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The Open Door Community – Hospitality & Resistance in the Catholic Worker Movement

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April 2015



He Is Risen by Lavrans Nielsen

The Resurrection Process

He penetrates the entire cosmos,
pervades the whole world,
and makes his presence felt
in every human being.

The resurrection is a process
that began with Jesus
and that will go on
until it embraces all creation.

Wherever an authentically human life
is growing in the world,
wherever justice is triumphing
over the instincts of domination,
wherever grace is winning out
over the power of sin,
wherever human beings
are creating more fraternal mediations
in the social life together,
wherever love
is getting the better of selfish interests,
and wherever hope
is resisting the lure of cynicism or despair,
there the process of resurrection
is being turned into a reality.

— Leonardo Boff

Published online at <http://inwardoutward.org/2015/02/13/resurrection-process/>.

The Saints Are in the Soil Lazarus, Compost, Resurrection and All Saints

By Ashley Goff

Scripture Reading: John 11:1-48

I wonder if it was the web of relationships that called Lazarus back.

After four days in cave-like darkness, as Lazarus started to feel and stir the shrouds on his waking skin, I wonder if he heard the cries of Jesus beyond the threshold of the tomb. I wonder if Lazarus could hear the footsteps of the many Judeans who came to comfort his sisters, Mary and Martha. Could he hear the clanking of kitchen utensils creating grief-stricken meals of hospitality? Could he hear the tenderness of the hugs being exchanged? I wonder if Lazarus could feel the presence of Jesus as the Radical One walked through the doorway of the household.

Did Lazarus hear the weeping of Mary and Martha overlapping the sobbing of Jesus? Did those sisters know that their own presence at a time of death would foreshadow the witness of women at another tomb in the not so distant future? I wonder if Lazarus heard the thud of Mary dropping to the floor as she poured out her vulnerable words: “Lord, if you had been here, my brother wouldn’t have died.”

In that cave, Lazarus, with his own power, took a breath, raised himself up, walked out of the darkness and crossed the threshold of the living and the dead. There Jesus greeted Lazarus with the words “Lazarus, come out!” Jesus instructed those who witnessed Lazarus’ resurrection to untie and unbind him, and let him go. The community of Lazarus gently took off his death shroud, interacting with life and death all in the same moment, peeling the cloths that were placed tenderly on his dead body four days earlier.

Lazarus is resurrected not in isolation but rather within an intimate, web-like, deeply connected community of sisters, followers, neighbors, onlookers, the curious, the doubters, the believers, the radicals and the revolutionaries. So many stories are bound together in the raising of Lazarus. This web of relationships is the spirit in which we gather on this All Saints’ Day, the day we remember the dead and our continued connection with them. Let us see what these webs of relationship have to say to the church today.

In the body of Lazarus, life and death were fused, mixed up like sugar in the coffee and cheese in the grits here at the Open Door. Is he dead, people might have asked? Is he really alive? Yes. He’s both. Jesus called Lazarus back in the context of community, where lives were intertwined, emotions overlapped, trust in the Jesus movement was palpable, the act of questioning embraced, and the vast span of past, present and future were bound up together. Resurrection took place within this web of relationships, and that resurrection brought more attention to the Jesus movement from the Roman Empire. At the end of our story, some of the chief priests and Pharisees freaked, proclaiming, “This man is doing many miraculous



Brian Kavanagh

signs! ⁴⁸ If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him. Then the Romans will come and take away both our temple and our people.” Those relationships bound up in Lazarus were a Spirit-infused, heart-beating threat to the Pax Romana, a sign of a revolution up against Empire. Lazarus’ death and resurrection within the community that unbound him from the shrouds of death agitated the dominating power of the status quo.

My Own Unbinding

When I walked into the Open Door in 1994, I, too, walked into a web of relationships — stories of poverty and privilege, brokenness and wholeness, death and life interwoven together. I had just moved to Atlanta to live a year with the Jesuit Volunteer Corps when it was suggested I visit the Open Door for worship. I came through that front door after walking through a crowd of folks in the yard, leaving this white, mid-Western, bourgeois young person to think “What the hell am I doing here?” But I kept walking up the steps, into this dining room, to find a community sharing a liturgy based on liberation theology, practicing principles of feminist ethics and taking the bread and the Word onto the streets. It was the year before the Olympics, when the new city jail was built and anti-homeless laws were passed. I was here to see Hannah play her stand-up bass. Here when Butler Street breakfast was happening; when lunch was every day;

The Saints Are in the Soil *continued on page 8*

Keep the Waters Troubled, Part 2

By Catherine Meeks

Where are our "leaders" when the race is being burnt, shot and hanged? Holding good fat offices and saying not a word. ... They tell us this great government can protect its citizens on foreign soil, but is helpless when it comes to protecting them at home, and hence however much the Negro is abused and outraged — "our leaders" make no demands on the country to protect us, nor come forward with any practical plan for changing the condition of affairs. A few big offices and the control of a little Federal patronage are not sufficient recompense for the lives lost, the blood shed and the rights denied the race.

—Ida B. Wells, *To Keep the Waters Troubled*

This comment speaks volumes and makes it clear that Black visibility is not the same as Black power — a notion that all in the 21st century would do well to remember. Wells was extremely frustrated and grief stricken at the lynching of her friends Thomas Moss, Calvin McDowell and Will Stewart. The three men were highly respected in the Black community. They owned and operated the People's Grocery Company, a joint stock grocery store established in 1889. Most of the Black people in the community participated in the venture and later there were some white patrons as well. Of course this created great concern for the white owner of the only other store, who had been enjoying a monopoly until the People's Grocery opened.

A fight over a game of marbles at the People's Grocery between a group of white boys and Black boys led to the involvement of their parents and a claim by the white store owner that he was beaten by some of the Black men. Since Barret, the white store owner, was determined to get rid of the Peo-

ple's Grocery, he continued to fuel the unrest until he was able to orchestrate a shoot-out between a white mob and the Blacks, who were trying to protect themselves. Though no one was killed, McDowell and Stewart were arrested. Moss was not there but he was accused of being the ringleader and, though his wife insisted that he was home at the time of the encounter, he was arrested anyway.

Four days after the event, a white mob entered the jail and killed the prisoners. McDowell and Stewart were shot and had their eyes gouged out. Moss is reported to have said as his last words, "Tell my people to go west — there is no justice for them here." These murders were reported in one of the local papers in such specific detail that it was clear the person offering the story was a participant in the event.

Ida B. Wells was deeply outraged, and in her newspaper, *Free Speech*, wrote:

The city of Memphis has demonstrated that neither character nor standing avails the Negro if he dares to protect himself against the white man or become his rival. There is nothing we can do about the lynching now, as we are outnumbered and without arms. The white mob could help itself to ammunition without pay, but the order was rigidly enforced against the selling of guns to Negroes. There is only one thing left that we can do; save our money and leave a town which will neither protect our lives and property, nor give us a fair trial in the courts, but takes us out and murders us in cold blood when accused by white persons.

Wells' call for Blacks to leave Memphis was well received; so many left that the city was impacted financially and suffered greatly

from the loss of workers. In addition to the Black migration, Memphis had to contend with the effects of the coverage of the lynchings by many papers in the North. The articles were reprinted widely in the Black press.

Prior to the lynching of her friends, Wells had believed the generally held notion that those who were the victims of lynchings had committed some crime against white women that made it possible for the lynchers to justify their behavior. But when Moss, Stewart and McDowell were murdered, she realized that, since they had committed no such crime, it was an attempt "to get rid of Negroes who were acquiring wealth and property and thus to keep the race terrorized" and to "keep the nigger down." The possibility of Black revenge following Emancipation fueled white hysteria, and lynching Blacks helped to exorcise some of that fear.

As Wells researched lynchings that were happening in other cities, it was even clearer that they were about terrorizing Blacks, and she filled the columns *Free Speech* with stories and powerful editorials about lynching. After a mob entered her newspaper office, destroyed the furnishings and equipment and made death threats against her, she decided to relocate to Chicago. She had bought a gun after her friends were murdered because she thought there might be some retaliation by the lynchers and "one had better die fighting against injustice than to die like a dog or rat in a trap. ... I felt if I could take one lyncher with me, this would even up the score a little bit." But in the end she evened the score a little bit with her pen rather than a gun.

Cornel West has this to say about Wells



www.womenshistory.about.com

Ida B. Wells, 1920

in his book *Black Prophetic Fire*: "[She] is the most courageous Black organic intellectual in the history of the country, because when you look at what she faces: lynching, American terrorism, especially vigilante activity of citizens condoned by the nation-state ... she is an exemplary figure full of prophetic fire ... calling into question the bestiality and barbarity and brutality of Jim Crow and lynching, but would do it in the name of something that provided a higher moral ground because of her Christian faith."

Wells said, "We want a higher moral ground, but I am going to hit this issue head-on." She had no fear or concern about keeping the waters troubled, for she knew that the "price of liberty is eternal vigilance." ♣

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 and for The Huffington Post.

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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Calvin Kimbrough

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Thy Beloved Community Come in Prison As It Is in Heaven, Part 9

By Eduard Nuessner Loring

This is the ninth and final article in a series based upon a presentation by Eduard Loring at a worship service at Central State Prison in Macon, Georgia on October 28, 2013. Approximately 200 prisoners attended, and one has since come to live at the Open Door Community.

My brothers and sisters, I know by now that you realize that the Word of God I proclaim tonight does not come from conservative Christianity (sic) or fundamentalism. I speak to you from the Discipleship Movement that is fighting for you spiritually and materially. For your souls and your bodies. Love and Justice. This is Discipleship Movement Theology. We follow Jesus who is the Center. He calls us to welcome everyone into the Beloved Community/Kingdom of God. Jesus cares as much for your body as he does for your soul. In fact, eternal life begins *now*, in prison, not when you get to heaven. This is the reason that you deserve to be paid a living wage for your prison work. The work of our hands is as important to the Holy One as our Bible study and our worship services. We unite with the history of the persecuted small groups from New Testament times all the way to today. And with those who live the Discipleship life in prison.

We set our proclamation of the Living Word of God over against conservative/fundamentalist/mega-church/prosperity gospel/soul-saving without body-saving blasphemies.

We have another way of reading the Bible. We read the Old Testament, the New Testament (Paul, John, Peter among others) through the teaching of Jesus Christ in the gospels Matthew, Mark, Luke and John salted in for spices and a hard-to-grasp radicalism given the horrible interpretation of John's gospel that haunts the church like the Ghost Riders in the Sky haunt the Sons and Daughters of the Confederacy.

Let me give you two examples. With Jesus at the center of our lives and interpretations (He is the Way, the Truth and the Life) we move to a new covenant. In Matthew, Jesus goes up a mountain, reminding us of Moses going up Mount Sinai

harsh and "hard on crimes" ideology not smash into the love of Jesus Christ? What if the preachers who come to this prison preached the Beatitudes and Dives and Lazarus with the emphasis they use to bellow out John 3:16 and soul saving as though it has nothing to do with your poverty and exploitation in prison? Would that the Beatitudes be posted in the food stamp office along with the Ten Commandments on the first floor. Then perhaps your families in the free world would be able to see you more often. Instead, many of you have families who suffer with two jobs for enough to eat, and either work on the weekend or are too exhausted to visit. How can

God gives Jesus to us that we may know the Way and put our opposition to slavery, death and exploitation into practice *now*. Yes, even in, and especially in, prison.

where the liberation prophet received the Ten Commandments. When Jesus arrives at the top of the mount he gives us a new Word that teaches us how to put the love of God and the Ten Commandments into action. That is, the love of God in Jesus Christ gives us the eyes to see and read and the ears to hear and discern. Now, the conservatives give a higher value to the Ten Commandments of Moses than the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount. What if the fundamentalist were Christ-centered? What if the Christian Right (sic) advocated a posting of the Beatitudes in every courthouse? Would the

they follow one of Jesus' most important mandates — to visit the prisoner? Is it possible that conservatives/fundamentalists refuse to demand justice, fail to proclaim Micah: "What does the Lord require of you, mortal woman, mortal man but to do justice, to show mercy, and walk humbly with your God." These preachers and their armor bearers sure walk humbly as they leave the prison in their Mercedes Benz, Lexus and SUVs. You can never make profit off preaching and teaching

Thy Beloved Community *continued on page 10*

The Open Door Has Enriched Me, Enlivened Me and Emboldened Me

By Melvin E. Jones

August 29, 2014, marked my 20th year of being buried in the bowels of the beast. On August 29, 1994, my DeKalb County judge sentenced me to 20 years imprisonment for a voluntary manslaughter conviction that I felt, and still feel, should have been adjudicated as justifiable homicide.

Because I was an outspoken prisoner activist and prison abolitionist, the administrative politics of the Prison Industrial Complex sought to silence my justice-based, morality-grounded outspokenness. I refused to shuffle my feet, scratch my head, prostrate in submission, or kowtow in hopelessness. As a result, the beast buried me for every single day of my 20-year sentence. Still, I rise...

Arisen and resurrected, forgiven and still dedicated to justice, peace and equality, I now speak out from 910 Ponce de Leon Avenue in Atlanta, the Open Door Community. Discharged from 20 years of imprisonment, at 8:00 a.m. on August 29, 2014, I boarded a bus in Albany, Georgia, with Atlanta as my destination. I was the last person to depart the bus upon our arrival at the Greyhound station. Ed (The Agitator) Loring, Murphy Davis, Mary Catherine Johnson and David Payne greatly surprised and pleased me with their reception at the bus station. Each of them held signs that said "Welcome Home Melvin," "Melvin Jones: This Way to Freedom," "Open Door Welcomes Melvin" and "God Promises Liberty to Captives!" It was such a cheerful reception into my Open Door Community family.

Five months later, I have engaged in a wealth of experiences and hospitality endeavors with the Open Door. I am ever thankful for my decision to become a resident here. My first protest with the community and a coalition of other

radical groups was joining in a rally to support higher wages for fast-food restaurant workers. Our rallying cry was "What do we want? Fifteen dollars. When do we want it? Now!"

I have attended numerous other protests with the Open Door and our affiliates, but the most memorable one that I have participated in was in conjunction with Gen Y and Black Lives Matter following the outrageous murders of Black men and women like Mike Brown and Eric Garner by white police officers. The rally started at Underground Atlanta with speeches and calls for action. Then we marched in the middle of the street, holding up traffic all the way to the Fox Theater, several miles away. At the Fox, 200 of us lay down in the entranceway to bring our fury about the killings of innocent, unarmed Blacks to the attention of those attending the Amy Grant concert that night, and to the world at large! Fox News broadcast the protest on its evening show.

On a daily basis, either at 910 or on the streets of our neighborhood, I am graced with the privilege of showing hospitality to our friends who are homeless. Sometimes, family or loved ones call us asking that one of our homeless friends return their call, and I have walked to the library or the park and told the "grapevine" to get the word out to the person that



August 29, 2014: Melvin Jones (center) is greeted by Eduard Loring, David Payne, Mary Catherine Johnson and Murphy Davis.

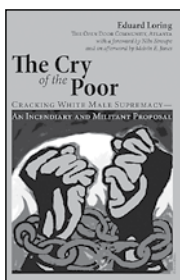
he or she should come to 910 and promptly return the call.

On Tuesday and Wednesday mornings, I hum to myself as I make large urns of coffee for our friends outside who will bring us blessings by allowing us to serve them a hot meal. During Soup Kitchen, I often give out tags for the bags that our friends carry with them all day, so we can safely store the bags while they eat with us. The job gives me the opportunity to happily greet each person as she or he comes to our home. Hospitality and love beget hospitality and love.

The Open Door Community has enriched my life, enlivened my spirit, and emboldened my outcries. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. ✠

Melvin E. Jones is a Resident of the Open Door Community.

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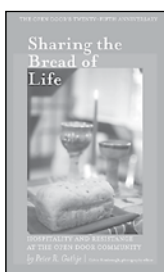
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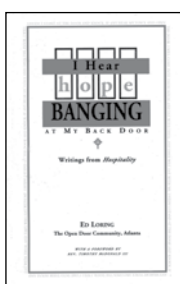
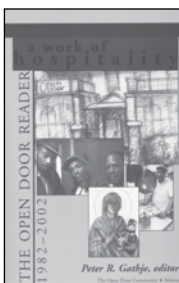
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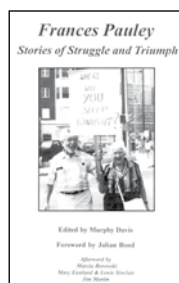
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Answering the Call to the Pulpit and the Streets

By **Terry Kennedy**

In the Book of Romans, Paul asks, "And how are they to hear without someone preaching or announcing or proclaiming the Good News?"

The Good News message is that the power and reign of God has come near. Since God is sovereign, God's rule signifies that there is an end to humans' propensity to use murder as a means of justice, that all God's children have keys to their own homes, that food is plentiful and that the captives shall be set free. Other than the Jesus narrative on love, this is the only message that we as proclaimers of the Good News have been mandated to announce. But in announcing this message we also tell the powers that be that there is a voice continually crying in the wilderness saying "Pharaoh, let my people go."

I am so thankful that I am now in a place where I can proclaim the Good News and speak truth to power in the sanctuary and on the streets. On August 27, 2014, I answered God's call to be licensed and jointly ordained by First Iconium Baptist Church and the Open Door Community. This gave me more responsibility to speak truth to power because as we know, to whom much is given, of them much is required.

Open Door I can put hands and feet to the Word I receive here and at First Iconium.

It has not always been pretty for me at the Open Door. One of the most difficult adjustments for me in community was to move from dependency on self to interdependency with others. As a Black man living in America I have faced depravity, racism, white privilege, white supremacy and all the other things that ingrained in me the idea that if I don't get it for myself, no one is going to give it to me. So I came to the Open Door as a proud Black man: I didn't need anything from anybody, especially white people. But who would have thought that two and a half years later I am still a proud Black man, but now I've got brothers and sisters from another mother, and I've got white folks who "ride or die" with me. That is one of the highest compliments we can pay one another. There is no greater witness than to bear the suffering of others, and I'm so glad that I have found others, Black and white, who live that same message. I recall my mother singing this song, which still resonates with me: "Must Jesus bear the cross alone and all the earth go free? No, there is a cross for everyone and there is a cross for me."

And what about the church? As an ordained minister I have a responsibility to say to the church, "Pick up your



Calvin Kimbrough

Terry Kennedy is ordained at First Iconium Baptist Church by the Rev. Heshimu J.D. Sparks, who was joined by all other clergy who were present.

In the last two and a half years at the Open Door leading up to my ordination, I have been blessed beyond my wildest imagination. I am so thankful for my life: to both live at the Open Door and be a minister on the staff of First Iconium, whose pastor of 35 years is Reverend Timothy McDonald. Rev. Mac is in the struggle for justice and a great mentor for me.

And as for the Open Door, it's a place where I can just be Terry. That is not only "good enough"; it has been transformative and liberating for me and for others. How wonderful it is to find a place where you can be found. How powerful it is to find a place that is safe, and where you can trust in that safety. I am well aware that a significant segment of the population doesn't understand community, or why anyone would want to live the way we do at 910, or why I find safety here. Before coming to the Open Door I was terribly undisciplined, individualistic, selfish and consumed by culture, with no concept of accountability. The Open Door has given me a new perspective on the suffering of people, while at the same time giving me an avenue to address this suffering and do something about it. In each person's life there must come a point where what is learned is put into action, and through the

cross." For far too long the church has been silent; can you hear the pin drop? Methinks I hear the *cha-ching* of the offering plate. Cornel West asks these painful questions in his new book, *Prophetic Fire*: Have Black ministers forgotten how great it is to be on fire for justice, and can the Black church snap out of this malaise of co-optation? There is plenty of work yet to be done. We are not getting needed direction from the church, but Scripture gives us that direction in Hebrew 12:2: "Let us run the race with endurance, the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame."

My hope for each of you is that you find a community of faith that will help you discover what is worth dying for. We are created for Life in community/close relationship with others. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. says that he never knew about living until he knew what he would die for. As a Black preacher living in community at the Open Door, I have found what I would die for. And I am grateful. ✠

Terry Kennedy is a Novice at the Open Door Community.

Atlanta's Greatest Sinkhole: Underground Atlanta

August, 1994

By Eduard Nuessner Loring

First published in a slightly different version in *Hospitality in August, 1994, Vol.13, No.8.*

The Bible is clear and concrete in its assessment of the consequences when a foundation is built on sand: "The rain poured down, the rivers flooded over, the wind blew hard against that house, and it fell. And what a terrible fall it was!" (Matthew 6:27, TEV) But Atlanta continues to rely on dirt, not rock. Last year two people of color were sucked to their drowning deaths as the rain poured and the earth opened her mouth and gulped them down. Other sinkholes have appeared throughout the city. Some are reported in the press, others are not. People are afraid. With or without the 1996 Olympics, Atlanta, below the pretentious towers of Portman's purposes, is coming undone as the earth moans and the pipes groan and the buttresses shiver. Unlike California and its nature-driven earthquakes, we slowly, forgetfully, decay from within. The floodwaters gather strength. However, the greatest sinkhole in the city is Underground Atlanta.

Underground Atlanta: The Sad Statistics

Underground Atlanta is failing, is dying. Underground Atlanta is sucking the life out of the center of our city. We are drowning in the filth of this sinkhole.

But as the interpreters of the American way of life tell us, we are a society filled with addictions, and a fundamental symptom (Greek: *to fall together*) of our corruption manifests itself in our denial. On June 18 [1994] the *Atlanta Constitution* published an article reinforcing our denial: "Underground's Toughest Times May Be Over." Why? Because Bob Grahamslaw, general manager; Joe Martin, president; Herman Russell, joint venturer; and Paul B. Kelman, Central Atlanta Progress, tell us so. Said Mr. Kelman, "Between now and the Olympics, business ought to be mighty good for downtown Atlanta and Underground." The hopes of these leading business voices are based on three possibilities: 1) Georgia State students will begin to come to Underground more often, 2) in a few years the Atlanta Federal Center will open and many of its 8,000 employees will eat lunch at Underground and 3) Atlanta may, someday, build housing for the wealthy downtown!

The article did not mention (because it could not tell the truth — the nature of addiction/denial) that Underground Atlanta is \$28 million in the hole, that tenants cannot pay rent, that racist and sexist policies keep Underground lawyers pleading for mercy day and night, and that the plans for a dome over Underground to isolate the visitor from a touch of public life, have collapsed.

Underground Atlanta could have been a happy place. A place for all people to work and play, think and feel, celebrate and grieve together in the heart of our city. But Atlanta has heart trouble. The central city is suffering cardiac arrest. Justice, righteousness and honesty are being tortured. Since the nights that Mayor Rev. Andrew Young, Daniel Sweat, Joseph Martin (biblical names all) and their "secret weapon" (to quote Rev. Young), Shirley Franklin, wrote the recipe for their foul brew, Underground has been doomed. Yet, "today is the day that the Lord is making." Let us repent, reconsider, redesign and redo Underground Atlanta for the sake of life, love and justice.

Five Points About Five Points

I would like to make five points concerning the growing death at Underground Atlanta, including proposals that might give that gasping hole some life. First of all, it needs to be acknowledged to the citizens of Atlanta that Underground represents "taxation without representation," which was one of the fundamental arguments in support of the American Revolution. It was, in part, because of taxation without representation that the New England clergy supported the use of violence and rebellion against the authorities that they took to be ordained by God. When it became clear to Mr. Sweat and Mr. Martin and Ms. Franklin and Mayor Young that the citizens of Atlanta would not pass the referendum to guarantee payment of the bonds if Underground Atlanta failed, they took their needs to the state Legislature. There was some loophole through which they could jump and dance that enabled the Legislature to grant the offering of the bonds. This obligated the citizens of Atlanta to back those bonds with tax monies without an opportunity to vote. The leaders of this city and Underground Atlanta need to come before the public and confess that terrible deceit. What would become of democracy and the American way of life if in fact we had taxation without representation?

Second, there need to be reparations. Approximately \$10 million was stolen from poor people to build Underground Atlanta. This was block grant money, hard to come by in the Reagan years, that could have gone into housing for the homeless and services for those deranged and hurt who wander our streets with nothing to do and nowhere to go. Instead, this money was used to build a playpen for those with money to spend. One needs neither to be a Jew nor a Christian to know the fundamental values of Western culture. When a community steals from the poor and deprives the hungry of their bread, the lonely wanderer and stranger within our gates of their shelter, then the forces of love



Atlantajpegs

January 2015

Dear Leaders (sic) of Downtown Atlanta:

Shirley Franklin, former Mayor, city of Atlanta
Joe Martin, past president, Central Atlanta Progress
Kasim Reed, Mayor, city of Atlanta
A.J. Robinson, President, Central Atlanta Progress
Scott Smith, President and chief executive officer, WRS, Inc.
Andrew Young, former Mayor, city of Atlanta

"Where there is a corpse, the vultures gather." (Matthew 24:28)

Re: Another of your failures for Underground Atlanta

Hundreds of homeless people have died since June 15, 1989, when I and others disrupted Mayor Andy Young's speech at the gala opening of the "New Underground." This was yet another manifestation of the post-Lester Maddox Underground, with its ax handles with which to beat down uppity African Americans — that brief period when Underground was of interest to white racists. Remember?

My fellow justice seekers and I, many from the Open Door Community, were hauled off to jail as we cried out for housing for the homeless. Remember?

We had done that which Dr. King recommended in his "Letter from Birmingham Jail." We had negotiated with you. Reagan's block grants for the homeless did not come easy, but Rev. Young said the city would hire homeless workers to build Underground. (Ha, ha, ha. We were already wise to the lies of Central Atlanta Progress (CAP), Coca-Cola, City Hall and that white group of secret souls who direct the policies that harm, frostbite and kill the homeless.) We even asked for a nickel charge for each visitor to Underground for a fund to build housing for the homeless. You said a resounding no. Remember?

Your plan was to drive the homeless away from downtown. Your response to the anguish and suffering of homeless women, men, girls and boys was, and is, to criminalize the poor and homeless, particularly African Americans. Do you not know that "Black Lives Matter"? Like your vision for the hapless Underground, criminalizing the poor does not work. Five Points continues to die. The stench of death intrudes. Vultures circle.

Joe Martin, now gone from the blood-stained soil of Georgia, continents away, introduced the man who, when he ran for governor, came out in favor of the death penalty. (Andy, remember who you were in Selma and Chicago and Memphis?) Said Mr. Joe Martin, "Come and spend! Spend! Spend!" Capitalism must have its acolytes, even as the poor perish from poverty.

Now, after so many tries and so many failures and so many cost overruns, Underground has been sold again. There was only one bidder. Many business folks can read the writing on the wall: Mene, mene, tekel and parsin. Most know this project is doomed, for the blood and flesh of the Abandoned Ones cry out against you, the city of Atlanta, and WRS, Inc. and its "fresh vision" for rotten apples. Mayor Reed beams as he counts the \$25 million, for he must now dispose of the "floundering city assets" — those self-deceived and impractical plans made by men and women so far from the suffering of the poor. These are people who will not, nay,

Novices Visit Sister Communities in California

In February the Open Door Community's Novices, Mary Catherine Johnson, Terry Kennedy and Emma Stitt, along with Emma's sister, Jessi Stitt, journeyed to California, where they spent time with the Los Angeles Catholic Worker (LACW), Beatitude House in Guadalupe and Bartimaeus Cooperative Ministries in Oak View. At LACW they helped serve thousands of meals to homeless guests at the Hippie Kitchen and on the streets of Skid Row, and took part in street vigils opposing war and oppression of the poor. Their time in Guadalupe coincided with the blessing of a beautiful new facility for Beatitude House — home to Dennis Apel, Tensie Hernandez and their children Rozella and Thomas, and Jorge Manly-Gil — which serves the local immigrant and farm worker communities. Then they headed to Oak View for the Festival of Radical Discipleship: Between Seminary, Sanctuary, Street and Soil, where they celebrated Ched Myers' 60th birthday and spent a week networking with 165 other activists from around the world. *Right: Terry Kennedy and Ndume Olatushani meet in Oak View.* Olatushani is an artist, organizer and passionate advocate for justice who lives and works in Nashville, Tennessee.

He was wrongly convicted of murder and served almost 28 years in Tennessee prisons, 20 on death row. He was released on June 1, 2012. *Right: At Beatitude House in Guadalupe, Jorge, Mary Catherine, Emma, Dennis, Rozella, Tensie, Terry, Rebecca Casas (LACW) and Thomas.*



Photographs from Mary Catherine Johnson

In, Out & Around 910

Compiled by Calvin Kimbrough



Selma 2015

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Selma campaign in 1965, when Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), along with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), worked to eliminate obstructions to voting for African Americans in the Deep South. *Left: On March 7 and 8, 2015, David Payne, Terry Kennedy, Dick Rustay, Robert Lee, Eduard Loring, Gladys Rustay, Murphy Davis, Melvin Jones, David Christian,*



Photographs from Mary Catherine Johnson

Mary Catherine Johnson and, in front, *Emma Stitt* joined tens of thousands in the streets of Selma to commemorate 1965's Bloody Sunday, when John Lewis led 600 African Americans from Brown Chapel AME Church across the Edmund Pettus Bridge to begin a protest march to the Capitol in Montgomery. At the bridge, Alabama State Troopers unleashed a fury of violence against Lewis and the other peaceful marchers, using tear gas, billy clubs, whips and guns to brutalize them. The television coverage of Bloody Sunday in 1965 ignited outrage across the U.S. and inspired thousands to answer Dr. King's call to come to Selma in support of the African Americans. These events culminated in the five-day, 54-mile march from Selma to Montgomery led by Dr. King, and the signing of the Voting Rights Act by President Lyndon Johnson on August 6, 1965. The 2015 gathering in Selma was a joyful and rousing event that united the activist community, and highlighted the recent gutting of the Voting Rights Act by the U.S. Supreme Court, as well as the magnitude of the work that remains to be done as we move toward racial justice.

Vigil for Life for Kelly Gissendaner

On Monday evening, March 2, we gathered at the Capitol to Vigil at the time Kelly Gissendaner was scheduled to be executed. Late in the evening her execution was postponed due to “cloudy” lethal injection drugs. The next day the Department of Corrections also announced a postponement of Brian Terrell’s execution which was scheduled for March 10.

Clockwise from right: the Vigil at the Capitol; reading the names of those previously executed; Jim and Fentress Waits (Jim spoke for clemency for Kelly at the State Board of Pardons and Paroles); Wende Ballew (a volunteer who has worked with Kelly at the Women’s Prison) and Murphy Davis, who both spoke about Kelly at the Vigil.



I Have Hope (A Poem for Kelly)

I haven’t always had hope.
 In fact, at one time, I only wanted to die
 By my own guilt’s twisted rope
 That choked out all options except for suicide.
 But then an angel must’ve heard me scream,
 Must’ve recognized the sound of pain when cut by one’s own shattered dream
 Like the wail in the Garden of Gethsemane, while feeling like a rejected child
 Like the shriek of Christ’s accusers at Calvary reviled
 Knowing full well that the story’s end was only a new beginning
 As Kelly breathed life to me through an air-vent, life became worth living
 And my talents and giftings and love worth giving
 And educating myself and others, being taught Theology in a community of new sisters and brothers
 Who never found it odd
 That a condemned inmate and other felons, would be caged in prison . . . still want to study about God
 Jailhouse religion can’t last past pain, and I hope that Kelly realizes how many lives she’s changed
 And how The Board of Pardons and Paroles can still remember her name
 I have hope, because of Kelly, and I’ll never be the same
 “You’re gonna live!” you told me that day your words cut away my rope.
 Well, Kelly, today I shout those same words back to you: YOU’RE GONNALIVE!!
 Because today I have HOPE!!!

— Nikki Roberts 3/1/15

Nikki Roberts was imprisoned with Kelly Gissendaner; the only woman on Georgia’s death row, at Metro State Prison when, following a suicide attempt, she found herself in a solitary confinement cell next to Kelly. Nikki performed a spoken word version of “I Have Hope” at a worship service honoring Kelly at Emory University’s Cannon Chapel on Sunday, March 1, 2015, the day before Kelly was scheduled to be executed. Once Kelly’s execution was postponed she was able to celebrate her 47th birthday on March 8, 2015. Praise be to God for the lives of Nikki Roberts and Kelly Gissendaner!

Photographs by Calvin Kimbrough



Kelly Gissendaner by Hannah White

The Saints Are in the Soil: Lazarus, Compost, Resurrection and All Saints *continued from page 1*

when Leo, Ralph, Ira, Elizabeth, Mike and Pottsie graced these halls. I was here when Murphy was sick, soon to be diagnosed with Burkett's lymphoma. I was here when the Open Door called you back, Murphy, from the thin space between life and death.

It was at table that the vital nature and importance of relationships would become clear. Names exchanged, stories shared, hot sauce passed among people unlikely to be sharing a meal together. That's the will and hope of Empire: to keep people divided, to keep stories of the poor suffocated and silenced, and to keep privileged folks in a bubble for fear consciousness might be raised and new ways of living explored. The relationships around these dining room tables exposed me to the ways of life and death. The Open Door unbound me, like Lazarus, and called me forth to life. You all highly disrupted, agitated, ruined and pushed me into the ways of the church — that highly dysfunctional, prophetic body that on its best days seeks to turn the ways of the Empire upside down to heal and liberate a broken planet.

Composting as Biblical Essence

Now what I didn't know a thing about when I was here, and I wonder if you all knew about it then, was a practice dependent upon interconnected relationships, a practice we now both embrace: composting — a resurrection experience of organic material decomposing and creating rich, dark, breathing, living soil.

Several years ago, Church of the Pilgrims, where I have been serving as one of the pastors since 1999, started an urban garden. A member suggested that we grow vegetables to supplement meals for Open Table, our lunch for hungry neighbors on Sundays. Today we have raised beds, honeybee hives, a root vegetable garden, an herb garden, a host of native plants, two apple trees, a pear tree, three blueberry bushes and six raspberry bushes. Homeless folks, bike messengers and folks in suits sit on our picnic table and hand-me-down patio furniture to rest, relax and recalibrate. This is all in Dupont Circle, a dense urban neighborhood in Washington, D.C. Our worm bin, full of worm castings, sits right outside my office door.

Compost takes us to our Genesis 2 text: that we come from topsoil; this is where our life has its beginnings. "God formed the human from the topsoil of the fertile land and blew life's breath into the human's nostrils. The human came to life." At Pilgrims the starting point for our garden is not only the hungry, rumbling stomachs of our neighbors, but also the place where the Holy One gave us our essence, where life and death both flourish: the soil beneath our feet. Pilgrims' compost has been created from our own web of relationships: vegetables and fruits from our Sunday coffee hour; members schlepping their household scraps to church; leaves from Rock Creek Park, Washington D.C.'s urban forest right across the street from Pilgrims. Our compost bins allow those things

which our culture calls garbage, dead and waste to be transformed into life-giving nutrients to help our Sacred Greens garden grow. In working together with God's creatures, the bugs and bacteria, we can witness the restoration of creation in our own backyard.

Compost represents Pilgrims' stand for the vitality that comes from life (and death); for possibility, not inevitability; for progress, not stagnation.



Meg Crocker-Birmingham

Compost is more than just a utilitarian endeavor. It lets us get our hands on resurrection. It lets life and death rest, crumble and flutter off our hands. Compost lets us take what was once alive and experience its aliveness in death. This is the context from which we eat and share with the poor and hungry — an interconnected web that creates the essence from which we are made.

As Christians, as we compost, we are called to experience the ordinary as holy, and to *literally* look below the surface of our actions and see where the values of the Gospel are being called forth and held incarnate. Our Sacred Greens composted soil absorbs death and sets the groundwork for new life to begin again. When our hands are covered with the dark, rich soil of our garden, we are, in essence, covered with the resurrection. Our bodies touch transformation, feeling the fusion of life and death. Covered in compost, the resurrection is literally getting under our skin. When we have that experience, something happens to us, transformation happens. The planet's soil — God's resurrected body — is within us, even if we scrub with soap and water to get it off.

This is the Holy One's most fundamental welcome and act of hospitality: as we work and tend the soil with intention and gentleness, we reconnect with and are welcomed back to the context of our Biblical narratives. We discover that "earth is not a planet we live 'on' in some temporary role acted on some temporary stage. Earth rather is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh and the only place in all the universe attuned to the kind of creatures we are." (Larry Rasmusen, *Earth-honoring Faith: Religious Ethics in a New Key*, p.85)

The garden is the experience of, not the talking about, resurrection. When life and death are embraced as two holy births,

we see the parallels between our garden and theological beliefs. Composting is Biblical mimicry of the resurrection. As we form our raised beds we are connecting our *Genesis* nature with the pulsating life and death of the resurrection, claiming an alternative, powerful way of connecting with the planet that is void of imperial, dominant power, and filled with mutuality, intentionality, curiosity and connection.

Weaving it All Together

Just as with Lazarus rising up from the dead in community, just like with compost bringing what appears to be dead organic matter back to life, we remember those who have agitated and risked their lives for the sake of the Gospel. It's especially palpable on this day to remember Jesus' words in the Gospel of Luke. It isn't a question of the dead versus the living; all of them are alive.

On All Saints' Day the memories of the dead and the lives of the living are all mixed up. Today we remember that the saints are in the soil, that the blood, cells, flesh and bones of the dead have been returned to our Genesis essence. Today we turn to those who have gone before us, and remember those whose lives inspire us.

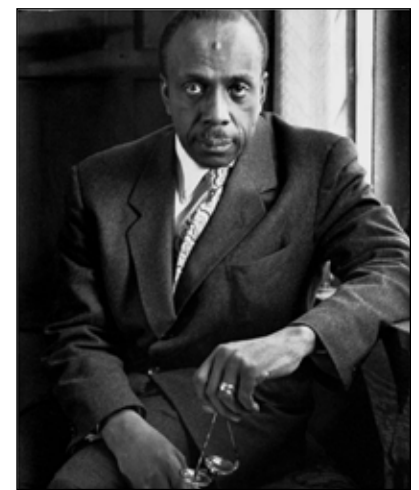
On this day we are reminded that as we carry the prophet's words on our lips, we carry in our veins the blood of holy revolutionaries, and our hands can hold the essence, the soil and the place where the saints rest. ✠

Ashley Goff preached this sermon at the Open Door Community on Sunday November 2, 2014. Ashley is the Minister for Spiritual Formation and Director of The Pilgrimage at the Church of the Pilgrims (PCUSA) in Washington, D.C., where she has served for over 16 years. She has been a friend of the Open Door since she served in Atlanta with the Jesuit Volunteer Corps in 1994-95 and worshiped and worked with our community.



Jane Hildebrand

Howard Thurman Speaks to 21st-Century Spiritual Pilgrims



Saturday, April 18, 2015
8:30 am - 3:30 pm
St. Paul's Episcopal Church
Atlanta, Georgia
www.episcopalatlanta.org/Repentance-Service/Howard-Thurman-Event/

22nd Annual Starvin' for Justice Fast and Vigil to abolish the death penalty



June 29 - July 2, 2015
The Supreme Court
Washington, DC
www.abolition.org

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Thank You!

Atlanta's Greatest Sinkhole - August, 1994 *continued from page 5*

and justice which lie deep in the roots of the human heart will arise to destroy those injustices. We as a city cannot steal from the poor without paying a much higher price. Reparations for that \$10 million to the homeless poor and hungry of this city must be made for Underground Atlanta not to fold and dry up and blow away.

Third, the city of Atlanta owes to the citizens of Atlanta, the Al Smith Park. This was promised to Atlanta Advocates for the Homeless by Ms. Shirley Franklin, as a representative of the mayor's office. Once she got what she wanted, she withdrew her support and Al Smith Park was forgotten. The reason Al Smith Park is so important has to do with space for the homeless poor in the city of Atlanta. When Underground Atlanta was built, it took over Plaza Park. Plaza Park was a place where older homeless African American men could sit and rest throughout the day undisturbed. When we went to the city asking for a replacement park it was guaranteed that such a park would be built. It was guaranteed that such a park would be named for Al Smith, a homeless hero. It was promised that there would be a continual place where homeless people could go unharassed. That has not taken place. Where is Shirley Franklin today? What is the value of her promises this afternoon? When will the city give the space that it has promised to the poor — the Al Smith Park? Underground Atlanta cannot have a restaurant that will succeed on the former Plaza Park until it gives what it has promised to give. Why do you think that restaurant after restaurant and play place after play place fails? Underground Atlanta will continue to be a sinkhole until Al Smith Park is established.

Fourth, Underground Atlanta must retrain its police force and teach them how to welcome all people to Underground Atlanta. Presently the police and security guards try to fend off poor people and most particularly African American poor people. They make a class distinction; they make a distinction based on outward appearance; they make a distinction that denies the fundamental vision of American democratic institutions which are committed to equality and freedom. Someone must teach those police officers how to welcome folk, how to be courteous, how to look after those in greatest need, how to treat men and women who are poor and needy with the same respect that they do the rich and powerful. The word *police* comes from the Greek word *polis*, meaning *city*. The police are those who are guardians of the city. Until Underground security personnel can begin to protect and to help we will see Underground Atlanta contributing to a growing hostility and meanness on the streets. The sinkhole will grow deeper if the security forces cannot learn kindness

and love and gentleness and welcome.

Finally, Underground Festival, Inc., including Joe Martin and Bob Grahamslaw, along with Paul B. Kelman of Central Atlanta Progress and Herman Russell, must become advocates for the poor. We know that those invested in the system that causes poverty and suffering suggest that homeless people really do not need housing and that the true origins of homelessness are mental illness and drug abuse. However, the fact remains that human beings need shelter and housing. Human beings need rights and respect. There is in the center of this city a vacancy and vacuum regarding advocacy for the poor. We are tripling the size of our city jail and at this very moment people are working on that construction job. We found millions of dollars to build a jail but not one voice was raised from the business and the political communities for housing the homeless. Until there is a turn-around in the hearts and minds of the business leadership, until business leaders are as concerned for human life as they are for profits, Underground Atlanta will continue to fail. We must have housing, just as we must meet all the basic needs for all of us.

Certainly entertainment is a basic need and it is good to have a place in the center of the city where we may go and eat and drink and sing and shop. But, likewise, we must have housing and hospitals and good schools for us all. Needless to say, advocacy for the poor would include the demolition of labor pools and the increase of the minimum wage to a living wage.

The Beginning Is Near

So we call for a new Underground Atlanta! A new covenant among us, binding our hearts and our economic resources together. Let us build in the center of our city, upon rock-hewn foundations, the Beloved Community. Let us rebuild Underground as a place for all people based upon truth. Based upon reparations to the poor. Based upon advocacy and leadership among our well-to-do business people for the least of those who live among us. ✦

Eduard Nuessner Loring is a Partner at the Open Door Community. On June 15, 1989, Ed, along with Ty Brown, Tim Wyse, Pete Stinner, Steve Clemens and Elizabeth Dede, was arrested and spent time in jail for disrupting the opening celebrations of Underground Atlanta. We feel that the \$142 million spent to develop Underground, and the millions spent to subsidize it since its opening, would have been better spent on housing and the needs of the poor.

Atlanta's Greatest Sinkhole - September, 2015 *continued from page 5*

cannot, work for the common good, for their good is the good of wealth at any cost. What of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s work for the city as a part of the Beloved Community? I hear your response: "Come on now, Ed, let's be realistic."

We are thankful to Councilwoman Felicia Moore for raising her voice concerning injustice in the city's bidding process. Only a single bidder for Underground? However, I do not think there is corruption here, but only the wisdom of those who can see the sky falling on Chicken Little.

So here we go again. Underground remaking itself. Articles in The Atlanta Journal-Constitution saying this time it will work! Glitter, groceries, housing for the rich, gourmet meals for the gustatory pleasure of the bored, alcohol in abundance for the sybarites. The poor and the homeless are brutalized by public policy. So the story goes on, until the Moral Arc that bends toward Justice tires of this hubris and the walls of Babylon come tumbling down, and all the mayor's horses and all CAP's men can't put Humpty Dumpty together again.

Want Underground to make it? What did we say in 1989? House the homeless. Feed the hungry. Undo the criminalization of the poor. Stop police brutality. Love your neighbor. Then you will have an Underground that can endure for at least as long as the Pine Street shelter (another failure in the face of the poor).

What is it about you people? Can you not see that Mayor Reed has no clothes on? Can you not hear the cry of the poor? Do you not care what this world will be for your grandchildren? Do you not, with Moses and prophets of old, now remember that "from dust we come and to dust we shall return"?

Love and Peace to you,
Rev. Eduard N. Loring
Partner, Open Door Community

Join us as a Resident Volunteer



Calvin Kimbrough

Come and join us for a life built around the table Jesus sets for us, the Eucharist.

Live in a residential Christian community.

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

Join street actions and loud and loving nonviolent demonstrations.

Enjoy regular retreats and meditation time at Dayspring Farm.

Join Bible study and theological reflections from the Base.

You might come to the margins and find your center.

Contact: Sarah Humphrey
at opendoorcomm@bellsouth.net
or 404.874.9652 option 4

For information and application forms visit
www.opendoorcommunity.org

Please Help!

The Open Door needs **2,000 sandwiches** to serve each week!

We need **meat with cheese sandwiches (no bologna, pb&j or white bread, please)** individually wrapped on **whole wheat bread**.

Thank You!



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Open Door Community
910 Ponce de Leon Ave., NE
Atlanta, GA 30306-4212

____ Please add me (or my friend) to the *Hospitality* mailing list.

____ Please accept my tax deductible donation to the Open Door Community.

____ I would like to explore a six- to twelve-month commitment as a Resident Volunteer at the Open Door. Please contact me. (Also see www.opendoorcommunity.org for more information about RV opportunities.)

name _____

address _____

email _____

phone _____



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 opendoorcomm@bellsouth.net or 404.874.9652 option 4

Thy Beloved Community *continued from page 3*

the gospel if you are preaching Jesus Christ at the center. Jesus Christ saves bodies and souls. The joy of an abundant life in the Beloved Community/Kingdom of God is a great reward. God loves you. The Holy One is not going to send you to hell. God gives Jesus to us that we may know the Way and put our opposition to slavery, death and exploitation into practice *now*. Yes, even in, and especially in, prison.

The leftover, defeated Confederates have a sign they put on the horse gate or the front of their cars. There is a picture of a fat little Confederate with a flag over his shoulder and the caption is "Forget, Hell." I believe this is a great gift to us. We are to forget hell and remember heaven. You are a child of God. "God will take care of you," to quote a gospel song by Fanny Crosby. It can be self-centered to worry about going to heaven or hell.

You are saved or you would not be here tonight. Now, get on with Discipleship.

Have you ever met any of the prison evangelists who want to save a murderer's soul, but never question the death penalty? God's forgiveness is short as a miniature jackass' hind leg to them; so you better repent quick before the needle is stuck in your arm. This, my brothers and sisters, is not the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is white religion which flows directly out of the Old South's proslavery gospel: Be

a good slave, work hard for master, and you will go to heaven. There's no reward on earth, but you will not have to pick cotton or face the whip up yonder if you just believe Jesus and obey him on the basis of Ephesians 6:1-9. Paul did not write these added verses. These verses derive from Roman household rules for the male authority to uphold family life. Hardly the freedom that Paul teaches to the women who preached the Gospel in the churches he founded. Some Christian preachers say that if it was good for a slave it is good for a prisoner. Oh, what love there would be if the conservatives studied the Bible instead of their worn-out doctrines.

The most debilitating and harmful sermon preached in American history is "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," by Jonathan Edwards. Oh, if only he had Jesus at the center. If only he had the Sermon on the Mount in his heart when he prepared this diatribe praising the violent, angry, hell-sending God that does not even exist in the Old Testament. Shame, shame, shame to one who would blast away our Jesus and his love, his healings, his hell-raising with the rich who do not share abundantly with the poor.

Yes, my friends, Biblical Discipleship rooted in the faith and practice of a love and journey with Jesus is the gospel of salvation and an end to mass incarceration, the war of drugs, the death penalty and, as Dr. King proclaimed in 1967, the end of poverty in the USA. Thy Kingdom come in prison as it is in heaven. "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and God's justice, and these things [economic justice] will be given to you." This is "the gospel in a nutshell," as my great aunt Zoe of Orangeburg, SC used to say of John 3:16. She was racist to the core. Her accepting Jesus had nothing to do with the suffering of white sharecroppers or African American tenant farmers. God forgive us for what we have done to your loving, liberating,

healing Word.

The faith of Jesus is the way to the Father/Mother God. When we have the faith of Jesus as our road to our faith in Jesus we see the world not by Paul, in the first place, or Moses or David or the gospel of John, all of which are essential, but by Jesus Christ our teacher, our servant leader, him crucified, resurrected, ascended, who gives us the Holy Spirit and the Beloved Community/Kingdom of God to continue to complete his work. Jesus gives us the Great Commission, which is to go out and make disciples. Not to save souls from the world and our bodies, but for the sake of God's world and our bodies. This is the faith of Jesus Christ who calls us to deny ourselves, take up our cross daily and follow him, i.e., make disciples. This is the faith of the Abolitionists, not Gen-

eral Robert E. Lee or Nathan Forrest. This is the faith of Social Gospeler Walter Rauschenbusch, not soul-saving Dwight L. Moody. This is the faith of Clarence Jordan, whose interracial community, Koinonia, is not far from this prison. This is not the faith of Billy Graham, who blesses war while sleeping at Reagan's White House and standing firm on apartheid in South Africa. Billy Graham is the most influential preacher/theologian of the 20th century for saving souls and buttressing the power



Brian Kavanagh

of the "Exceptionalism" of white America.

This is the faith of Dorothy Day, Fannie Lou Hamer and Martin Luther King Jr., not the faith of white moderate and conservative preachers and congregations who populate the South like the boll weevil covered the cotton fields during the lynching days. This is the faith of your chaplain who loves you and works to make your lives better. Not the faith of the Georgia Board of Pardons and Paroles, whose hearts are bereft of grace, mercy, or a gospel that stretches to hope in life on earth as it is in heaven.

Yes, the invitation, the altar call, tonight is a bold one. I announce the gospel knowing that if you "hear" me with the ears of your hearts, persecution and hardship will follow you all the days of your faith. That is the nature of the truth of the gospel which is a gospel of discipleship. Not a phony gospel of soul-saving whether on the plantation of old, the mega-church and Tea Party today, on death row or in this very prison.

The time is come. The hour is at hand to bring an end to one of the very important evenings in my life: being with you, my fellow slaves and captives. I end with Jesus' words as he invites us to discipleship in "this worldly walk with him."

"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Matthew 11:28-30

Thank you all. Amen. ✠

Eduard Nuessner Loring is a Partner at the Open Door Community

Grace and Peaces of Mail

Dear Editor,

A friend recently passed along to me the January-February issue of *Hospitality*. Because of my opposition to the death penalty and my commitment to prison visitation, he knew I would be interested.

My 24-year-old son was murdered in 1989, and after a year of depression and anger I heard the offender at his sentencing express remorse. At that point I felt God nudging me to respond. I did so by writing to him and forgiving him.

I eventually advocated for him at a hearing of the Board of Parole, and he was released early. Today we are good friends, and often appear together at churches, universities and community events to share the story of forgiveness and reconciliation as well as opposition to the death penalty.

I was especially moved by the article in *Hospitality* entitled "Imprisoned" by Katherine Norgard. I often visit in prisons, and on one such occasion I encountered the coldness that she experienced. I was visiting a man on death row, a serial murderer, and the first officer I encountered said, "Why do you want to visit scum like that?"

I didn't react, but on my way out of the prison about two hours later I met the same officer and simply said, "You must have a tough job."

He "melted" and for nearly a half hour he poured out his soul. As Katherine suggested, there is something of God in each person we encounter as we enter a prison, and if we seek that, we free that person to respond with his/her God-given humanity.

Peace,

Walter H. Everett
Retired United Methodist Clergy
Lewisburg, Pennsylvania

Good friends at the Open Door,

Actions by Christians Against Torture (ACAT-USA) is a group seeking to abolish torture, the death penalty and the earth's destruction by nuclear weapons. We appreciate the work of the Open Door and this contribution is a token of our appreciation. May your good works in the name of Christ be strengthened.

Blessings,

Jere Abbott
Pleasant Hill, Tennessee

Dear Friends,

Thank you so much for the newsletter and for the 2015 calendar! The new calendar is in the kitchen on the board for all the workers in there. I no longer work there, but last year's calendar was much used in that spot. Thank you, and great scripture!! I go home in September of this year. It's been 17 long years and your newsletters help very much. Thank you.

With love,

S.P.
a prisoner in Florida

I will miss my buddy Ralph, as I know you will. I read the article, front page no less, in the January-February *Hospitality*. I was particularly interested in the part of Ralph not making friends easily. Every time I came to the Open Door, Ralph brightened up when he saw me. Stood up and greeted me warmly. Such an honor. I'd call him "pet names" and he would laugh and we would "cut up" about the news, rock 'n' roll and the sorry state the world was in. My pal Ralph. He was always glad when Ruth [Grimes] came with me; he would really get lively. He always said how pretty she was and called her "Darlin'." They would hug and laugh together. He acted like it made his day. Rest in peace.

Rick McDevitt
Founder, Georgia Alliance for Children
Atlanta, Georgia

Hi Murphy,

What a terrific article you wrote, "Is You De One?" I thought it was very well done and so glad to benefit from your wisdom and good writing. Thanks also for the wonderful time to celebrate Christmas Eve with you all; it was really special to see Hannah and the baby!

Much love,

Marty Collier
Decatur, Georgia

Dear Mary Catherine,

I've just read your article on executions in the January-February *Hospitality* issue that came today. For me, it was both very informative and emotionally powerful. Thank you for writing it ... and for playing so many important roles at the Open Door.

Love,

Ann Mauney
Atlanta, Georgia

Peace!

Thank you for sending us *Hospitality* and motivating us to be and to do more for justice and peace.

Blessings for 2015!

Sr. Grace Ann and Sr. Gwen
Clare Guest House
Sioux City, Iowa

Dear Open Door Community,

Thank you for all the ways you bring light and love — God's light and love to our sisters and brothers. And thanks for your paper, *Hospitality*.

Christ's Peace be with you,
Sister Therese Bangert
Kansas City, Kansas



Rita Corbin

Eduard,

Glad and grateful am I to have the opportunity to share with the Open Door ministry. Because of you I have learned much that I should have learned decades ago from Scripture and the teachings and life of Jesus. For that I am thankful.

The states are killing people in our name. I haven't found that the state has the authority to take anybody's life. Jesus never commanded the state or empire to take lives, yet the white folks over in Rome took his life. Yes, Sir, it was the white man in Europe who invaded the land of Palestine and took the life of Jesus our Lord.

For decades I have had a legal pad on my desk to write down the things that Black folks did to white folks to have white folks treat them as non-human beings. I haven't written down one word on that list in over 20 years. I cannot find one thing that the Black folks did to white folks to have been treated the way they have been treated in America.

Yet white folks have bombed Black folks' churches and homes, and have lynched Black folks as if they were criminals. We have seen the white government abuse and oppress Black folks while they should have been protecting them as citizens of the United States.

Our prayers are for you (all). Ride on and stay on the right side of history.

Your sincere friend,
Wendell Wentz
Rockwall, Texas

Dear Murphy and Open Door Community,

I am sending you a gift of gratitude for the gift you offer through your *Hospitality* newspaper. I was a lead volunteer at a house of hospitality in northern California up until a year ago. I left to move south and help a sister whose health was in decline. Before I left, I chose a couple of Catholic Worker newspapers to continue subscribing to — yours was one that fed and touched me/inspired me so. Each issue is packed with material that continues to bless me. Thank you for all you do for God's people.

In Christ,

Mary Ann O'Connor
Chatsworth, California

Dear Ed, Murphy and All,

Please send two copies of *The Cry of the Poor*. Thank you for your consistent "no" to death in the forms of poverty, racism and militarism, including your stand against the death penalty.

With continued prayers for the Open Door and for the sick,

Sally (Sarah) Peck
Livonia, Michigan

from facebook:

Nelia Kimbrough had just finished telling me this beautiful story about how the Eucharist is in every sandwich of the thousands of sandwiches the Open Door Community serves to hungry people in need — about how really their whole lives are the liturgy, how their work blends with their worship, how Eucharist is this sacrament of everyday life as a prayerful act of edible, liturgical performance art — before she made me a peanut butter & marmalade sandwich on whole wheat bread.

Then, as I am navigating Atlanta traffic to find my way to the freeway north, I am stalled on a ramp with a traffic light that lets cars onto the highway one by one, and I find my hand in my cooler pulling out the sandwich bag, and I notice she hasn't made me one sandwich, but one sandwich plus an extra half, which I first think is strange and too much, but then suddenly realize is just part of this Eucharist that we must share with the world, so I pass that extra half out the window of my car to the man standing on the ramp, flying a sign saying that he is hungry and would accept any help.

So now I know why we needed that extra half of a sandwich. I give thanks to God for the Body that nourishes our humble bodies, as I drive north back toward Tennessee. "What we say at the Open Door is that our Eucharistic table extends to every meal we serve. That's what we say, and we say it all the time. So, a couple of weeks ago, we were totally out of sandwiches; we had no sandwiches to give out, zero. We give out about 2000 sandwiches a week. So we need to make sandwiches, to have them ready for the next week to serve. The worship service, then, I designed to be truly the extension of the Eucharistic table, in that we made the sandwiches right there as a part of the service. We all shared Eucharist with one another, then we got out the meat, cheese, and seventy loaves of bread. Everybody made the sandwiches together. That week we all watched where the sandwiches we made got consumed." — Nelia Kimbrough.

Andrew Smith

Andrew is a former Resident Volunteer at the Open Door Community and an English professor at Tennessee Tech in Cookeville, Tennessee, where Nelia and Calvin earned bachelor's and master's degrees in 1969 and 1971. He is completing an MTS degree at Vanderbilt Divinity School and was doing research for his thesis, "Bread and Banjo: Some Biographical and Theological Notes on Love, Liturgy, and Liberation in a Creative Christian Counterculture, Cookeville, Tennessee, 1964-1971."

Open Door Community Ministries

Soup Kitchen: Tuesday & Wednesday, 9 a.m.

Women's Showers: Tuesday, 9 a.m.

Men's Showers: Wednesday, 9 a.m.

Harriet Tubman Free Women's Clinic: Tuesday, 7 p.m.

Harriet Tubman Medical Clinic: Wednesday, 7 p.m.

Harriet Tubman Foot Care Clinic: Wednesday, 7 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

Retreats: Five times each year for our household,
volunteers and supporters.

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 option 6.

Please visit www.opendoorcommunity.org or call us for the most up-to-date worship schedule.

- April 5 8 a.m. Easter Breakfast & Worship
April 12 4 p.m. Worship at 910
Celebration of Terry Kennedy's
Partnership
April 19 No Worship at 910
Spring Retreat at Dayspring Farm
April 26 No Worship at 910
Spring Retreat at Dayspring Farm
May 3 4 p.m. Worship at 910
Luther Smith preaching
May 10 4 p.m. Worship at 910
Eucharistic Service
May 17 4 p.m. Worship at 910
Eucharistic Service
May 24 4 p.m. Worship at 910
Eucharistic Service
May 31 4 p.m. Worship at 910
Eucharistic Service



He Is Risen! by Brian Kavanagh

Clarification Meetings at the Open Door

We meet for clarification
on Thursdays 3 pm. - 5 p.m..



Daniel Nichols

For the latest information and
scheduled topics, please call
404.874.9652 option 8
or visit
www.opendoorcommunity.org.

Medical Needs List

Harriet Tubman Medical Clinic

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.!**

Needs of the Community



Autumn Dennis

we need

**T-Shirts
2XL-5XL**

Living Needs

- 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
- toothpaste (small)

Food Needs

- fresh fruits &
vegetables
- hams
- sandwiches:
meat with cheese
on whole wheat
bread

Special Needs

- blankets
- backpacks
- MARTA cards
- reading glasses
- rocking chair
- trash bags
(30 gallon, .85 mil)
- postage stamps
- a home for every
homeless person:
every woman,
man and child

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