

HOSPITALITY

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One Last Advent

By Murphy Davis

When Nelia and Calvin Kimbrough moved to the Open Door Community in 2004, I finally lived with somebody who loved Advent as much as I have over the years — Nelia. A gifted liturgist and preacher, Nelia has spent years — in seminary in the early 1970s and ever since, moving more deeply into the Advent scriptures and traditions. For both of us, it has always seemed that the double gift of the beauty and the radicality of Advent is unparalleled in the liturgical cycles. Of course this always makes me think of William Stringfellow, who wrote passionately, “Easter is the most radical of all the liturgical seasons.” Later he wrote, “Advent is the most radical of all the liturgical seasons,” and on through Lent and the others. It is a reminder that when we really hear the gospel story we find that it is hot stuff, and as we read the cycles of scriptures over the years, they reveal themselves to us as more deeply radical all the time.

But oh, there is something so deep and rich about Advent: the darkness of the year, the bright light of a candle or a star, the hope and longing for peace and restoration for the peoples of the earth and the earth itself. And so we have looked forward each year to planning our community worship for the four Sundays of Advent and Christmas Eve. We bring out all the Advent art that has come to us over the years: Nelia’s stunning Advent banner of the pregnant Mary looking toward the New Jerusalem, Bruce Bishop’s adamant angel of



Calvin Kimbrough

Annunciation, the creches from Africa and the Americas. And best of all, the music! Dick Rustay and Calvin and I have collected more “favorite” Christmas songs than we can squeeze into the few Sundays.

And now comes our last Advent at 910 Ponce. The Open Door will live on, but the old building that has been our home will be sold. Nelia and Calvin have already moved to Nashville, and the rest of us are in preparation. Our beloved Connie and Clive Bonner will come from Scotland to be with us from late October until we close in mid-January.

So we will greet Advent with joy once more in this blessed place. The preparations will have the house buzzing — stapling and stuffing 13,000 calendars to send out to all of you on our mailing list, decorating the dining room to welcome our homeless friends for festive meals, preparing cards and gifts for prisoners and spending several evenings working together on handmade cards for death row prisoners while we drink hot apple cider and listen to Christmas music. And each Sunday afternoon the dining room church will glow with candlelight and the air will be filled with the scent of fresh evergreens from Dayspring farm. We will mark off the weeks of the season with the Advent wreath — three red candles, one green, and the beautiful black Christ candle. (Years ago in working for a more inclusive and non-Eurocentric worship,

One Last Advent *continued on page 7*

Blessing of the Table and Human Rights

By Eduard Loring

The following remarks were delivered by Ed Loring at the Church Women United Human Rights Celebration Luncheon at St. Paul AME Church in Atlanta on September 10, 2016. Ed, Murphy Davis and Catherine Meeks were honored at the luncheon.

How many of you ate breakfast or chose not to eat breakfast this morning? Though hunger is a curse to many folk over God’s earth, in the U.S.A. it is a blessing to have bread on the table. Having enough food to eat, after all, is not a human right in America. What a blessing it is to come to the table to eat, see, feel and taste good nutritious food. Think of our lunch today. The Welcome Table: an eschatological fulfillment of MLK’s table in the Beloved Community where children of slaves and children of slaveholders sit and eat together. That is true at the table where I am eating lunch, and I think for almost all of us in this room today. Yet, in this nation and in many churches who heretically claim Jesus Christ, there is no Welcome Table; there is no human right to food in church or society.

There is a sad irony of the Bill of Rights of the U.S. Constitution. There is no right to the basic necessities of life. Oh, I can stand in front of Publix grocery store on Ponce de Leon (and I have) and protest against hunger and Publix’s refusal to add a penny per box to the income for tomato pickers. Oh, I could have an empty stomach, my little Michaela could be starving, and I have a guaranteed constitutional right to the freedom of my cry and pleading about hunger. But I have no constitutional right to a piece of bread or milk for Michaela. If I am driven to steal even a crust of bread, I will likely go to jail.

What a blessing it is to come to the table to eat, see, feel and taste good nutritious food.

In Italy recently a hungry homeless man stole a loaf of bread. He was caught immediately by surveillance we all have and security guards who growl over the meat counter and bark at the candy shelf. Yanked before the judge for his lawless act, the judge decreed that it is not a crime to take food when you are penniless and hungry. Oh, the small and stumbling steps we take toward the right to food and the right

to eat. May we act the same in the U.S.A.!

Because you have no human right to food. Because the folk in our Soup Kitchen have no right to food. Because the folk who eat in soup kitchens all over this city have no right to food. Those who go to church pantries, who go to the Food Bank, who shoplift food. No one has a right to food or to eat. People die of starvation diets in this very city and Mayor Greed lets the drums beat on.

We in this room this afternoon — disciples of Jesus all — we must fight like hell-on-fire for all people to have the *Blessing* of a human right to table, bread, good nutritious

food. “Ain’t you got a right to the tree of life?” My use of the word nutritious is most important. In the U.S., often the least expensive, most filling meal, the food most easily obtained and requiring the least preparation and preservation, is junk food/fast food. So many poor folk, when they get to food,

Blessings of the Table *continued on page 7*

The Heart's Banquet

By Catherine Meeks

The Gospel contains Jesus' parable about how one should behave when invited to a wedding banquet. He observed how the guests were entering the room and placing themselves in the seats of honor without waiting for an invitation to do so. He went on to say, "When you hold a lunch or dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or your wealthy neighbors in case they may invite you back and you have repayment. Rather when you hold a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind; blessed indeed will you be because of their inability to repay you." (Luke 7:1, 7-14)

While this is good advice from Jesus about the way to keep the ego from causing you to put yourself in a higher position than you deserve, as well as making it clear that we are on this earth to serve others, I would like to take a look at a deeper meaning of this passage. It appears that, as is always true with Jesus, he is talking about something far beyond simple banquet behavior.

Another way to look at this passage is from the perspective that Jesus is talking about our inner community. We have many parts to ourselves and they are not always in concert with one another. When we think about our inner community, who do we find living there? Are there parts of ourselves that tend to be elevated above other parts? For instance, do we have some behaviors such as being generous that make us excuse a more negative behavior such as being greedy? Do we allow our ego to keep that greedy person hidden and excuse our greed with the notion that we are going to be generous enough to compensate for it?

We can pay attention to our blind, poor, crippled and lame inner community members. Who are they? How do they present

themselves in our daily lives? Have we caught glimpses of them and, if so, how did we greet them? Did they get any type of welcome? Were we willing to invite them to the table so we could acquaint ourselves with them and understand them better? Or did we push them aside and make every effort to send them away?

A major part of the reason that we find it difficult to confront the lame, crippled, blind and poor persons in the street comes from the fact that we have been unwilling to see those parts of ourselves that reflect the same state of being. There are none of us who are totally awake. There are parts of ourselves that are unknown to us or at the very least not well known. We have limitations. We are crippled in so many ways. We are poor in spite of the fact that we might consider ourselves unlike the poor who are forced to live in the hovels that our culture has created. We are not that different when we are willing to confront our poverty of spirit.

These parts of our inner community have to be engaged in order for us to live our lives in peace and with authenticity. Whenever we allow ourselves to see our many selves and learn to befriend them in ways that make it possible for them to be included in our understanding of who we really are, it brings us peace. The highly exalted ego is not allowed to sit on the throne in the heart and mind of the person who is conscious of their inner community. The place that ego holds is informed by this consciousness, which helps to maintain a healthy balance. The person who pays attention to their inner community members is able to take a lower seat at the banquet and wait to see if an invitation comes from the host to take a higher seat. But that person does not assume that the invitation will come and at times is surprised by it,



Cathie Bleck

because it is truly unexpected. Such a person does not take offense in their encounters with those that the culture has named as "other." This is the result of having honestly confronted one's inner community and the parts that create limits. When those inner limitations are faced, those in the outer community who embody limitations can be welcomed.

So it seems that Jesus wants us to pay attention to these deeper issues so that we can offer hospitality to the unlikely among us, and do it with great joy because we have met them before in our own inner community. This makes the banquet of the heart possible; and when we create that type of inner community spirit, we shine the light of that spirit into the darkness of the world. ✠

Catherine Meeks is a community and wellness activist and an active member of the Open Door Community. She taught African American Studies at Mercer University and is the retired Clara Carter Acree Distinguished Professor of Socio-Cultural Studies at Wesleyan College, the author of five books and a columnist for The Telegraph in Macon, Georgia. (kayma53@att.net)

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Men's shoes sizes 11-15 are especially helpful.

and **backpacks!**



Thank You!

HOSPITALITY

Hospitality is published by the Open Door Community, Inc., an Atlanta Protestant Catholic Worker community: Christians called to resist war and violence and nurture community in ministry with and advocacy for the homeless poor and prisoners, particularly those on death row. Subscriptions are free. A newspaper request form is included in each issue. Manuscripts and letters are welcomed. Inclusive language editing is standard.

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Open Door Community

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Calvin Kimbrough

Christmas Eve at the Open Door Community

Newspaper

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Open Door Community

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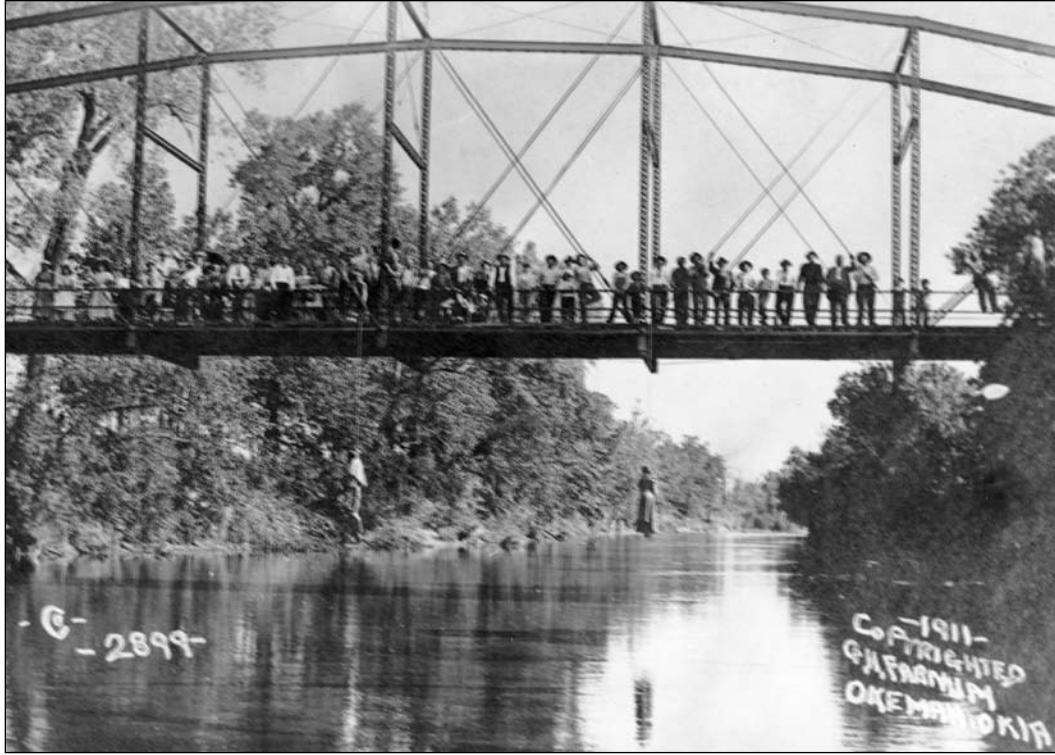
Being Resilient Among The Wolves

By Nibs Stroupe

In the tenth chapter of Matthew, the Black Jesus warns his disciples that in their ministry, they will be as sheep out among the wolves. He also tells them that they must be as “cunning as serpents and gentle as doves.” (Matthew 10:16) Whatever those adjectives may mean, he is surely telling them that the arenas in which they will now operate will require strength and agility, or to put it in our “R-word” sequence, they will need to be resilient. This idea of resiliency is the third word in our sequence of recognition, resistance, resilience, reparations, reconciliation and recovery. All these steps are necessary in battling the biggest “R” word: racism.

The first two steps in combatting the power of race in our lives, the steps of recognition and resistance, will not be adequate to eradicate the power of race. Like any deeply rooted system, the power of race is both resistant and resilient in response to the few attempts to mitigate its power. In the 1870s and 1880s, the white Southern powers began developing a two-pronged and resilient approach to reestablish slavery under the watchful and approving eyes of the white Christ. They used both violence and legislation, knowing that they could not overtly indicate that they were working to reestablish slavery. In the 1890s, they adopted what came to be known as the “Mississippi Plan,” a coordination of violence and legislation that sought to intimidate and restrict Black rights and movement (and white sympathizers), never mentioning the words “race” or “racism.” They bet that the federal government and the Supreme Court would accept their premise that in the world of race, “intent” was more important than “results.” And they were correct: In several decisions in the 1890s, the Supreme Court upheld neo-slavery because no intent to reestablish slavery or to develop systems based on race was expressed in the laws that were reviewed.

That story has continued in American history, especially in response to the short periods when a few steps toward racial equity have been taken. The period known as Reconstruction, which attempted to distribute political power in the South, was quickly extinguished by violence and legislation, and by the development of the myth of the “Lost Cause.” Not only were the laws and political structures recaptured by race after Reconstruction, but the idea of Reconstruction was reconfigured from a noble experiment crushed by political power to a failed attempt at social engineering, weighted down by corruption and Black incompetence. This myth-making machine worked, especially as the number of lynchings increased in the 1890s. The white reason given for the lynchings was because Black men were lusting for and raping white women — the myth became the need to hold down the lustful urges of African American men. Even the giant of the 19th century, Frederick Douglass, began to believe this myth. It took the fresh eyes and the resilience of a young African American woman, Ida Wells, to explore and to explode the myth that the motivation for the violence was to hold down Black lust. She investigated every lynching in the decade and found that the reason for the lynchings was not Black lust but rather the white desire to terrorize African American communities and to strip them of their rights. Frederick Douglass wrote her to thank her for her work, and he indicated that he, too, had begun to believe in the white Christ. Her published work is “Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases.”



George Henry Farnum / Wikipedia

The lynching of Laura and L.D. Nelson, mother and son, May 25, 1911 near Okemah, Oklahoma

We have seen a similar pattern ever since the passing of the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act in the 1960s — there is great pressure to repudiate them, with the named motive not white racism but rather an overreach by the federal government and the incompetence of Black people to achieve and maintain equity. The election of an African American president prompted the idea among white people that we are now in a “post-racial” society, but it also triggered that deeply-held belief that Black people cannot handle political power

So we must begin with our own consciousness and recognize a thirst for the God revealed in the Black Jesus born to Mary and Joseph.

— hence the almost constant “NO” in response to President Obama as a person and as president. The current rise of the Tea Party is the resonating voice of the Mississippi Plan, and Donald Trump’s base is this river of racism, resistance, and resilience that is flowing ever more strongly in the open waters of American society. In her book published this year, *White Rage*, Dr. Carol Anderson gives a running history of this response of the white Christ to the movements for justice and equality. The extra-legal lynchings have been replaced by the targeting of African Americans and Latinx by the police and the court system. The development of social media has recorded this state-sanctioned violence, yet there is still great denial that this is the power of race and not the “criminal” tendencies of African Americans and Latinx. The white Christ has so overwhelmed the Black Jesus in our individual and collective consciousness that it has captured all of us.

The teenager Mary of Nazareth hears a request from God to put herself in peril and to swim against the stream of oppression by allowing herself to be the mother of the Black Jesus. She asks, “How is this possible?” The answer that she hears in Luke 1 is a reminder that God has come and is coming to help us hear about the power of another story, a story that moves us away from the oppressive systems of race and gender and class and militarism of the white Christ and toward the systems of justice and love and equity of the Black Jesus. She hears that she must be resilient in this journey, and once she agrees, she goes first not to her fiancé, Joseph, but to her cousin Elizabeth. In finding solidarity there with her womanist community, she is able to face and endure the resilient power and resistance to equity represented in the male domination system. The front line of that system

in the Christmas story is Joseph, who in Matthew’s account is portrayed as a liberal. Upon hearing of Mary’s pregnancy by someone else, he decides not to give her the death penalty, but he does believe in the male system, and he decides to shun Mary and break the engagement. Yet, he receives a consciousness-changing vision from God, and he makes a huge shift. His maleness will not diminish if he stays with Mary — indeed, his maleness and his humanity will increase if he decides to live out of this vision rather than living out of the male domination system. Mary will need his maleness and protection in order to survive the wrath of the domination system, whether it is his refusal to ask the elders to stone her, or to help her and their son (yes, he claims Jesus as his son) escape the ravaging fury of the soldiers of Bethlehem.

This history and this Biblical story give all of us, and especially us “white” folks, clues about the necessity and the nature of our resilience in engaging the system of race in our time. First, let us find ways to listen for God’s voice in our individual lives, the voice telling us to look for a different story. This returns us in our own journeys to the need to recognize that we are all captured by the tramping boots of domination. So we must begin with our own consciousness and recognize a thirst for the God revealed in the Black Jesus born to Mary and Joseph. It will be a huge step if we are able to take it, and we won’t be able to go back to our old consciousness. Second, there is the absolute need



Brian Kavanagh

for community, for listening to those who are oppressed by us and by the white Christ. Mary found community in Elizabeth and Joseph (a surprising source!) and in Egypt. In this listening and engagement, we will find many struggles, but we will also begin to find a sign of life. Whether or not we will move to Mary’s Magnificat is not as important as our beginning to believe in this alternate story of life, of the Black Jesus. That belief and Mary’s Magnificat leads us to the next step in our journey of “Rs”: reparations. We’ll go there next time. ✦

Nibs Stroupe is the pastor of Oakhurst Presbyterian Church in Decatur and a longtime friend of the Open Door Community. (nibs.stroupe@gmail.com)

The Early Shoots of the Vine and Fig Tree

By Heather Barger

Four years ago, I sat in my little house in Atlanta and made a call to Will O'Brien and Dee Dee Risher. They were two of four people I knew at the time in Philadelphia, where my wife, Katie, as well as Katie's sister, Christa, and brother-in-law, Timothy, and their three daughters were preparing to make our new home. We had been talking for over a year with Christa and Timothy, who were living in Greece, about landing in the same place and creating some kind of shared life together. Katie had been called as pastor to Tabernacle United Church in Philly, and so our destination was set.

After thirteen years for me and seven for Katie in Atlanta, we were moving to a new city and searching for connection. Will and Dee Dee had been good friends of the Open Door for many years, beginning from the time they were co-editors of *The Other Side* magazine. They had led a retreat for the Open Door when I was a baby Resident Volunteer about a decade prior. Would they even remember me? I took a deep breath and dialed the number. Katie and I had plans to visit Philly the following weekend to look for housing and visit the church where Katie would be pastoring. "We'd love to see you!" Will said as if we were long lost friends. "Oh and by the way," he went on to mention, "we live in a small rental house in the back of a large property. There's a big house with several apartments in front and a huge yard. We have dreamed of buying the whole property and creating a residential community here. It's not for sale, and it might not ever be. But if we ever get there, maybe you would consider being a part of this."

It sounded like a pipe dream at that point. I remember thinking Will had only met me once and never met Katie, not to mention the rest of our family who were all about to descend upon Philly. Yet here he was inviting us to be a part of this as yet non-existent intentional community. What kind of a fool was he?

Four years later, I sit writing this article from my little apartment at the Vine and Fig Tree Community in the Germantown neighborhood of Philadelphia. Will and Dee Dee purchased the property a little over two years ago. We have spent much of that time cleaning out and renovating the main house, which is an ongoing process. The house was bought "as is," which included tons of treasures and trash left behind by the previous owners. Will and Dee Dee and their two children continue to live in the carriage house at the back of the property. Now there are five households in the community, both singles and families. We have a quarter-acre yard in between the two houses where we maintain a large garden of 15 beds and five chickens. We are in the process of renovating an efficiency apartment to serve as a "Christ room" for guests in need of a safe and hospitable home for a short time.

We have developed six core commitments to define and guide our life together:

- ❖ Support each other in our commitments to Christian discipleship, and in each other's well-being, vocation, and ability to do life-giving, creative work. We will practice common prayer, mutual accountability and aid.

- ❖ Live simply and in closer relationship to the earth in an effort to reduce consumption and to care for creation. This will include economic sharing, stewardship of the land, and growing our own food.

- ❖ Engage in conscious work to resist the dominant culture of individualism and greed, including overcoming our own addictions to militarism, racism and other "isms."

- ❖ Use our communal resources to provide hospitality to persons in need or in transition.

- ❖ Make our community, including our house and property, an occasional gathering place for the broader community for events of prayer and reflection, celebration and creativity.

- ❖ Foster an appreciation of beauty and a spirit of joy and celebration as part of our community life and public witness.

Some of these commitments we have begun to live out: our weekly practice of communal prayer and dinner together to nurture our faith life and care for one another, cultivation of this little piece of land that we have been gifted, and the use of our home as a frequent gathering spot for study, reflection and music-making. And some of these commitments still serve as calls and challenges to us. How do we live more fully into the

I think it reflects the first steps necessary for seeking any alternative to the mainstream culture of individualism, consumerism and violence that we are swimming in. As I look back, I realize these are also steps that I watched and learned from at the Open Door over the years.

First comes imagination. We have to have the capacity to envision a world beyond what is right in front of our eyes. We have to be dreamers, fools even. Dorothy Day said, "We are fools for Christ and wish we were more so!" It is part of the call of our faith to join in God's dream of abundant life and radical love, to envision an overgrown lot and a rundown house in an urban neighborhood as a thriving garden and a home full of beauty and welcome.

But if we sit pondering our dreams, they are nothing more than that. We must risk speaking them aloud, as Will did to me four years ago. And people will consider us crazy, as I did Will. More than that, we must risk our money, our time and our sweat toward that imagined alternative, which many will call a bad investment. At the Vine and Fig Tree, in our infancy, we find ourselves in the thick of this — weighing and praying over the minor and major risks, and sometimes pushing each other off the diving board.

Will we become co-owners of this property? Will we have more of a common economic pot? Will we invite this or that person as a guest? This stage of discerning our way through risks is, I suspect, a place we will return to again and again.

And we need each other to call and carry us into risk. We have to risk inviting others to join us. Will and Dee Dee invited me, Katie, Christa and Timothy to join in their dream even before it was realized. We need companions to say "Yes! I'm a dreamer, too!" and to live into the newness we are imagining. We cannot follow this odd and beautiful path alone or, like a vine without water, our dreams will wither and die. We need each other and we need the Spirit to remind us of our purpose and to nourish our creativity and courage.



At Vine and Fig Tree Community — front row, left to right: Cammie and Sean Dodds, Dee Dee and Luke Risher; back row, left to right: Will O'Brien, Katie Aikins, Heather Barger, Timothy Hill, Christa Aikins, not pictured: Jenna Bryant, Thea Risher, Sophia, Julia and Aria Aikins-Hill

We cannot follow this odd and beautiful path alone or, like a vine without water, our dreams will wither and die.

work of resisting racism and militarism — particularly as a white household in a predominantly AfricanAmerican neighborhood? What does the practice of hospitality look like, given our gifts of space and resources, and our limitations of time and energy due to full or part-time jobs and family?

In the early stages of our shared life, we are still discerning and muddling through those questions together, thanks be to God. I know that I could not see my way through to make even one of the above commitments on my own. As my fellow community member, Dee Dee, wrote in her recently published book, *The Soulmaking Room*, "Apart from connection to a like-minded community, making different choices about neighborhoods, schools, marriage roles, parenting, jobs, salaries and consumption can be terribly isolating. Without others accompanying us, our good intention to build a world on alternative values is doomed." Even with community, these small and big choices are not easy, but I am thankful for the creativity and support of this community that make an alternative life feel possible for me.

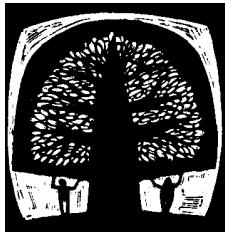
I tell the story of that first phone call with Will because

I give thanks for Will and Dee Dee's imagination, risk and invitation that gave birth to our community. And I watch how we all engage in these steps again and again as we move deeper into our life together. I give thanks that we are not the first; we have many teachers and companion communities like the Open Door who model this life of faith and resistance. And I am grateful for the opportunity to reflect on our life through occasional missives in *Hospitality*. Meanwhile, please pray for us, that the early shoots of the Vine and Fig Tree will be nourished, that we will not lose courage, but continue to imagine and risk together with God's help. ✦

Heather Barger was a Resident Volunteer and then member of the Open Door worship community for more than a decade. She is now a member of the Open Door Board of Directors. She lives in Philadelphia at the Vine and Fig Tree Community (vineandfigtree.wixsite.com/vineandfigtree) and works for Project HOME, a homeless outreach and affordable housing development organization. (hbarger@gmail.com)

From the Czech Republic

Connections



Meinrad Craighead

Dear Ed,

My name is Zdenek Rossmann. I am now 43 years old. In 1993-1994, I served as a Resident Volunteer in the Open Door Community. Since then, I have been receiving *Hospitality*, year after year. I think I have more than 250 issues at home. Now I read in the May-June issue that you are going to dismiss the community and move with Murphy to Baltimore. It made me very sad, but I can understand your reasons. It's sad that you couldn't find anyone who would take your ministries over after you. I wish I could help you, but I am quite far away, in the Czech Republic in Europe.

It has been almost 25 years since I lived and worked at 910 Ponce de Leon, but my memories are still incredibly clear. First of all, I can remember most of the people I met there. I can still see Leo McGuire, Carl Barker, Ira Terrell, Marcus Gill, Ed Potts, Ralph Dukes, Gino, Gladys, Dick and many others. And I remember many moments like driving early in the morning to the church on Butler Street to serve grits to the homeless, doing the Festival of Shelters in the park in the center of Atlanta (I forgot the name of it, but not the atmosphere of the festival) or praying together before our meals. I never proclaimed myself to be a Christian; I come from a very atheistic country where the religion was suppressed during 40 years of Communist power, but I still felt a part of the community life

and never stopped loving the Open Door. Indeed, after these 23 years, I still consider those six months as one of the most important and beautiful periods of my life. The conversations I had with you and Murphy were among the most crucial ones for me. Before the end of my stay at the Open Door, I had a dinner with you and a breakfast with Murphy in some pizza place near 910. I still remember Murphy saying, "Whatever you do in your life, you have to feel joy in it." These are exactly the moments that shape our lives.

The reason I travelled to the U.S. at the age of 20 was that I didn't know what I should do in my life. I could see no light in the tunnel of my future. And after two months travelling through New England, by a pure coincidence I ended up in the community in Atlanta, although I didn't even intend to visit Georgia. You accepted me, although I was an unknown, dubious little man out of Eastern Europe and, on top of that, I wasn't even a Christian. But my love for the people in the community was stronger than my atheism. I never became an active Christian, but I never stopped loving the community, although my only contact with you in the following years was through *Hospitality*.

After leaving Atlanta, I started studying medicine. I think I wouldn't have made that decision without my previous stay in Atlanta. In 2001, I finished the studies,



Zdenek with his family

and since then I work as a doctor. In 2003 I joined a mission of Doctors Without Borders in Congo Republic in Africa. It was another amazing experience. I dealt with malaria and sleeping sickness in the middle of swampy areas on the Congo River. Now I work in Germany, just near the border with the Czech Republic. I am a nephrologist — I treat patients with renal problems, and we run a dialysis treatment for over 230 patients. I like the work, I like talking to people, especially to those old German men who were born back in the 1920s and fought in the Nazi Army dur-

ing World War II. Some of them didn't come back from the Soviet gulags until the mid-'50s.

I live in the small town of Turnov in the Czech Republic, close to the border with Germany. I have a wife, and a daughter who is now five years old. I send you a photo of us.

Dear Ed, I just wanted to express my deep gratitude, appreciation and love to you, Murphy and all whom I met during those amazing six months. I wish I could come and see you before you move out, but my time is short and I have some bloody German medical examination to pass in the coming months. But I am glad I can send you an email, at least. And please forgive me any poor English; that, like many other things in this world, has got worse and worse since 1993. I have been speaking, reading, writing and cursing only in German and Czech since the last eight years, and my English has been neglected.

I send much love to you and other members of the community and I wish you a lot of strength, happiness, health and humility.

With love,
Zdenek Rossmann,
"Zee" back in 1993-1994

When Your Life Doesn't Matter

By Peter Gathje

The conversation was around the sentencing of the man who killed Semaj. In May 2014, a security guard shoved Semaj off of a bus. As he fell from the bus he hit the sidewalk face first and fractured his skull. He never regained consciousness and died a few months later. Testimony indicated the security guard escalated the situation by forcibly confronting Semaj, who was drunk and being disorderly.

One summer during graduate school, I worked as a security guard. Our "training" lasted a whole six hours, most of which was about how a security officer is not a cop, and how to write reports, check in and follow the rules of wherever we might be placed. None of the training addressed how to deal with conflict or with unruly people or drunks. I would guess the same was true of the guard who confronted Semaj.

We were told we could go on and get weapons training, and with that training we would be paid more. Only two wanted to do so. The rest of us did not want to carry a gun. The two exceptions were also the two who were "wanna be" cops. Most of us were sim-

ply looking for steady work that would pay above minimum wage. Several told me they figured this would be quiet work, just going around a warehouse or factory after hours making sure everything was fine.

After that day of training, I was assigned to various places to work as a security guard. My first assignment was to a PGA Golf Tournament. I "guarded" a hospitality tent one day. The next day I "guarded" the TV tower where the play-by-play guys sat. People generally ignored me, though a few drunks made fun of me and the other security guards as "rent-a-cops." I know movies like to do the same — mock security guards as incompetent or over-zealous. My fellow guards were neither. Just ordinary folks trying to make a living.

My next assignment lasted the rest of the summer. I became a guard at a state psychiatric unit. The supervisor who assigned me said, "You're a college boy, so maybe you can talk with the patients." I was not sure exactly how to take that observation.

Our role at the psychiatric unit was to be "the muscle" who would be called in when a patient became unruly. My only special training for this work was advice from

a co-worker, "Watch yourself. These people are crazy. Be safe. That's what matters." One night I came to work and learned that one of the guards had his arm broken by a patient a few days earlier on the day shift. I learned that the security firm did not pay for his medical bills. "He'll probably lose his job, too," another guard said to me. "He can't work with a broken arm. They don't care about us. We don't matter."

Semaj had been a regular guest at Manna House for many years. He found work and a place to live and we did not see him much anymore in the year before his death. Still, many of the guests knew him and were outraged that the security guard did not receive a stricter sentence.

"You kill a man and walk away free. That doesn't happen very often."

"Semaj was difficult, but he didn't deserve to die the way he did."

"I don't know how someone gets nothing when a man is dead."

"DA probably didn't even want to prosecute."

Then on the way to the gate as we were closing for the morning, one last comment from a departing guest brought into focus

for me Semaj and the security guard. "If someone kills me, ain't nothing going to happen. Nobody looks out for us. Our lives don't matter."

Biblical justice, I teach my Christian Ethics students, respects our dignity as made in God's image. The lives of those harmed and the lives of those who did the harm are supposed to matter. When we are called to account for our wrongdoing, we are led into repentance and reconciliation and the just renewal of community. In this case, Semaj's life clearly did not matter. And the guard was not called to a just accountability. For Semaj and this security guard there was no biblical justice. And so, as biblical justice also makes clear, there is no peace. ✠

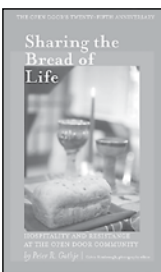
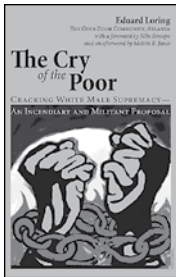
Peter Gathje is a professor and Assistant Academic Dean at Memphis Theological Seminary, and a founder of Manna House, a place of hospitality in Memphis. He wrote Sharing the Bread of Life: Hospitality and Resistance at the Open Door Community (2006) and edited A Work of Hospitality: The Open Door Reader 1982 – 2002. (pgathje@memphisseminary.edu)

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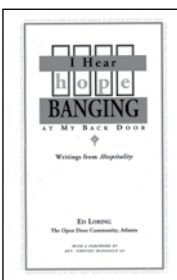
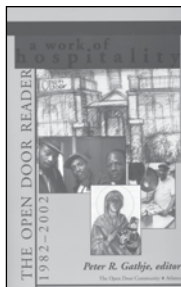
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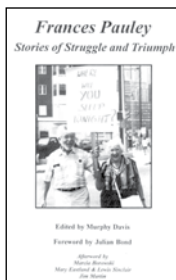
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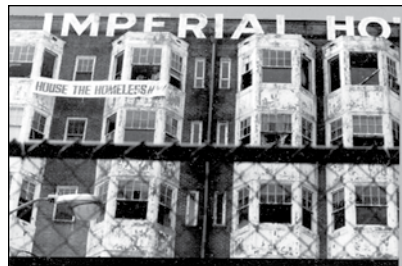
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New!

Raising Our Voices, Breaking the Chain

The Imperial Hotel Occupation as Prophetic Politics

By **Terry Easton**



Raising Our Voices, Breaking the Chain

The Imperial Hotel Occupation
as Prophetic Politics

Terry Easton

Terry Easton is Associate Professor of English in the College of Arts and Letters at the University of North Georgia. His dissertation on Atlanta's day laborers, Temporary Work, Contingent Lives: Race, Immigration, and Transformations of Atlanta's Daily Work, Daily Pay, won the Constance Coiner Dissertation Award of the Working Class Studies Association. In addition to holding a firm commitment to bridging the chasm between the academy and the streets, he strives to eradicate classism in America.



On Saturday, September 24,
Terry Easton presented the
story of *Raising Our Voices*
and signed books at the Metro
Atlanta Democratic Socialists
of America membership meeting
at the Open Door Community.
Join us at 12 noon on Saturday,
December 10, at the Imperial
Hotel, 355 Peachtree Street, for
another book talk and signing.



Photographs by Calvin Kimbrough

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One Last Advent *continued from page 1*

we changed our candles to reflect an African presence and suggest Kwanzaa in the midst of Advent.)

But as always, Advent is not all warmth and candlelight. Even as we anticipate the coming of the Prince of Peace, the state of Georgia is revving up the death chamber again. Already Georgia has executed six men in 2016 — the most that the state has ever killed in one year since the state resumed executions. But not enough, they say! Greg Lawler was executed on October 19 and two or three more may be executed before the end of the year. The institutions of our home state are not known to appreciate irony. I once sat through a death watch with Freddie Davis on Christmas Eve. As Cordell Collier always says, “You can’t make this stuff up.”

We will celebrate the coming of the light, but in many ways, nothing changes. The executions go on. Homeless people suffer in the cold and some will die or lose fingers, toes, legs, to frostbite. Women and children are still beaten in their own homes. The wars rage in Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Central Africa. The drones fly, wreaking death and havoc and assassinations around the world. And our national political scene just makes you want to weep.

What’s the point?

Perhaps we know that we need liturgy to survive with hope. Perhaps at times it is only the light of a candle that keeps us from drowning in despair. The word Advent means “coming.” Surely we know that we need to see something *coming* that is not already here. Surely we know that this war-torn, unjust world order will someday be superseded by the Beloved Community. Surely we know that to continue to build a new world in the shell of the old, we must stop and celebrate the new world toward which we are moving with hope.

God is already present to us by way of those who are absent from history — those whose story is almost never told because they have no power and neither shape nor influence major events. As Thomas Merton famously wrote in his *Raids on the Unspeakable*,

Into this world, this demented inn, in which there is absolutely no room for him at all, Christ has come uninvited. But because he cannot be at home in it, because he is out of place in it, and yet he must be in it, his place is with those others who do not belong, who are rejected by power, because they are regarded as weak, those who are discredited, who are denied the status of persons, tortured, exterminated. With those for whom there is no room, Christ is present in this world.

And so it is our privilege to enter this Advent season, waiting with those for whom there is no room. And so one more time in this place, we light a candle and summon the hope: the Prince of Peace is coming. The Beloved Community is being born among us — even here, even now. ✠

Murphy Davis is a Partner at the Open Door Community. (murphydavis@bellsouth.net)



Calvin Kimbrough

Blessing of the Table and Human Rights *continued from page 1*

food stamps or no (which the God-forsaken Republicans want to cut again), eat trash: diabetes-producing dead food of the American Way of Life. Food filled with sugar and saturated with sodium. Death. Do you wish to see a room full of hungry dying folk eating their one decent meal of the day? Come visit our Soup Kitchen.

The food of faith and faithfulness begins and ends at the Communion Table where we know our Jesus in the sharing of the bread-body and the cup-life force of Jesus himself. Daily we pray the Jesus prayer, “Give us this day our daily bread.” Jesus commands us to feed the hungry. Yes. But Works of Mercy are not enough. Mother Teresa was mistaken. We must work for Justice. Let us fight for human rights. For the Tree of Life. For food and table to be a human right in church and society.

Murphy and I plus a thousand others plus those sitting right in front of this podium from the ODC — for 40 years

in the center of the city. Once, when I was taking U.S. Congressperson John Lewis on a Labor Pool and Street Tour, we ended up for breakfast at Butler Street. He was dumbfounded by what he saw. He told me this breakfast with all these people hungry and cold was a huge wake-up call in his life. But not a single person there: John Lewis, Ed Loring or any of the guests had/have a right to food.

Many incarnations of God have shaken my foundations over the past 40 years. Once, when I was in my office at Clifton, a strange and plaintive African American banged into my office. She was speaking in tongues and then interpreted the message herself. “Pastor Loring, Godalmighty, Pastor Loring,” she keened in anguish, “there is a famine in the land. There is a famine in the land. Right here in Atlanta. Help me, help me, Pastor Loring, I am starving. Please give me a bag of food.” I embrace her in a holy vision to this day. She is the Black Mother God for me. Standing there in my office. She



Robert Lee

Murphy Davis, Catherine Meeks and Eduard Loring were honored at the luncheon.

— from Clifton Presbyterian Church to 910 Ponce de Leon Avenue, we have been setting the Welcome Table in a mustard seedling Beloved Community for hungry men, women and children in Atlanta. This is “the other Atlanta.”

No right to food translates for many into no right to life. We Georgians have executed more human beings in 2016 than any other state in the U.S. In October we killed Greg Lawler. We the people save tax money by serving

taught me and I now know that in the U.S.A. there is a famine in the land. Only the blessed and the hungry poor can see the desert in the heart of America with its ruined and parched grain and cows with rib cages poking through their leathery skins.

But sisters and brothers in the crucified and risen flesh of Jesus, that’s not all we do at the ODC. We fight like Amos; we holler like John the Baptist; we teach like Jesus; we disrupt

**We fight like Amos; we holler like John the Baptist;
we teach like Jesus; we disrupt business as usual
and we go to jail with the cry of the poor in our hearts.**

what prisoners call “bird feed” to our brothers and sisters in cages. Only two light meals a day on the weekend. The state forces prisoners to work for free and often against their will for no pay. This is a succinct definition of slavery. There are no prisoner rights to enough to eat. Prisons are a most helpful location to discern what is going on in America and God’s will for us.

We at the ODC have served up to 10,000 meals a month at our home. For 18 years we served breakfast to 250 folk, Monday through Friday mornings. Finally the Black pastor told us we must go. Church growth was suffering because it is not inviting to prospective members to have so many mostly Black men around the church. Let me tell you, I was shocked, naive white man that I am. I was shocked, but I learned my lesson well. Just to whom do Black Lives Matter?

Yet for 18 wonderful years there was a Table of Blessing, a Table of Welcome of abundant nutritious food served

business as usual and we go to jail with the cry of the poor in our hearts. We walk, talk, sing and shout Glory Alleluia.

The human right to a Welcome Table, to food, to a house for all citizens and for the strangers in our land, for you, for us, for our children and our children’s children: This is our prayer and prayer is worthless pious prattle without feet in the streets.

The blessing of a table is the grace of God. That is why we say the blessing before we eat. The human right to a table with yummy food is God’s grace incarnate in the political order. Let us perform the Works of Mercy — feed the hungry. Let us join the prophetic witnesses and fight for food to be a human right in the U.S.A. Let us practice the Human Right to food: Justice trumps hunger and creates a Human Right to Food. ✠

Eduard Loring is a Partner at the Open Door Community. (edloring@opendoorcommunity)

Grace and Peaces of Mail

Hi Ed,

Thanks for the public letter and the phone conversation. What I hear leads me to be confident that all is finally good news that connects with The Good News. Committing to the “arriving future,” as Moltmann advocates, is painful because the past has become normal. Moving on appears to be at odds with our interests. But, as you understand and live, being attached to a suffering god means the future prevails in the face of the impossible.

Peace and justice!

Dave Woodyard
Denison University
Granville, Ohio

Dear Ed & Murphy,

I read with great sadness your announcement in the latest *Hospitality* that the Open Door Community will close in 2017. I know that it has been your life’s work and joy for the past 35 years. It must be very hard to imagine being somewhere else; although it sounds that you will be close to Hannah and her family.

I vividly remember my time with you in 2009. I learned so much about the pleasure of giving to others from you and your colleagues as my mentors. The joy of serving others shone in the smiles on the faces of the staff and residents. I fondly remember many interactions with folks who came to partake of your goodness and love, especially Ralph. The love between and among all who entered the Open Door was so apparent to me.

Do take care of yourselves and know that you have surpassed anyone’s expectations of your ability to fight for the rights of the underserved and underloved.

God bless and keep you always,
Kay Hart
St. George, Utah

Dear O.D.C Staff and Family,

Hello, I am currently serving a capital life sentence. I have been locked up since I was twenty and am now thirty-three years old. I’ve been getting *Hospitality* for about four years now and always get some very good advice and emotions coming through the articles by numerous people. Thank you and God bless to you all there at the Open Door Community. Take care and keep up God’s work!

Sincerely,
A Texas prisoner

Like many others, I really “put in” for Bernie to win California. I have not been so “fired up” for social and economic justice since the 13 years ago this summer I spent at the Open Door (August). I always carry that experience with me and what it still means.

The path is long. The task not easy. Each of us does what we can in our own way.

Peace to you always,
Wes King
Long Beach, California

Dear Open Door Community,

I just learned from the *Atlanta Progressive News* with great sadness that you are going to close the door. Thank you so much for your important and courageous work for so many years. I feel you will make a big hole in Atlanta, while I understand the circumstances that compelled you to make this decision to close. But I do believe your effort and presence have made a difference in many people’s lives, and I am sure you have enjoyed the long journey in numerous ways.

I am proud to say that I was part of the Grady Coalition in 1999-2000, and you welcomed me at least once to a meal at the community. Since then, I have moved out of Atlanta, but without losing the sense of working toward social justice in my own way.

I am excited to hear that some of you are coming to Baltimore, because that’s where I now live! I have been teaching at a community college in a suburb of Baltimore for the last couple of years. As you probably know, racial and class inequalities are very stark here, and changes often happen not to our liking. But, as Mr. Wimberly said, “We gonna do the best we can ‘til we can’t.”

Once you settle down in Baltimore, please contact me if you would like. Thank you again for your long service, and please take care of yourselves.

With gratitude,
Taka Ono
Baltimore, Maryland

My name is Norm Lowry, a 62-year-old lover of God and all people — boundlessly and indiscriminately. After half a life of normalized Christian ministry, I turned exclusively to reach out to religion’s unwanted — I want all!

Currently I’m in a Pennsylvania prison for my third consecutive nonviolent protestation against America’s great loves of militarism, violence, racism bigotry, poverty-production, injustice, inequity.

Blessings,
Norman Lowry
Dallas, Pennsylvani

Calvin,

I had not heard of this decision! Obviously this is Atlanta’s grievous loss. What a place of real humanity you and the community have been.

Your move is Nashville’s gain. I’m glad to know you will be close to siblings and your mom.

We will miss you greatly! But I hope to get to Nashville on occasion.

Affectionate greetings to Nelia. We will stay in touch, good friend.

Don Saliers
Decatur, Georgia

Don, now Theologian in Residence at Candler School of Theology, taught Theology and Worship there for 40 years. He has been a faithful supporter and a frequent leader of worship at the Open Door.

Dear Open Door Community,

Thank you for all your faithful witness and especially for your recent work on the Black Jesus. It coincides with the racial and systemic injustice work of the Baptist Peace Fellowship.

Words are lacking for me to express my deep honoring of the decades of work you have done on behalf of the homeless, poor, disenfranchised and imprisoned sisters and brothers among us. You have my great respect and gratitude. Your heavy hearts at closing the ministry as it is now known is shared and understood.

One of my dreams had been to join you as a resident volunteer once I was on Social Security and didn’t have to work in a salaried position, but that won’t happen until 2018, so likely I will miss that opportunity.

Your closing, transition, moving, all the grief and letting go that will entail will be deeply in my care and prayers for you over the next few months.

Thank you for the gift of *Hospitality* and Eduard’s books over the years. I have been greatly challenged and blessed by them, read them over and over. May your writing continue and your agitation!

Thank you, Blessings, Peace, Prayers,
Sandi John
Chico, California



Rita Corbin

Ed Loring and family,

Just devoured your article in *Hospitality* re “Murder at Moore’s Ford Bridge.” What a horrible slap that was in the face of all folks! And though black folks have it a bit better, I know the back lashing still goes on but is covered up and hoping folks don’t smell it!

I’m so grateful you had the courage to run this article now, some 75-80 years later yet it is still going on!! Folks like you keep it on the up and up and don’t try to cover what’s real.

We have many wonderful black workers here in this care center. They have “feeling” for the sick and aged. And that often means more than knowing all the pills and doctors around! Many women workers are so happy for the job, ‘cause their husbands are out of work. And we know why and they know too!

We pray that we have a deep appreciation for them.

Sincerely in hope and trust in God’s love,

Sr. Dorothy Droessler
Sacred Heart Center
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Dear Ed,

First let me tell you how much Mary and I enjoyed your visit. Murphy appears in excellent health. We have been aware of her frequent bouts with cancer.

As long as I have been reading about the ministry of the Open Door, this book by Terry Easton has made me aware that your experience in the Imperial Hotel was an important historical event — a learning event for your team in dealing with the powers of Atlanta leaders, white money and African American leaders, who have other interests and could not care less for their homeless brothers and sisters.

Our pastor, Nath Briley, knows you. He came to Pickens after a long stay in Atlanta as an assistant pastor for a big church. He calls you a true prophet and shares your concerns for the underclass who are needy in many ways as well as spiritual needs. He has also teamed up with like-minded clergy and lay leaders to improve race relations in Pickens and has stirred up opposition as well. There are still many who hate African Americans, except in their role as workers helping white people.

We love both of you,
Zig and Mary Burroughs
Pickens, South Carolina

Zig Burroughs is Ed Loring’s cousin. A Baptist preacher and South Carolina liberal at 93, Zig continues to witness to the radical gospel of Jesus our Christ.

To Ed, Murphy and the Leadership Team:

I learned of the existence of the Open Door Community only recently, and have been a *Hospitality* reader for less than two years. Nevertheless, I was surprised and saddened (as I’m sure you were as well) when I learned of the community’s plans to close in the coming year. A radical Christian community is a rare and precious gift to the world, and its presence will be sorely missed.

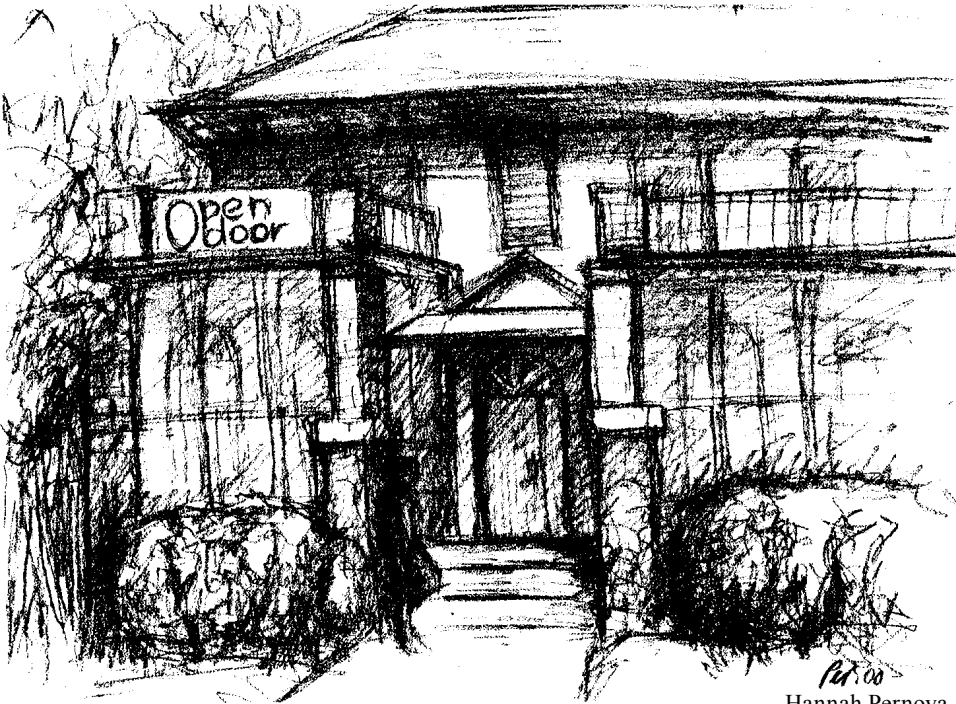
I don’t begrudge anyone at the Open Door a retirement, nor well-deserved time spent with family. At the same time, I do not want you to be discouraged. While your efforts to recruit younger leaders may have met with limited success for the time being, as long as injustice exists there must also be those who rise up to face it, in every generation.

Thank you for being the hands and feet of Christ to the down-and-out, the homeless and the incarcerated people of Georgia. Thank you for agitating for justice, for being present for those who need you and for tackling the complex issues of race that have darkened our history and present as a people. While I’m not qualified to speak on behalf of other *Hospitality* readers, I think I probably speak in the same voice as a lot of other people when I say, simply, thank you. We are grateful for your witness, your service and your example.

Sincerely,
Freddie Odom
Mayor
Bluffton, Georgia

Closing the Door at 910

*Homecoming
for former
residents,
partners,
volunteers,
supporters
and friends.*



Hannah Pernova

Saturday, January 14 and Sunday, January 15, 2017

On **Saturday** we will have a time to enjoy Nine-Ten Ponce de Leon one more time, tell stories and meet up with old friends. There will be plenty of food and drink.

On **Sunday** (location to be announced), we will gather for a closing worship service.

Please watch our website for updates.

Join us as a Volunteer



Calvin Kimbrough

Robert Lee lived and worked at the Open Door Community for nine months in 2014. He recently returned to offer his leadership skills again and will move to be a part of the Open Door in Baltimore. Come join in the work with him.

**Serve Jesus Christ
in the hungry, homeless, and imprisoned.**

**Join street actions and loud and loving
nonviolent demonstrations.**

**Join Bible study and theological reflections
from the Base.**

**You might come to the margins
and find your center.**

until January 15, 2017

Contact: Sarah Humphrey
at opendoorcomm@bellsouth.net
or 404.874.9652 ext. 101

For information visit
www.opendoorcommunity.org

poetry corner

Thirst



Julie Lonneman

Another morning and I wake with thirst
for the goodness I do not have. I walk
out to the pond and all the way God has
given us such beautiful lessons. Oh Lord,
I was never a quick scholar but sulked
and hunched over my books past the
hour and the bell; grant me, in your
mercy, a little more time. Love for the
earth and love for you are having such a
long conversation in my heart. Who
knows what will finally happen or
where I will be sent, yet already I have
given a great many things away, expect-
ing to be told to pack nothing, except the
prayers which, with this thirst, I am
slowly learning.

— Mary Oliver

*Mary Oliver (born 1935) is an American poet who has
won the National Book Award and the Pulitzer Prize.*

Hospitality welcomes poems from people in Georgia prisons or living on the streets in Georgia.

Send submissions to Eduard Loring,
Open Door Community, 910 Ponce de Leon Ave. N.E., Atlanta, GA 30306-4212
or by email to hospitalitypoetrycorner@gmail.com.

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sandwiches** to
serve each week!

We need
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sandwiches
**(no bologna, pb&j or
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individually wrapped
on **whole wheat** bread.

Thank You!



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**volunteer
needs
at the
Open Door Community**

Volunteers for Tuesday and Wednesday
Soup Kitchen and Showers **8:45 a.m.-12:15 p.m.**

Volunteers to help staff our Foot Clinic on **Wednesday** evenings (**6:00 p.m.** for supper, **6:45-9:15 p.m.** for the clinic).

Individuals to accompany community members to medical appointments.

Groups or individuals to make individually wrapped meat with cheese sandwiches on whole wheat bread for our homeless and hungry friends (**no bologna, pb&j or white bread, please**).

People to cook or bring food for our **6 p.m.** household supper on Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday evenings.

For more information,
contact Sarah Humphrey
at sarah@opendoorcommunity.org
or 404.874.9652 - ext 101

Grace and Peaces of Mail

Dear Ed,

I am grieving with you and for all of you. I never expected to read such a letter. It means so much that you wrote to me. Thank you for the kindness.

How difficult to see your work in Atlanta coming to an end. I'm sure the time remaining will be painful and difficult but also poignant and infused with joy. There is still work to be done and I will support you and Murphy wherever the hand takes you. We are all getting old, but God is not done with us.

Our hearts break again and again until we believe we cannot endure it. But God's heart breaks and Jesus weeps over every war, terrorist attack, poverty, violence, indifference, unkindness, hatred and evil. It doesn't matter where the differences come from: Isis, Al-Qaeda, Israel, or America. So let our hearts continue to break along with God's, trusting God's help in learning to love suffering and become like God.

Yes, Kenny is dead, Daniel is dead, and yet they are more alive now than ever before; that is the hope. Many will die today, tomorrow and every day. The evil one is alive and active in the world, but he has been defeated. This is the truth and the victory. The kingdom is here and the kingdom is coming.

Rae Jones
Forest River Hutterite Colony
Inkster, North Dakota

Dear Murphy and Ed,

We will greatly miss you at 910 and throughout the city. You were always the "gold standard" of ministries *with* the poor. Who will care for the least, address power, challenge the death penalty...? God will have his people. In the meantime, God speed. Baltimore, get ready.

Sincerely,
Tom and Alexandra Roddy
Atlanta, Georgia

Tom Roddy is a retired Presbyterian minister. He and Alexandra lived as missionaries for many years in Northeastern Brazil where Murphy Davis met them and was welcomed into their home.

Calvin and Nelia,

Jesse and I have thought of you so many times since reading this letter. We continue to count you as two of our most beloved mentors and artists.

It pains us to think about this closing, and what a closed Open Door will mean for so many people, including the two of you.

We will hope for open doors ahead. And should you come through Kansas City, you know that the biggest open door of all will be our home and Rainbow Mennonite Church.

Love to you and your companions in ministry.
Ruth Harder
Pastor, Rainbow Mennonite Church
Kansas City, Kansas

Dear Murphy and Team,

What a wonderful service you have given to the homeless and the community. I'm so sorry it has to end this way. My husband, Leon, who passed away in 2014, started an outreach program at Jackson Presbyterian Church several years ago. Each year we send clothing, medical supplies and other items to the Open Door. Do you need us to send these things again before the end of the year?

Please let me know.
Sincerely,
Gayle Meenach
Locust Grove, Georgia

Editor's note: Thank you Gayle! Yes, indeed, we are still at work here until early 2017 and can use the supplies.

Dear and Beloved Ed and Murphy,

It was with very mixed emotions I read in *Hospitality* of the closing of the Open Door house, where for 35 years Christ-in-the-poor was housed, clothed and fed! Of course, the reasons you expressed were truly reasonable. And so as history and mystery move on, the local churches adapt to changing circumstances. A big and deep "Thank you" to you and all the many folk who helped you, even to the hundreds of donors and readers who kept you supplied so you could feed and minister to Christ (not so disguised) in the poor and indigent of Atlanta. Of course, we all know you will continue to be of service to God's people in different ways and forms.

Abbot Francis Michael is "retired" now, and chaplain to our Nuns in Arizona. At 88, I "work" at our new Welcome Center. Do come!

Love,

Fr. Tom Francis
Monastery of the Holy Spirit
Conyers, Georgia



Rita Corbin

Dear Nelia and Calvin,

From our occasional conversations over the years, my head is not shocked by the news of the Open Door Community's closing. However, my heart is still trying to recover from it.

In reading the announcement to ODC friends, I am so appreciative of the explanation for and about the specifics of the transition. I've printed it as an example of testimony done right. And what a testimony it is! My own faith journey has been informed and inspired by your witness. When I've spoken of Christian witness at full stretch, the Open Door Community has been exemplary. THANK YOU!

A fact that I knew, but that had not registered as having significance about the faith journey, is: "Everyone that Jesus healed eventually died." This does not diminish the astonishing significance of Jesus' healing power or the meaning of healings. Healing transforms us now and for how we enter the future. Healing frees us from oppressive realities that define and limit us. Healing releases the saving awareness of faith, love, and hope as resident within us and for us — for all time.

I have no doubt that the Open Door Community has experienced the healing power of God many, many times. And I have no doubt that the Open Door Community has had the healing power of God to flow through it to an uncountable number. So I rejoice that my life has been blessed by such doubtless knowing. I rejoice in the miracle that is the Open Door Community.

Nelia and Calvin, anticipating times of reunion with the two of you at Candler or in Nashville will be a joy for Helen and me. Even though we do not know all the occasions to come, we delight in the anticipation. As done many times before, we hold you prayerfully upon our hearts.

With abiding love,
Luther Smith
Atlanta, Georgia

Luther is Professor Emeritus of Church and Community at Candler School of Theology, Emory University. He often brought his classes to 910 to learn more about the Open Door Community and the Catholic Worker Movement.

Grace and Peaces of Mail

Dear Friends,

I read with sadness but not surprise of the closing of the Open Door. You have not only been a great help to hungry, shoeless, showerless folks, but your witness to God's love has been an inspiration to me and to many.

I retired from my pastorate ten years ago. It's not easy to turn over work you have cared for. But the Spirit keeps turning dying into rising. Let's see what happens next!

Blessings on you all as you manage this transition,
Blair Moffett
Wolfeboro, New Hampshire

Greetings!

I cannot begin to understand how difficult your decision to terminate your Open Door Community must be. Thank you, thank you, for all the tremendous ministry you have been involved in these 35 years. "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope." (Romans 15:13)

Sincerely,
Sister Betty Donoghue
Sisters of Providence
St. Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana

Dear Friends,

I was very sorry to read that the Open Door will have to be closed in January. I will always remember when my wife, Sue, and I were able to visit that sacred place some years ago. Sharing in worship that day was a moving experience. I trust that I will hear in a future issue of *Hospitality*, which I devour each time it comes, where my future support can be sent.

Blessings to you all,
Rev. James E. Ray
Poland, Ohio

Dear Open Door Friends,

I was stunned at your news of the closing of 910 Ponce de Leon, and am grieving the loss while marveling at and praising God for the gigantic ministry you have done there. Also I know that — a la the Maya Angelou quote on the stamp on this letter — you have "a song to sing," a song that has not and will not end until the Lord comes again, and even then will be rolled into that vast paean to the Lamb on the throne.

Meanwhile, my thoughts and prayers are with you as you "do what you've gotta do."

Peace, strength, blessings!
Karen Whelchel Redwine
Athens, Georgia

Dear Ed,

It is with sadness that I hear the news that you and Murphy are stepping away from the Open Door. I indeed, understand the need for Sabbath, rest and caring for medical issues as we age. I wish you only the best in the years ahead.

I tell you nothing new when I say what a wonderful ministry you have created at the Open Door. You have fed many, housed many and advocated for many; a more important ministry there could not be.

When I was teaching at McCormick I always held up your ministry as a stellar example of how community ministry was done. Having served in similar ministries I also know how incredibly difficulty such a ministry can be: long hours, hustling for money, dealing with the dysfunctions of street people, rounding up volunteers, etc. I commend you for your patience and perseverance.

I pray God's blessings continue to be with you in the years ahead.

Peace,
Rev. Mark W. Wendorf
Sanford, Maine

Dear Calvin and Nelia,

Thank you for the news ... I had not heard about the closing of the Open Door. You two have poured yourselves into the Open Door for a decade plus. Young people usually do not appreciate enough the importance of the long-term commitment of the elders. Thank you for your friendship and for your loving service to the poor and to the Open Door Community.

At the age of 62 it is barely in my consciousness the idea of retirement, but friends not too much older than me are encountering the reality. I don't anticipate going to a care center anytime soon, but aches and pains are beginning to be part of my daily life. As you may know, I'll be in Guaymas, Mexico (7 hours south of Tucson) this coming year to prepare to begin a border friary in southern Arizona in 2017. So we'll all be in some transition. I am "gearing up" for this challenge of living in a different culture, but I know it will be good preparation for the border friary next year. Our Franciscan province has had friars in Guaymas since 1969. We have a soup kitchen, free clinic, orphanage, and old folks home there.

Yours in Christ and Francis,
David Buer, ofm
Tucson, Arizona

Brother David has been present on the streets of Atlanta during the Open Door's Holy Week With the Homeless for over a decade now. Spending a night and day with him on the street is an amazing experience full of wonder, wisdom and grace. You will find him in many pictures from past Holy Weeks in the online Hospitality newspaper archive at www.opendoorcommunity.org/resources/hospitality.



Rita Corbin

Dear Friends,

We are deeply saddened to see the Open Door closing after so many years and so great a testimony and so many lives transformed. No doubt you and others will continue their witness in new ways in our needy world. We thank you for making this possible and we join you with the Spirit and the hope that God goes with us all always.

Peace,
Ross and Gloria Kinsler
Pasadena, California

Dear friends and companeras/os, the Kinslers have spent their lives living in Central America and struggling to help North Americans re-examine the Biblical texts in light of the theological and political insights coming to us from Radical disciples in the South.

Hey Rev. Eduard and Rev. Murphy,

So much is going on here it's positive in a way. The food has gotten bad, but I'm thankful, because there are some with no food at all. I remember when I was homeless for about a year eating out of garbage cans. It's a wonder I didn't die from food poisoning. I stay humble, and thank God daily for good people like you all, which I call friends, for providing safety every day, and food and His word which guides us. I've noticed myself becoming a little more isolated; a lot of these guys don't like people who speak about the right thing to do, they like negative stuff. I'm not afraid to speak the truth and help out someone, but I see I'm getting more enemies, so I'm sitting back and counting them all so I'll just know. Rev Ed! Continue on, loving and forgiving them. Bless you all, stay encouraged. God loves you.

A Georgia Prisoner

Dear Friend Eduard,

...My world has shrunk and since I'm almost totally deaf — unable to decipher human voices — I'm more comfortable at home where my limitations don't bother me as much, and it is a good excuse to let the clutter go and read good books! I recently finished your friend Wes Howard-Brooks' *Come Out My People*. I was extremely impressed. I felt for many years there were two tracks in the Bible, the movement and the institution. I didn't really understand the connection. I knew First Baptist Church in Gainesville where I grew up was narrow on certain issues that Mac Bryan, Clarence Jordan and Will Campbell accepted. I wanted to go with the wider path of God's love. I met you and Murphy later on this path!

I am living in Tiger, in the mountains outside the town and am reduced to reading as my main endeavor. I'm trying to purge my files but find it very difficult to let good books go. I give some to the library but this classic paperback is out of print and one of Frank Cooley's favorites: H. Richard Niebuhr's, *The Kingdom of God in America*, 1927. Richard Niebuhr was head of Frank's doctoral committee. They loved each other very much. Many other excellent books remain in boxes. ... I'm hoping to send now this first recovered book and hope that you will be able to see whether Wes Howard Brook and his wife can also enjoy it when you and Murphy finish.

Am enclosing a copy of Jim Hightower's newsletter, *The Lowdown*, recommended by Bill Moyers. It is helpful and disturbing. I really loved Wes's book. I sat up many a night until after 2:00 a.m. reading it. I read slowly now and I'll admit I early on stopped looking up most of the footnotes, but I definitely want to keep the book for reference. I kept Peterson's *The Message* out to read along with *Come Out My People*. I've got a CD of *Cotton Patch Gospel* I often play to help me set the mood for reading.

Carolyn Martin
Tiger, Georgia

Dear Christian friends at the Open Door,

I was so saddened to read that you are going to have to close your doors, and that the building needed so many repairs. You have been such an inspiration to me and to my husband for these past several years. You have truly been about the Lord's business and God bless you for that. I'm sure that the many Residents over the years have thanked you and have given thanks for you being there. And Murphy and her prison ministry — you've opened my eyes.

Thank you for your ministry among us and for your writings. We trust you are both well, and will settle near your daughter in Maryland.

God bless you,
Sandra and Charles Baboian
York, Pennsylvania

Calvin,

I love you brother. This is certainly not an email I expected to receive. I'm still trying to process it.

Thank you for thinking of me. Thank you for sending me this note. I will be contacting Brandon soon to learn more about your archives. I can only imagine the history that you captured. I'm so glad that it is being preserved.

I'm praying with you and Nelia. Maybe I'll find better words soon. Right now, you are just resting on my heart.

Carlton Mackey
Atlanta, Georgia

Carlton is Director of the Ethics and Arts Program at the Center for Ethics, Emory University. He is the creator of 50 Shades of Black, www.50shadesofblack.com, and brings us a stirring word every time he preaches at 910.

Open Door Community Ministries

Coffee & Sandwiches: Tuesday, 8:30 a.m.
Soup Kitchen: Wednesday, 9 a.m.
Women’s Showers: Tuesday, 11 a.m.
Men’s Showers: Wednesday, 9 a.m.
Harriet Tubman Foot Care Clinic: Wednesday, 7 p.m.
Public Restroom: Monday, 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.,
Tuesday - Thursday, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m., Sunday 8 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Mail Check: Tuesday & Wednesday, during serving;
Monday, Thursday, Friday & Saturday, 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Use of Phone: Tuesday & Wednesday, during serving.
Prison Ministry: Monthly trip to prisons in Hardwick, Georgia,
in partnership with First Presbyterian Church of Milledgeville;
monthly Jackson death row trip; and pastoral visits to
death row and various jails and prisons.

Sunday: We invite you to join us for **Worship** at **4 p.m.** with
supper following worship.

We gratefully accept donations at these times:
Sunday: 9 a.m. until 3 p.m.
Monday: 8:30 a.m. until Noon and 3 p.m. until 8:30 p.m.
Tuesday: Noon until 8:30 p.m.
Wednesday: Noon until 6 p.m.
Thursday: 8:30 a.m. until 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. until 8:30 p.m.
Friday and Saturday: We are closed. We are not able to
offer hospitality or accept donations on these days.

Our **Hospitality Ministries** also include visitation and letter
writing to prisoners in Georgia, anti-death penalty advocacy,
advocacy for the homeless, daily worship, weekly Eucharist,
and Foot Washing.

Join Us for Worship!

We gather for worship and Eucharist at 4 p.m. each Sunday, followed by supper together.
If you are considering bringing a group please contact us at 404.874.9652 -ext 101.
Please visit www.opendoorcommunity.org or call us for the most up-to-date worship schedule.

On November 6, 13, & 20, we will celebrate Eucharist at the dinner table.
On November 27, we will begin our Advent Journey with Eucharist and the lighting of candles.
Advent continues December 4, 11 & 18.
On Saturday, December 24, we will celebrate Christmas Eve Eucharist at the dinner table.
During November, December and early January,
Rev. Connie Bonner of Scotland will join our preaching schedule.
Sunday, January 15, Final Worship Service “Closing the Door at 910”
Please see our website for location and details.



Rita Corbin

Needs of the Community

blankets



We need blankets for
our friends that are
washable and can be
dried “hot.”

Do you have a garden? Can you share some fresh produce for the Open Door Welcome Table? *Thank you!*

- Living Needs**

 - ☐Your prayers for the Open Door Community
 - ☐jeans 30-34 waist and 46-60 x 32 long
 - ☐women’s pants 16-24
 - ☐cotton footies
 - ☐sweat pants 1x-3x
 - ☐work shirts
 - ☐hoodies
 - ☐belts 34” & up
 - ☐men’s underwear M-L
 - ☐women’s underwear
 - ☐walking shoes especially sizes **11-15**
 - ☐baseball caps
- Personal Needs**

 - ☐shampoo (large)
 - ☐disposable razors
 - ☐nail clippers
 - ☐nail files
 - ☐cough drops

Food Needs

 - ☐fresh fruits & vegetables
 - ☐hams & turkeys
 - ☐sandwiches: **meat with cheese on whole wheat bread (NO PB&J, bologna or white bread, please)**
- Special Needs**

 - ☐blankets
 - ☐backpacks
 - ☐MARTA cards
 - ☐reading glasses
 - ☐trash bags (30 gallon, .85 mil)
 - ☐postage stamps
 - ☐a home for every homeless person
 - ☐Abolition of the Death Penalty



Autumn Dennis

we need
T-Shirts
2XL-5XL

Medical Needs List

Open Door Medical Cart

- ibuprofen
- acetaminophen
- Lubriderm lotion
- cough drops
- non-drowsy allergy tablets
- cough medicine (alcohol free)

Foot Care Clinic

- Epsom salt
- non-scented/allergen-free soap (*Dr. Bronners Baby Mild or similar*)
- shoe inserts (*especially men’s larger sizes*)
- apricot scrub (*St. Ives or similar*)
- pumice stones
- vitamin A&D ointment
- lavender essential oil (pure)
- tea tree essential oil (pure)
- Smart Wool (or equivalent) socks

We also need volunteers to help staff our Foot Care Clinic on Wednesday evenings from 6:45 - 9:15 p.m.!