms, and a consumerist view of music. That sense of community, however, is far from dead.

We call our interview project the Grant Rogers Project, named after a local well-known fiddler and ballad singer. As word spreads about the project, eyes sparkle with memories. The mother and also teacher of Grant Rogers, Ethel, was also a musician but little is known of her. We discovered, however, that one of her great nieces has her concertina, which sits in a box and hasn't been played in decades. What would happen if a concertina player picked up this instrument and was able to play a tune? Would Ethel open this old world to us? Would she be

present to us in a new way and help lead us to a deeper appreciation of and commitment to our community?

We hope and pray that such small miracles might happen and multiply for us, and we wish the same for all of you this season of Resurrection.

*Jim Haggerty and his wife live in Walton, a small N.Y. rural town in the foothills of the Catskills. They are both retired. Jim worked for the thirty years with Catholic Migration and Refugee Services, United States Catholic Conference and Catholic Legal Immigration Network, CLINIC. He served on the IVC National Board of Directors for two terms.*