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Open Door: A Prophetic Discipleship Community Honoring The Black Jesus, Dorothy Day and Martin Luther King Jr.

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January 2020

The Welcome Table

By Eduard Loring

Blind.

I go to see the sights with my eyeballs
in my pocket. A 2-year-old,
Precious girl, watching cartoons,
sucking a Tootsie Roll Pop.
Mom pushing stroller. Dad pushing drugs.
I hand her a banana.
She smiles. I see. Can you see why
many hide in their homes and
Safe places and never put their eyeballs
in their pockets?

Deaf.

I listen to the Cry of the Poor screaming
through prison windows and bent women
gabbling off the side sidewalks into the middle
of Pennsylvania Ave.

Tongue Tied.

Lock jawed I venture like a Viking to proclaim
the Word of God to drug dealers, smokers,
needle injectors, hungry, abandoned children,
men and women who in their freedom and
hope are beautiful. Moving like street salt after
the snow I sing Christmas Carols to children
acrobats in Canton Park.

Finger-Frozen.

I kneel before a glorious young Black Woman
and tie the laces to her boots. She, confused
and embarrassed (she granted me permission
to tie her loose strings). She whispers down at
me, "What was it you wanted?" I whimper, "To
wash the feet of the poor." (I have not washed
anyone's feet since moving to Baltimore).

My nose with its Black wart.

Smell the drug and tobacco smoke mingled
with the glorious grease of frying chicken. I
stand at the top of the subway station watching
a man take a leak as the pee freezes on the
concrete floor.

On the way home I listen to the discussion of 45's
proposal to cut food stamps for thousands and
thousands of people. Many will die. ✦

*Eduard Nuessner Loring is an Activist/Advocate/
Ally at the Open Door Community in Baltimore.
Pronouns: he, him, his.
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Going to Hardwick 1 4/98 | Calvin Kimbrough

Community on Wheels

By Murphy Davis

*Editor's Note: When we had to close 910 Ponce
— the Open Door Community as it had existed since 1981
— we were able to keep several of our long-term ministries
going. The Hardwick Trip was one. First Presbyterian in
Milledgeville was ready to continue providing the monthly
meal to welcome the prison families, and the Open Door
paid a small stipend to the coordinator of the trip who
organized the drivers, vans, cars and passengers. It worked
for about three years. But when the prisons made visitation
especially difficult, it became a problem that could not be
resolved from a distance. We had to face the fact that it was
time to say, "We have done our work and it has reached an
end." It was deeply painful for us and for the congregation
in Milledgeville. The last trip was in July 2019; then on
September 15, we held a worship service to celebrate our 37
years of partnership in ministry followed by a pot-luck dinner
with the fried chicken that had become emblematic of the
abundant hospitality offered by the church. Murphy Davis
preached and a number of Open Door Community members
and friends were in attendance.*

Psalm 133

*Look! How good and pleasant it is when the children of God
— covenant kin — work and sit together in unity!
It is like the pleasure and joy of the circle unbroken.
It is like the dew on the fields of wildflower meadows
at the foot of the mountains,
Which falls on the mountains of Zion
and the hills of North Georgia!
For here God has commanded the blessing of enduring life
— life in all its fullness — life abundant!*

Mark 9:50

*Have the salt of friendship among yourselves and live in
peace with one another.*

In the late 1970s I began what became a journey of
more than 40 years of visitation in prisons and jails of Georgia.
My focus was the men and women and children on
Georgia's death row and women in the general prison population.
The one women's prison in the state was the newly completed
Georgia Women's Prison in Hardwick, Georgia, just south of
Milledgeville. I went at least once a month and spent the day
visiting with Rebecca Machetti, the one woman under death
sentence, (not long after, there were five) and a number of women
in general population. It was one of my favorite days of the month.

It did not take long to learn that a major problem for many
of the women I saw was that their children were being raised
by others and visits were nearly non-existent. Many of the
children were in foster care; the lucky ones were with a sister
or mother of the prisoner. Vanessa was a young mother who
captured my heart and is still a friend today. Her three-year-old
daughter, Kenya, was in the care of Vanessa's mother, Connie,
in Atlanta. Every time I saw Vanessa, she wept for her daughter,
knowing that with every week that passed, she was missing out
on her child's growth and development. It would not take long
before Kenya would not know her because Connie did not have
a car to make the two-hour drive to rural Hardwick and there was
surely no public transportation that would get them even close.

I stewed over this — surely I could find *somebody*
who could drive Connie and Kenya to the women's prison

Community on Wheels *continued on page 4*

Creative, Courageous and Clever

Remembering the Women

By Joyce Hollyday

It's mid-November as I sit down to write these reflections. Here in Vermont, we've already had a dusting of snow, which glimmered last night under the light of an almost-full moon. There's a definite chill in the air, and Advent is just around the corner. I love Advent — the warm glow of candles, the tinges of pine scent in the air, the magical wonder of the season's hymns — most of all the hope it brings into a world that so badly needs hope.

But there's another feeling that visits me at this time every year as well. Advent marks the beginning of the church year, and as congregations all over the world launch into a new cycle of common lectionary readings, I lament that once again they will not hear the stories of the bold, vulnerable, compassionate, clever women of scripture. The names Rizpah, Michal, Huldah, Mahlah and Tamar will remain unspoken. The horrors suffered by Jephthah's daughter, the Levite's concubine, Dinah and the women of Midian will be ignored. The courageous witness of Vashti and Claudia, Phoebe and Dorcas, Eunice and Lois and so many others will be overlooked.

And so, throughout 2020 I'd like to use my space in *Hospitality* to lift up a few of these women: to offer a glimpse of an alternative lectionary that celebrates the stories of women alongside those of men. I'll begin with my favorites (though be warned that I may say the same about all the others as I write about them).

Exodus 1:8-22 tells the story of the midwives Shiphrah and Puah. It's a prequel to the more famous story of the mother of Moses — whose name was Jochebed, though it was left out of the record — who saved her infant son by hiding him in a waterproofed papyrus



Shiphrah and Puah | Meinrad Craighead

basket and setting him afloat in the Nile River. Before the Egyptian pharaoh ordered that all Hebrew baby boys be drowned in the Nile, he had ordered the midwives to kill them as soon as they were born.

The pharaoh's oppressive authority was legendary. He had made the life of the Hebrew people "bitter with hard service." (Ex. 1:14) He feared an uprising, losing sleep over the growth in numbers of those he kept enslaved, and he decided that the best way to thwart trouble was to get rid of all the boys — the girls being of such little consequence as to constitute no threat.

Shiphrah and Puah refused the pharaoh's order, risking their lives by their disobedience. When called on the carpet in the palace, they had the audacity to offer this retort in answer to the brutal ruler's question about why they let the boys live: "Because

the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them." (Ex. 1:19) Wink, wink. A surreptitious exchange of smiles, perhaps. These two creative, courageous and clever women used the pharaoh's ignorance about childbirth against him, capitalizing on his belief in ethnic stereotypes — and got away with it.

I met a descendant of Shiphrah and Puah in the sprawling South African township of Soweto. Living under the brutal repression of modern-day pharaohs during the apartheid years, Albertina Sisulu was both a prominent anti-apartheid activist and a nurse midwife. In the townships and squatter camps, in corrugated-iron and cardboard homes built on dust and ashes, she ushered new lives into a frightening world. She caught babies born under the death decrees

of racial hatred, police violence and malnutrition. Many survived the odds and grew up to join the struggle for freedom. Albertina Sisulu, honored with the title Mother of the Nation, became the midwife of a movement.

During the bleakest days of apartheid, with her husband serving a life sentence in prison and the nation under a state of emergency, herself having been arrested, detained and banned multiple times, Ms. Sisulu said to me, "My hope is based on the world's history; there's nothing without an end. I pray to God that one day I will see my people free." She got her wish. A political system that seemed impossible to budge was brought down by courage, faith and hope.

Thirty years ago I had friends who agonized about bringing children into a world where global nuclear war seemed inevitable. Their children now wrestle the same despair on a planet ravaged by climate change. But, under the worst of realities and threats, the children keep coming and wise ones in their lives find ways to protect them.

Shiphrah and Puah refused a pharaoh's death decree. Jochebed hid her son to save his life. Keep reading, and you find that the pharaoh's daughter found baby Moses afloat in his basket and rescued him. His clever sister Miriam, waiting among the bulrushes on the river bank, asked if she should find a nurse for him and went and fetched their own mother, Jochebed. Five bold women conspired to save the life of Moses. And to think, that old pharaoh didn't judge girls even worth enough to bother killing them. ♦

Joyce Hollyday, a writer and pastor living in Vermont, has been a friend of the Open Door for four decades. Her blog can be found at www.joycehollyday.com.

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Open Door Community

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David Payne

Eric joined us at the Welcome Table on 10/23/19.

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Please join us on **Facebook** for the continuing journey of the **Open Door Community** in **Baltimore**. Thank you. David, Eduard and Murphy.

2020 — Another Year Is Coming In Lhude Sing

By Eduard Loring

*I will see “old men with broken teeth stranded without love.”
(Dylan)*

“An aged man is but a paltry thing/a tattered coat upon a stick UNLESS . . .” (Yeats) Yes and Yes indeed. I am now an aged man who hopes to reach 80 in the season of crocuses pushing through the vestiges of the winter snow. Paltry except the middle flabby flesh. “How they will say ‘see how his arms are growing thin.’” (Eliot) The coat I wear on the streets and at the Welcome Table is not tattered to the beholding eye, but all the pockets have holes and the zipper is ornery to its purpose. And I pray that throughout 2020 I will be more of a sticker than a stick. But I will not be UNLESS I feel in my guts the poison of poverty and the Cry of the Poor. Unless I get up and go to the streets to be, to be with, to be for those crippled by the white system of supremacy, apathy and addiction to wealth and its lie, “You are okay.” Unless I cry out to end war and make the world safe for Peace by dismantling nuclear weapons. I live in a city, a good city whose symbol is a rat, where the murders for five years in a row have bled ruination over 300 human bodies a year. I will try and try and try to be a peace maker in my spaces. Murphy and I are Black Jesus disciples who are pushed and pulled into the zones of hate and violence as we seek another way to God. Another Jesus who knows his moniker, Christ, is but of the white man’s making to assure the rich there is no problem. “In Jesus Christ you are forgiven.” (No matter what, who, when, just say I am sorry or better pretend none of it happened.) You can have your communion wafer and the house high on the hill for we will assure you of pardon at least once a week for free.

The other day as I went walking at the harbor I ran into the echoes of Harriet and Frederick making plans to make America great again as in the day of the Indigenous People before Columbus brought all the white diseases and two other ones he discovered at sea.

Unless . . . the waters below or the heavens above can conspire to diminish my fire for Murphy Davis. And by the gods of Eros and womanly and manly love I shall remain or the tattered coat will break my stick and burn it in the sulfur and limestone of hell. She will continue to suffer and fight and heal and love with a compassion I know not. To put it plainly: She is my babe and I am her sweetheart and we share the UNLESS until death do we part.

And I remember. I remember well when the Dutch thieves came boasting up to Jamestown. “We got 20 women ready for the bidders. Come on, get a good look. And we got 20 likely Africans. God made them to work for us. Buy ‘em, work ‘em, feed with the cows. They will belong to you.” Ah, I remember how the good news of the New World came to dull and comfort us until the virus of whiteness spread through the veins of all the banks, churches and the body politic. And 2020? Well, I remember 1699 when the Quakers began the first white NO. And later, Nat Turner agreed. And William Lloyd Garrison rose from his small frame to make white Americans tar and feather him and burn down the building where he preached that we are equal including women. My God! The other day as I went walking at the harbor I ran into the echoes of Harriet and Frederick making plans to make America great again as in the day of the Indigenous People before Columbus brought all the white diseases and two other ones he discovered at sea. Yes, Unless. Unless we remember the dangerous memory that can make Trump tweet, Steve Miller show his Nazi leanings, and . . . you know. You know whom I taunt.

And who am I, old man serving and singing and performing white-boy free style on the streets? Who am I as Black Disciple with skin as white as the leper kissed by St. Francis of Assisi? I am loved and therefore I love. I am loved and therefore I am . . . Unless. . .

To whom do I belong?
I belong to Black Jesus
I belong to Murphy Davis
I belong to Hannah
I belong to Michaela
I belong to the poor
I belong to the prisoners with whom we write,
talk and visit.
I belong to The Open Door Community
and our supporters and Board of Directors
I belong to the Welcome Table and David
and Erica and Beth and Tyrone
I belong to the Guests who come to the Welcome Table
I belong to Baltimore and Atlanta
I belong to the human family
I belong to the animals and fish and birds and reptiles
and spiders (no mosquitoes or gnats)
I belong to the earth, the sky, the mountains and the sea
I belong to my song and the songs of the Elders
I belong to the Edisto River and the Mississippi River
“I am a pal of the wilderness”
I belong to all my forever friends. (Thank you)

I do not belong to the United States of America
The white race
Religion

Abandoned: They Come and They Go
For Brother Mallardworth

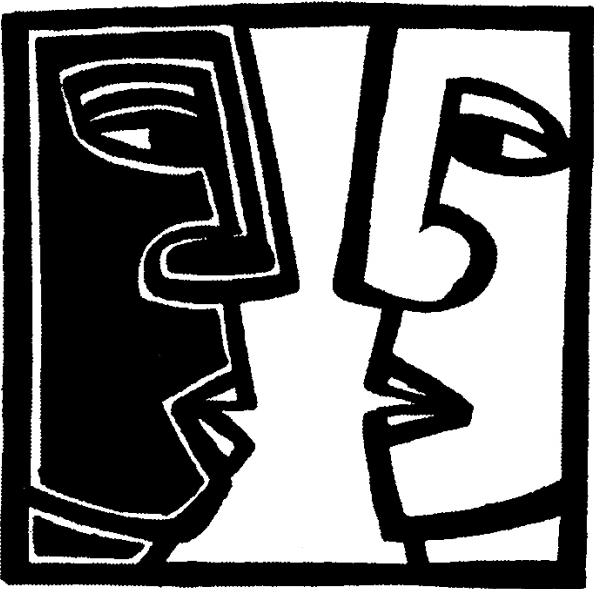
They flew away
Some by night. Some by day.
They could have done it some other way.

Not a word. Silent most
Fled like a spook or flew like a ghost
All left a gift and a wound
Each gave life and a slice of doom.

I thank you. I thank you. I thank you all.
Your gift has been my wake-up call to my warts and all
And the wounds? They are healing
The scabs are peeling
All my heart is full of feeling
My knees are kneeling
The Eucharist is appealing
As you go dealing
With not one ace
Only one wild deuce.

“An aged man is but a paltry thing/a tattered coat upon a stick UNLESS. . .” 2020 is the hub of the wheel, the fulcrum, the crossroads at midnight, the turning. Who will we be in 2021? How can we reshape our lives? Who will be among us in 2021? What we gonna do? What we gonna do?
Thank you. ♣

Eduard Nuessner Loring is an Activist/Advocate/Ally at the Open Door Community in Baltimore. Pronouns: he, him, his. (edloring@opendoorcommunity.org)



Rita Corbin

“An aged man is but a paltry thing/a tattered coat upon a stick UNLESS. . .” And Unless. And Unless. So I have fallen and I have gotten up. As Dan Berrigan writes, “Ten steps forward nine steps back.” Like my African American teachers, we survive and we create. The other day as I was hanging out at the Lexington Market I got a call from a friend who left me many years ago. I am beside myself with jubilation to reconnect with him. Yes, many come and go. I came home and wrote myself a letter that I wish to share with those who are still wading in the waters troubled by God.

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Community on Wheels *continued from page 1*

for occasional visits. Finally, I heard the most beautiful words: “Well I could do that!” said Carolyn Johnson, one of the founding members of the Open Door Community. The simple, basic words on which all the rest is based: “Yes. I will do it.” So off they went one Saturday, Carolyn at the wheel, Connie with little Kenya. Two hours down, a two-hour visit, two hours back.

Word spread in the visiting room, and there were others. People called to ask if they could ride. So I called my trusty friends Trudy Green and Jean Jones from Central Presbyterian. When I moved to Atlanta in 1970, they recruited me to volunteer with them at Central’s free night clinic and the Fulton County Juvenile Detention Center for girls. Forever after, they were my two first volunteers in everything I had a hand in starting. So we had two cars, then four, and it grew from there. I called churches to see if they would loan us a van and a driver for the day: Central Presbyterian, Butler Street CME, Central Congregational. Then there was a turn in the road; John Campbell called. “I’m the pastor of the Presbyterian Church down here in Milledgeville,” he said in his slow Southern drawl. “We got all these prisons down here and we figure we ought to be doing something about it. So I called down to the denomination and Henrietta Wilkinson said I should call you.”

It was a less-than-thrilling presentation, but I was happy, nevertheless. We agreed that I would come down to speak to the adult Sunday School class in March 1982.

Now I’ll admit that I was a little bit sneaky: I asked Jean Jones to go with me — she had been driving on the trip for a while. She was a little gray-haired Scottish grandmother, and I was well aware how we Presbyterians can fall on our faces for a Scottish accent!

So I held forth about prisons for a bit — about separating families and how hard it was to keep families together through a prison term. Then Jean told about our trip once a month, and she described the joy of driving up to the prison and watching the children jump out of the car shouting, “Mama, Mama, Mama!” as they ran for the gates. I watched the faces in the room as Jean spoke. It looked like, “Well, she looks like me and she’s not afraid of doing this. I guess we could do it too!”

Then they began to say (the most *beautiful* question), “What could we do to help?”

I let the question hang in the air for a moment and then asked, “Well what do we church folks do best?”

“...Eat?” came their honest response. Right you are! We spread the table and we invite everybody and we pass the food. Whether it’s a crust of bread or that famous Milledgeville fried chicken, eating together creates friendship. In fact, there is a meal at the center of our faith. The communion table is at the center of all we are and do. Jesus and his community were always eating together, and Jesus told them to keep doing this. We tell the story — we remember Jesus and how he lived among us; and the food we eat and the cup we drink fills us with his courage and love.

The one thing lacking in our trip was a meal. Some folks brought lunch, some did not. The cars stopped at a fast food restaurant where some folks had money and others did not. It made for awkward moments.

“What if you invite folks here? Let the kids run around and get to the bathroom, and then we can all sit down and eat together.”

It’s important to know that during prison visitation, children are expected to sit still in plastic chairs; if they get too rowdy, the whole family can be asked to leave — cutting short the visit. So time at the church could be a sort of pressure valve for the children to run and make some noise without a gruff guard yelling at Mama to get that child back in the chair.



Photographs by Calvin Kimbrough

April 1998

Left: “The De-Schooling of Murphy Davis” by Carrie Echols.

Above: Elizabeth Dede, as the trip coordinator, makes sure everyone finds a seat in a van for the trip to Milledgeville.

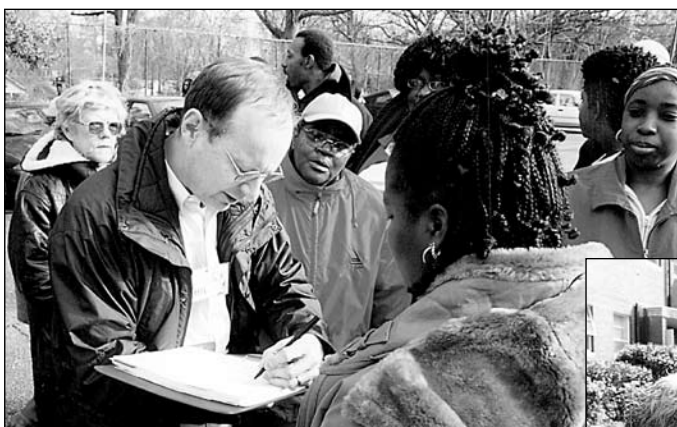


September 2003

Right: Loading up in the Central Congregational Church van. Central Congregational, Oakhurst Presbyterian and Central Presbyterian churches faithfully supplied drivers and vans over the years for the trip.



ODC/Atlanta



February 2005

Above: Phil Leonard, trip coordinator, handles the van assignments for the trip to Milledgeville.

Right: Carrie Echols makes a point with Tony Sinkfield.

Below: Lunch is served at First Presbyterian Church.



Photographs by Calvin Kimbrough



Photographs by Amanda Petersen

June 2008

Above top: **Heather Barger**, hidden in the crowd, makes van assignments.

Above: Milledgeville members and Hardwick travelers gather for a picture.

February 2014

Right: Hungry travelers enter **First Presbyterian Church** in Milledgeville headed for lunch.
Below: Ever gracious, Milledgeville members served up plates and bowls of food each month.



Photographs by Calvin Kimbrough



Community on Wheels *continued from page 4*

But back to Sunday School. One of the Elders said they would begin the considerations in the Session. The wheels were turning. All the movers and shakers are gone now: Ed Andrews, Charles King, Mary Barbara Tate and so many other saints. Through that year, I would sometimes meet with them in the late afternoon after my prison visits. We would talk about their questions and “what-if”s.”

Presbyterian Committees have often reminded me of the way an old dog will circle a spot over and over before it lies down. The wheels were turning, but everybody knows those wheels don’t usually turn real fast.

Fred Heal was a young Turk in the congregation and he got very frustrated with the slow pace of the Session deliberations. Finally, in exasperation (and with Faye’s support), Fred announced that he was not waiting any longer. The first Saturday meal would be served at his and Faye’s home. And it was. The passengers and drivers were delighted. By the next month, September 1982, all the Presbyterian ducks were in a row. Jane Tipton was the first food coordinator, the food was on the table and the big oak door on Greene Street swung wide open to welcome our passengers as honored guests.

Unanticipated glitch: Most of the passengers were Black; the church was clearly established and prosperous and — it was rightly assumed — white. Some of the passengers would not cross the threshold. They figured that they would not *really* be welcomed to this church of Middle Georgia Presbyterians.

There it was! Right at the church door: the crisis of Faith in the American South in black and white. This church — historically the Presbyterian Church of the Confederacy — where the children of slaves entered by the back door *only*, and not to worship, but to clean the bathrooms and perhaps cook a meal.

But Dr. King told us of that dream in which these children of slaves entered by the front door — the Green Street door — to sit down *together with the daughters and sons of slaveowners at the table of sisterhood and brotherhood*. Here it is: the picture of the Beloved Community!

But it took some conversation and persuasion to get folks past the door on that first Saturday. We insisted that the reluctant guests really were anticipated and welcome, and that the church members and pastor *did* want them to come in. The jitters continued for a bit, but then one day when nobody even noticed, First Presbyterian Church Milledgeville became another Home for our passengers, and a new community was born. That happened for me as well, and these 37 years have given me a wonderful home and community of faith in the heart of Middle Georgia.

For all these years, the third Saturday of the month — *every* month for all these years — always looked like the Beloved Community. People came from north and south and east and west to sit at the table of the Kin-dom of God. New friendships were forged across all the lines that normally divided us. We all learned from each other. From what we learned about what was going on in the prisons, we sometimes confronted the Department of Corrections with issues like the exploitation of families of prisoners by exorbitant rates for phone calls. If we had to push to change unfair rules, we kept pushing until a change was made.

And the vans kept rolling.

At about the same time, a lot was happening on the grounds of the old Central State Hospital. De-institutionalization of the mentally ill got a start in the 1960s. It was a good thing in many ways — with the new psychotropic drugs, many people could live decent lives reintegrated with family and community outside of the institutions. (Many problems were created when the back end of the plan did not materialize. Half-way houses and other supportive measures were scuttled when neighborhoods began the NIMBY move-

Community on Wheels *continued from page 5*

ment — Not in MY Back Yard! Over the years, many of the released mentally ill became homeless wanderers. But all of this is another story for another day.)

The point for Baldwin County was that, as many of the hospital buildings emptied out, jobs in the hospital evaporated. State Senator Culver Kidd, in an effort to boost the dwindling industrial base in his district, began to advocate for re-opening the old CSH buildings, now ghostly and vacant, as prisons. Kidd could see that those haunted buildings needed only a few rolls of concertina wire to be opened as prisons. The Senator wasn't called the "Silver Fox" for nothing. As the buildings opened — Rivers North, South and East, Washington, Kemper, Ingram, Holly, Binion, etc., the prisoners were shipped in and poured into dormitories that generally held 75-150 men. This, of course, created more need for support of family visitation. The church at Wayne and Green was there to fill the gap.

In the Rivers Building there was a chaplain who actually tried to help the prisoners with whom he worked to find ways for their families to visit. Everyone knows that prisoners who receive visits from family and friends while they are locked up are the least likely to return to prison on new charges. But this fact of reduced recidivism does not necessarily motivate prison bureaucrats to encourage visitation. It is, in fact, just the opposite: Visits are discouraged in many different ways. This makes it easier to run a prison without outside scrutiny and advocacy.

At about the same time the new/old buildings opened, JoAnne Solomon became the coordinator of the trip for the Open Door. JoAnne gave the program and the people pastoral care and encouragement that had an enormous effect. The trip grew and matured with her leadership.

What is important to remember is that if you are helping folks to visit in the prisons as this church has done all these years, you are an alternative to prison: *You are creating a new imagination and a new way of doing things.*

So the trip grew and flourished. By the mid-1980s and through the 1990s, the average monthly trip brought 50-70 passengers to the church and then to the prison. And every month, Jesus showed up in our midst — just like he promised he would!

And the congregation never missed a beat. Generally, there were one or two good souls from the Board of Deacons to coordinate the meal. Each team would do the job — and sometimes for more than one year. Folks stepped up year after year and provided beautiful meals and tables decorated for company. Charlotte and Joe Owens served so many times we all lost count.

We came to anticipate the specialties: Margie Dodd's pecan pie, Joe Owens' pound cake, Joseph Dean's home-cooked greens, the Lounsbury's Christmas decorations.

My favorite trips were Thanksgiving and Christmas, served by the Board of Deacons and the Elders. The meals were such an abundance that we were all astounded. And then they added the Teddy Bear tree to the delight of all the children and grannies.

When one family left the trip because they reached the end of a sentence, the mother wrote to then-Pastor Bill Morgan and the congregation: "Thank you for all you've done to help us get through this — the beautiful meals, the prayers and friendship. This church is a Do-Body!" What an honor to be named by that grateful mother as a "Do-Body"! How great is that?

The whole group — passengers, drivers, church members and Open Door folks — became a community, sharing joys, troubles, sorrows. And there were groups within the larger community that became family to each other. Carrie Echols and Cherry Moore and others gave us the gift of laughter and they often dubbed the van they were in as "the party van." Carrie and Bill Morgan carried on to the delight of everybody else when Bill would exclaim, "Miss Carrie, I'm glad you're finally here because I've been cooking since six



February 2014

Left: Sarah Humphrey, trip coordinator, gets everyone into a van for the trip..

Below: Sarah checks to make sure everyone got in for their visits.



Photographs by Calvin Kimbrough



Murphy Davis

November 2011

Left: Barbara Noble, Ann Graves, Jasmine and Jaylen Hill, four generations of family having lunch before going for their visit at the prison.



Calvin Kimbrough

February 2014

Above: Brandon Watson on the trip with ODC Resident Volunteer Nathan Dorris.

April 2018

Left: Brandon Watson with Murphy Davis. Brandon rode on the trip with his grandmother, Janie Watson, to visit his uncle from the time he was a very small boy.



Eduard Loring

Community on Wheels *continued from page 6*

o'clock this morning!" and Carrie would respond, "I *never* knew a preacher to tell such BIG lies and to lie so much — and right here in the church!" And off they would go! Pastor Susan Balfour never could wait for Wilveria Clarke to arrive so they could sit down and swap news and funny stories and check out what wig Wilveria had chosen for the day.

Oh, the stories could go on and on. But what does it all mean, my friends, all that we have shared over these 37 years?

Well first of all, we have to take off our hats to how *many* families have been nurtured and held together by the trip — many hundreds of families! Most of the folks we've brought on the trip would not otherwise have been able to visit with their separated loved ones, not to mention the opportunity to visit every month. In an era when our government has made family separation an even broader policy, we have to give thanks for the opportunity to do this work as a gift to the families *and* as an act of resistance to cruel and destructive public policy.

Second, we have had a regular praxis of crossing societal boundaries that are normally hard and fast. When we came with a large group of African American folks all those years ago, most assumed that they would never be welcomed here. But love overcame.

We have steadily and consistently resisted the power of the Prison Industrial Complex and the very phenomenon of mass imprisonment because the opposite of separation and punishment is love, hope and community.

We have — together — practiced a living faith every time we've gathered. Eucharist has been at the center and people have come from north and south and east and west to sit at the table of the Beloved Community. We have this opportunity every time we gather to break bread and find the Holy One in our midst.

What has been over all these years and all the saints who have been a part of it must be celebrated, so I say from the bottom of my heart to you, the members of First Presbyterian Church of Milledgeville, WELL DONE, GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANTS!!

But this history is volatile because you can now receive it as Dangerous Memory — as a seed for a Radical future. The Hardwick Trip is now over, but the mission of the church is not. You will search and God will lead you into new work and fresh joy on the journey for justice and mercy.

But I had to come by today to say Thank You. I've seen with my own eyes the miracles that have gone on here for 37 years. Thank God there has been so much goodness and such abundant grace, so many kindnesses, so many eyes opened and friendships formed.

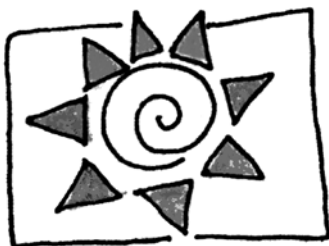
Now as we all thank God, let us pray that the miracles in our past become seeds for miracles at Wayne and Greene for the future. Seeds for a Radical Future in which walls come down, friendships are forged and we move toward the Beloved Community, saying to each other and to God again,

Thank you! Thank you!

Let there be Liberty to the Captives! Thank you! Healing to Broken Victims! Thank you! Food and drink for the hungry and thirsty! Thank you! Welcome to the stranger! Thank you! The salt of friendship and the blessings of Enduring Life! Thank you! Life Abundant! Thank you!

AMEN. ✠

Murphy Davis is an Activist Pastor and writer with the Open Door Community in Baltimore. (murphydavis@bellsouth.net)



Becca Conrad

poetry corner



Julie Lonneman

The Journey of the Magi

'A cold coming we had of it,
Just the worst time of the year
For a journey, and such a long journey:
The ways deep and the weather sharp,
The very dead of winter.'
And the camels galled, sorefooted, refractory,
Lying down in the melting snow.
There were times we regretted
The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces,
And the silken girls bringing sherbet.
Then the camel men cursing and grumbling
and running away, and wanting their liquor and women,
And the night-fires going out, and the lack of shelters,
And the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly
And the villages dirty and charging high prices:
A hard time we had of it.
At the end we preferred to travel all night,
Sleeping in snatches,
With the voices singing in our ears, saying
That this was all folly.

Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,
Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation;
With a running stream and a water-mill beating the darkness,
And three trees on the low sky,
And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow.
Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves over the lintel,
Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver,
And feet kicking the empty wine-skins.
But there was no information, and so we continued
And arriving at evening, not a moment too soon
Finding the place; it was (you might say) satisfactory.

All this was a long time ago, I remember,
And I would do it again, but set down
This set down
This: were we led all that way for
Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly
We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,
But had thought they were different; this Birth was
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.
We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,
With an alien people clutching their gods.
I should be glad of another death.

— T.S. Eliot

Grace and Peaces of Mail

Dear Folks at Open Door Community,

Just wanted to let you know that we so appreciate your work and love receiving *Hospitality*. The articles always touch my heart and have inspired me to order several books that have brought blessings to my spiritual journey.

Our little congregation found a small building to rent. I'm not sure if I shared with you that the former site of the church suffered major damage in last February's floods. While it seriously damaged the church grounds, the flood actually saved our ministry as we ended up selling the property to the local school district at a greatly reduced price, but one that will ensure we can keep going and that gives us some breathing room to work toward becoming self-sustaining.

Like you, we have found that we can do some amazing ministry even when our numbers are few. (We usually have 15-20 in church on Sundays, although occasionally we have 24-25. Except for two elderly ladies, the rest of us are on pretty limited incomes, and 4 to 5 are living right on the edge of homelessness, with several who choose to remain on the streets.

Even though it has been a struggle many times to keep everything together, even when things are at their worst, miracles both large and small have pulled us through it all.

We continue to pray for your ministry and the health and safety of you all. Blessings to you and to the people you meet on your journey.

Namaste, Blessings to All!
Pam and Zack
Coverdale, California

Hello Ed.

Just thinking of all of you at the Open Door each morning. I get up, I pray and thank the Lord for each and every one of you all. Because it's so very hard to find Real People in this lifetime and I have the Best Friends anyone would want to have. Thank you all for walking with me during these days and years, it mean so much to me in my heart.

Take Care Brother and my Sisters as well. Be good,
Prisoner USA

Dear Eduard,

It is with sadness, that due to your stance on Abortion, I am withdrawing my support for the ODC Baltimore.

My conscience tells me Abortion is wrong and a grievous sin. Please remove from your mailing list.

Peace
Frank Madden
Mableton, Georgia

Dear Ed and Murphy,

I've been meaning to send this for a while; shame on me.

With the passing of Elijah Cummings, I was reminded once again of all of the goodness that is in Baltimore, including the work that the Open Door Community accomplishes.

Love to you both,
Leigh Schuyler Houck
Chevy Chase, Maryland

Please take me off your mailing list. I was not aware you were a pro-abortion organization.

I wish I could take back my contributions I made to your organization years ago.

You cry out and plead for the lives of the unfortunate souls on death row but turn your back on the unborn. I am extremely disappointed.

Jeremiah 1:5: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you..."

Please take me off your list!!

Gary Huguenard
Fremont, Indiana



Twin Suns | Susan MacMurdy

Good morning Ed,

I am reading the latest *Hospitality* and this issue has allowed me to reflect on my continuing journey through racism. I can identify with the early life of Nibs Stroupe as I grew up in the South with the curse of white privilege. Your work is much needed encouragement for this painful search of myself.

I am a thankful supporter of the efforts of you, Murphy and your staff. If I can occasionally send items I need an address perhaps more than a P.O. box.

I wish Open Door God's continued blessing.

John Brewster
Sewanee, Tennessee

Mr. David Payne, Murphy Davis and others of the Open Door Community,

Please accept my request for immediate removal from the mailing list of the *Hospitality* paper. I can no longer support or tolerate your fight for saving death row inmates' lives yet advocating the killing of fetus life. All life no matter how conceived is precious to God Almighty! Amazing how Scriptures can be distorted to fit one's personal need.

I pray your eyes will be opened to the total truth by the Holy Spirit.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Jane Brown Mull
Goldsboro, North Carolina

I became acquainted with your work by joining vigils against the death penalty on the Capitol steps, and then directly contacting my senator and representative to inform them of my views on issues.

Now I felt called to this area to serve the poor and homeless here, as God directs me.

Love and peace,
Lorraine Mills
Florence, Alabama

Dear friends of the Open Door Baltimore,

Each day of your lives is lived with such heart — courage — and we imagine Murphy's open, expansive heart readily adjusting to its new way of beating. We send you our prayers of hope in these days of change.

Always with gratitude for the power and mercy of your witness,

Kaki, Dale & Jody Roberts
Asheville, North Carolina

The Box

By Eduard Loring

My pain makes me want to cry. A one-year-old, waiting for food at the Welcome Table in a stroller, on a smart phone screen. Where is he going? His predestination?

It's the birthday of Emily Post, born in Baltimore (1873), who wrote about etiquette. She said: "Manners are a sensitive awareness of the feelings of others. If you have that awareness, you have good manners, no matter what fork you use. (Garrison Keillor, "Writer's Almanac," October 3, 2019)

In 1892, Ida Wells published a groundbreaking and very threatening study of lynchings in the USA. Her newspaper offices were firebombed and a price was put on her head as a response. In light of the mass killings this year, I am hoping that we will begin to think of these mass killings as lynchings and describe them that way, because that is what they are. With automatic weapons of destruction, a lone person can carry out lynchings that used to require a group. Seeing these as lynchings helps me to understand why no law has been passed against such weapons — it was just last year that Congress finally (after 100 years) passed an anti-lynching law.

— Nibs Stroupe

Open Door Community Needs:

- ☐ Granola bars
- ☐ 2% milk. We use 2 - 3 gallons a week for coffee.
- ☐ Coffee. Coffee.
- ☐ Stamps to write prisoners
- ☐ Money for Prisoner support and prisoner family support
- ☐ Gloves
- ☐ Winter socks
- ☐ Stocking caps
- ☐ Hoodies: medium, large, extra large. Used and from thrift stores are great.
- ☐ Knit hats. Thank you to someone who just sent a great package of hats.
- ☐ Scarves for women. Thank you to someone for a recent gift.



Rita Corbin

Please send us your name when you give a gift.
Thank you! Murphy, Erica, Beth, Tyrone, David and Ed