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

Vol. 36, No. 5

PO Box 10980 Baltimore, Maryland 21234 404.304.1483 / 404.290.2047 www.opendoorcommunity.org

July-August 2017

Where Are Your Wounds?

1 Peter 4:12-16, 5:6-11

By Andrew Foster Connors

Imagine for a moment that you are a parent of a nine-year-old boy. It's a weekday and you wake up your son, drag him out of bed, and pester him to get dressed, eat breakfast and brush his teeth. You pull together his lunch, make sure he has his backpack, brush your fingers through his bed-head and shuffle him out the door to the car. You pull up at school and dish out your daily admonitions: "Have a good day, son, listen to your teachers, and I'll see you at the end of the school day."

What you don't know on this particular day is that you won't see him after school. Because on this day Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) will follow you home, put you in handcuffs and drag you to detention where you will stay for the next several months, leaving your family without your paycheck, your pregnant wife without a partner, and your two children without a second parent. Such is the experience of Jesus Peraza, who faces deportation as he goes before a judicial hearing this week.¹ [Jesus]² — held in prison for months for the "crime" of crossing a border. The crime of fleeing the gangs of Honduras after he witnessed murder. The crime of going where safety and work can be found. The crime of being a good employee, a present husband and father, whose wife will deliver his third child in two months. For all the promises we've heard from the Trump Administration about deporting criminals, [Jesus'] situation makes it clear that our American policies are dividing families, disrupting businesses, destabilizing communities and spreading fear.

I would add "threatening the church" except that this is not true for the church, on the whole, in North America. We have constructed a faith where the trials and tribulations of [Jesus] and many like him are irrelevant to our purpose. Where faith is mostly an evacuation plan from this world instead of God's gift to transform it by transforming us.

I think that's why Peter's words to the church in Asia Minor are so difficult for us to relate to. Don't be surprised that you'll be tested, that you'll suffer, he says. That comes with the Christian territory. Peter assumes that when you follow Christ, when you take on the name "Christian," it means you're likely to suffer. The powers will notice that you don't bow down to the local idols and they'll make you suffer for it. They'll notice that you won't engage in violence and they'll make you suffer for it. They'll notice that your first allegiance is not to any leader or any nation but to the God of Abraham, Hagar and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob, Leah and Rachel, and the God of Jesus Christ. And you'll suffer for it.

You don't have to look far to see Peter's assumption confirmed across the world. Ask the Coptic Christians who continue to die as martyrs because of their faith.³ Look at the dwindling populations of Christians in every country in the Middle East save the United Arab Emirates.⁴ Hear the stories of martyrs across the world whose worship of Christ and



Michelle Dick

whose practice of the love and forgiveness that he demands is a direct threat to governments and people opposed to that way of living in the world.

And yet even as I honor their steadfast love of the Lord, I hesitate to raise them up as examples for us because too often we respond to their example only with gratitude for our nation's First Amendment. "Thank God we have the freedom to worship here," we say. "Aren't we lucky to live in a nation that allows for freedom of worship." As if there is no [Jesus]

Where Are Your Wounds? *continued on page 11*

Love in Action is a Harsh and Dreadful Thing

By Peter Gathje

Dorothy Day, who founded the Catholic Worker Movement, often quoted from Dostoevski's novel *The Brothers Karamazov*, "Love in action is a harsh and dreadful thing compared with love in dreams."

Dostoevski was analyzing a "love for humanity" that has the high ideal of loving everyone, of serving the poor and "making a difference" in their lives. It is that love for humanity that Dostoevski skewered with his brutal description of "love in dreams." He wrote, "In my dreams, I often make plans for the service of humanity, and perhaps I might actually face crucifixion if it were suddenly necessary. Yet I am incapable of living in the same room with anyone for two days together. I know from experience. As soon as anyone is near me, his personality disturbs me and restricts my freedom. In twenty-four hours I begin to hate the best of men: one because he's too long over his dinner, another because he has a cold and keeps on blowing his nose. I become hostile to people the moment they come close to me. But it has always happened that the more I hate men individually the more I love humanity." Edna St. Vincent Millay put it succinctly, "I love humanity, but I hate people." It certainly is easier to love in the abstract than to love in the flesh.

At Manna House, there are guests who are easy to love and there are guests who make the practice of love harsh and dreadful. I confess that there are guests at Manna House that I find difficult to love. These guests not only try my patience, they try my soul.

Monday morning, a guest insisted that he get on the shower list. I tried to explain that the shower list was already full. This only intensified his demand to get on the list. If looks could kill, I was already dead. And his mutterings about this not being a Christian place, and how he never gets nothing he wants here, only made me wish he would just go away.

Tuesday morning, I met the immediate need of another guest as I replaced his horribly worn out shoes. About fifteen minutes later, a volunteer approached me and asked, "Isn't there any way we can get shoes for this man?" The volunteer pointed to the guest for whom I had just gotten shoes, who now stood barefoot in the backyard. I told the guest he already had shoes. His response was a hateful stare.

Then there are the continually sour guests. They never smile. They never even give the slightest acknowledgement that I have said "Good morning" as they enter the yard or house. I am not sure what it would take for their unchanging scowl to turn to a smile.

Love in Action *continued on page 11*

A New Way to See

By Catherine Meeks

A few weeks ago, when I was in Nashville, Tennessee for the Lipscomb University Christian Scholars Conference, I was given a grand opportunity to expand my way of seeing life events. On the second day of the conference, I was driving in a much bigger hurry than I should have been, failed to notice the traffic pattern closely enough and smashed into the back of another driver. The driver had a bicycle on the back of her car, so her car was not damaged, but her bike was completely destroyed. She was very upset because she had owned the bike for a long time and referred to it as "an old friend."

I had thought that my car was not very damaged and proceeded to the afternoon sessions, finishing on Friday and heading back home. Little did I know, my radiator was cracked and it ran hot; the car would not make it to Atlanta. My insurance company had to obtain a rental car for me to continue my trip. The car was totaled as a result of the

than I am used to being under such circumstances as I walked through the various steps in handling everything that is required when you have an accident. I realized that I was at peace and spending more time being thankful that no one was injured and that the woman whom I hit was quite a kind and peaceful soul. I realized that something was changing in my soul and I was grateful for that. I saw God's hand being reflected in my response as I had not seen before.

I have been thinking about accidents I've heard about that provoked someone to road rage, and about some instances when someone was killed because of the violent expression of that rage. I was so thankful



Mia Nussbaum

that was afforded to me during the time of this accident, I would have turned my attention toward gratitude instead of grumbling and being disagreeable.

I found it interesting that several folks had trouble allowing me to be at peace and

This situation taught me a few good lessons and I want to hold on to them. I want to continue to take a few minutes to separate tragedy from inconvenience and act accordingly when unexpected and unwanted things happen. I believe that the energy that I will save by paying attention and embracing the grace that makes this entire process possible will serve me well as I continue to try to make as many contributions as I can to the work of creating space for God's kingdom to be made real on the earth. May we all see more clearly as we stay on the pilgrims' path. ✠

Catherine Meeks is Chair of the Beloved Community: Commission for Dismantling Racism for the Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta, and the retired Clara Carter Acree Distinguished Professor of Socio-cultural Studies and Sociology from Wesleyan College. She has published six books and is editor of Living Into God's Dream: Dismantling Racism in America (2016), which focuses on racial healing and reconciliation. She writes for the Huffington Post and is a regular contributor to Hospitality. She is involved with prison work, visits regularly on death row and works for the abolition of the death penalty. (kayma53@att.net)

When I look back, I see many instances when I have responded to events with the amount of energy that should have been reserved for tragedy, when actually they were merely inconveniences.

damages from the wreck and the overheating of the engine. I was sad about that because I had planned to give it to my sons next year and purchase a new one for myself.

This accident opened my heart and eyes to a new way. Our material possessions were destroyed. A new bicycle was required for the kind woman that I hit and I have a new car several months before I was planning on it. While all of this was a huge inconvenience, that is all it was. There was nothing tragic about it. I realized that I was more peaceful

to encounter a very lovely woman who reminded me of a Greek goddess because of her manner and appearance. Even my insurance adjuster commented about how nice and pleasant she was and how much he had enjoyed working with her.

When I look back, I see many instances when I have responded to events with the amount of energy that should have been reserved for tragedy, when actually they were merely inconveniences. In those cases, if I had allowed myself to be open to the grace

not stressed out and lamenting about this accident. But I am well and I have a brand new car. When one of the insurance adjusters began to sympathize with me and tell me how stressed out she knew I was, my response was not acceptable to her. I said that I was not stressed because I have good insurance and no one was hurt. She changed the subject and quickly ended the conversation. This was not the only time that I got such a response to my attitude of acceptance and gratitude.



Rita Corbin

HOSPITALITY

Hospitality is published by the Open Door Community, Inc., a Baltimore 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.

A \$10 donation to the Open Door Community would help to cover the costs of printing and mailing **Hospitality** for one year. A \$40 donation covers overseas delivery for one year.

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ODC/B

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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.

In the Presence of My Enemies

By Katie Aikins

*You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies (oppressor/adversary/accuser)
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD
my whole life long.
Psalm 23:5-6*

“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.” I get to this line in Psalm 23, and it feels off. Shouldn’t it be: “God, I praise you because you have set a table before me in the *absence* of my enemies?” Why would we want to eat in the presence of our enemies? Wouldn’t we lose our appetite? This is a psalm about the comfort of God’s presence. Shouldn’t that mean that there are *no enemies* around?

According to this poet, the life of faith involves being in the presence of my enemies. To put it another way — if you’re walking in the Way of Yahweh, you will be aware of the presence of your enemies. Just like following the Good Shepherd doesn’t shelter you from experiencing the valley of the shadow of death, as this psalm attests; so walking with the Good Shepherd also means that your enemies are still in the picture. God has not obliterated your enemies. God has invited your enemies to the banquet table, too.

The invitation to the table of God is not a private invitation. It’s not an invitation to dinner in a “members only” country club that is only open to the elite. There is no gate, no wall around the table of God. One of the hardest things for us to grasp is that our enemies are invited to the table of God.

Jesus said it a bit differently when he said God makes the sun to rise on the evil *and* on the good, and sends rain on the righteous *and* on the unrighteous. If you love those who

courtroom. Courtrooms are one of our best teachers for identifying how injustice plays out in all the many facets of our systems in this country. My wife, Heather, and other friends at the Open Door were the first people to teach me this. When I moved to Atlanta, they encouraged me to go to court to see what was happening, especially to the poor and to people of color. Courtrooms reveal the criminalization of the poor, and especially the criminalization of Black and Brown poor people.

Some of us who are part of the prison ministry group at Tabernacle United Church went to court on a recent day to support Joe Ligon. Joe was 15 years old when he was convicted of murder. He was involved in a stabbing spree in Philadelphia that resulted in two people losing their lives. Joe was with a group of young guys, and was accused by the others of being the one who stabbed and killed the two victims.



There is no gate, no wall around the table of God.
One of the hardest things for us to grasp is that our enemies are invited to the table of God.

love you back, how is that different from what mean people do? Mean and hateful people can show love to those who love them back. That’s easy love. But I’m calling you to a more radical kind of love, says Jesus — to choose to love even those you don’t find lovable at all. God has invited your enemies to the banquet table, too.

Table scenes are frequent in Scripture and in the memory and liturgy of the church. We have a table in the center of our worship space and it’s intentionally in the center. While we don’t take communion every Sunday, we see the table and remember this as a welcome table. We remember how Jesus often sat at table with his followers for meals. We also remember how Jesus sat in the presence of his enemies. And the truth is that his disciples were also, at one time, his enemies. Judas was there, who we know betrayed Jesus. But all the others around that table didn’t exactly do a marvelous job at being faithful either. They fled in fear. They abandoned Jesus in his hour of greatest need. Even when Jesus sat at table with his closest friends, he sat at table with his enemies.

You can be a friend of Jesus and sometimes his enemy, too. It’s never been as simple as separating good people from bad people. Being in the presence of my enemy can sometimes mean that I’m sitting with myself — in my failure to love, in my recognition of my own role in betrayal.

Our enemy can be anywhere and everywhere, outside of us and inside of us.

I had an experience of the enemy a few weeks ago in a

At 15 years old, he was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole. The year was 1953. Joe is now 80; he has spent 64 years in prison. Joe is the oldest juvenile lifer still living in the U.S. And on this day that we were in court, he had the possibility of being re-sentenced and released on parole.

Before moving to Philadelphia, Joe’s parents were sharecroppers in Alabama. They moved north in search of a better life, like so many Black folks hoped for who migrated from the South at that time. His family had only lived in Philadelphia two years when the crime occurred. Joe was an outsider and didn’t have many friends. He also didn’t know how to read or write. Because he was an outsider to this group of peers, he was an easy target on which to pin the blame for the murders. Throughout all the years that Joe has spent in prison, he has maintained that he was involved in the events of that night, but that he did not kill those two people.

To our surprise, we learned during the court proceedings that Joe’s lawyers were trying to help Joe *not* to get released on parole, but to stay in prison for the remainder of his life because that was Joe’s wish. He has been in prison for so long that this is the only life he knows. The thought of adjusting to life outside now at age 80 is just too overwhelming for him to consider.

The judge was kind to Joe, and even the prosecutor was friendly. Other juvenile lifers who had been released were also there to show support for Joe. With our group from

Tabernacle and others, there were probably close to 25 people there on his behalf. Technically, all went well. The re-sentencing ended in favor of Joe’s desires, and the courtroom climate felt less hostile than I have experienced at other times.

But something didn’t sit well with me. I couldn’t stop thinking: Who’s responsible for sending Joe to prison at age 15 and keeping him there for 64 years before giving him a chance at release? What does it mean that he would rather die in prison than be released to a world that is so foreign and frightening to him? We have made him a man who cannot imagine surviving outside the institution. No one could, or no one would, take responsibility for this terrible injustice. I could feel an undercurrent of shame at the tremendous injury to this now elderly man at the hands of our system. Everyone was trying to be friendly and respectful to Joe, but the horror of the situation was piercing through, as if to cry out: “What

have you done to Joe?! Why have you caged him for 63 years?!” The sin our country seems most eager to prosecute is the sin of being poor, Black and illiterate. It is as true today as it was in 1953.

I experienced the enemy in that courtroom. But the enemy was hard to pin down. It felt like “the power of the air we breathe” that Paul talks about in his letter to the Ephesians. It felt like it was inside of me, like I was part of the history that brought Joe to this place. The enemy is in us. The enemy is outside of us. The enemy was at work in history and we are living its legacy. But who was going to raise that in court? Where is the place to admit wrongdoing against the defendant? When does that happen? Where is the place to put the state or our nation on trial? Where is it? I wished there could have been some acknowledgment that we — the system, our government, the people — had failed Joe.

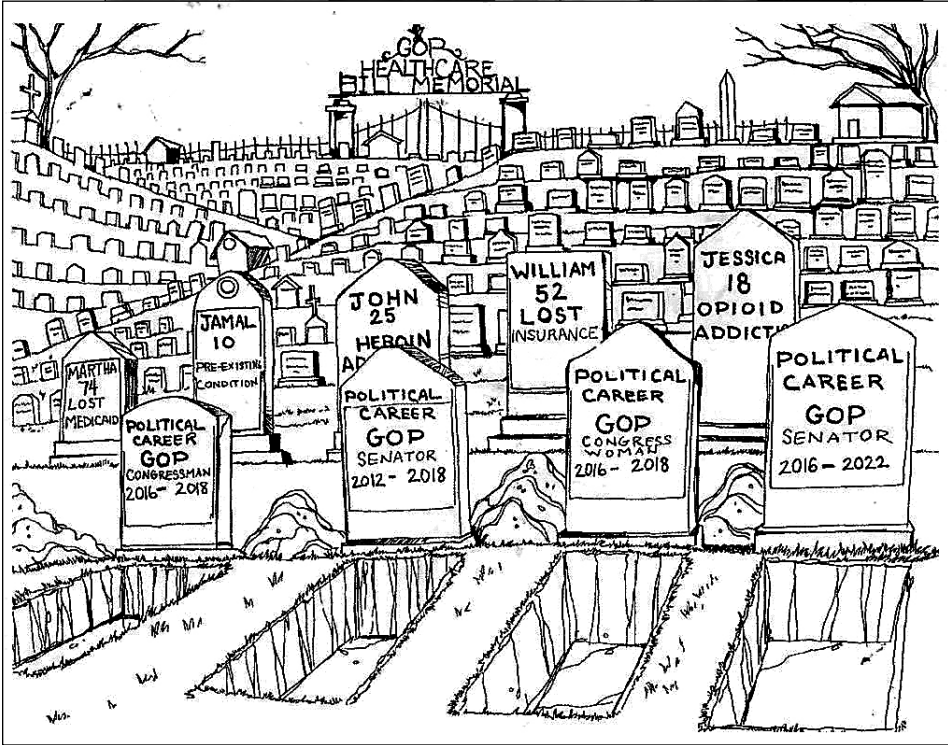
The enemy was present in the courtroom. To be in the presence of our enemies is sometimes to be in a courtroom and discover how the enemy has worked through history and continues to be a powerful force in our systems. To be in the presence of our enemies is sometimes to sit with yourself and face the enemy that is in you, too.

But Psalm 23 does not leave us sitting in the presence of our enemies. According to this poet, the enemy does not define the outcome of our situation. No, the psalm goes on to say that, even in the presence of our enemies, there is something else that chases after us, all the days of our lives. We may think it is the enemy; but what chases us is the goodness and mercy of God: “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me, all the days of my life.” “Follow” is not a strong enough translation of the Hebrew word. It’s more like God’s mercy is a hunter chasing us down! What this poet is saying is that we are able to eat at the table in the presence of our enemies *because* God’s mercy has pursued us and stayed with us all the days of our life.

When Joe entered the courtroom he waved at everyone and said, “Good morning!” And when the hearing ended, he turned around as he was leaving and said with a smile, “Thank you all for coming.” To me it seemed that Joe was Jesus — in part because Joe is Black and convicted as a criminal by the state, like Jesus. But also, Joe acted like more of a host than a victim. He acted like a human being more than



In, Out & Around ODC/B



ODC/B

Medicare For All

On July 19, Ed joined The People’s Filibuster for Healthcare in DC. He and several hundred others went to each Republican Senate office to tell their stories of the need for Medicaid. Ed told the story of Murphy’s 23 years of cancer. Without Medicaid she would be dead. Because Maryland has no Republican or Libertarian senators, Ed joined the affinity group from Georgia. The disruption and civil disobedience were glorious and the angels sang out, “Ain’t gonna let the Republicans turn us around.” For more pictures of the action see the Open Door Community Facebook site. We are thankful the killer health bills did not pass.



Visitors

Left: Steve Bright with Murphy Davis and Eduard Loring.

Below: Rev. Ezekiel Holley, Eduard Loring, Murphy Davis, Chris Wright, Gary Holley and David Payne. Rev. Holley, Chris and Gary were visiting from Dawson, Georgia for the 108th NAACP meeting in Baltimore.



Above: Louis Boulanger, Marilyn Schertz, Murphy Davis and Eduard Loring at the Peace Pole in the front yard. Louis and Marilyn brought this carved stone as a gift to the ODC/B.



Photographs by David Payne



Update 1: Thank You

By Eduard Loring

In our beginning. In our middle. At the end, be it finis or telos, we say thank you.

The lives of Murphy, Ed and David have been in too many directions, disarray and pain for way too long. In the midst of the darkness there has been a light and the darkness could not put out the light. When the vultures surrounded 910 Ponce de Leon, waiting to eat the carrion leftovers of our community, the Dove who is the Holy Spirit, the love of God, the fire of John the Baptist, the radical message of salvific hope of Jesus the Human One carried us on. The way of the Cross, radical discipleship of the Black Jesus, community, family, friends and you, our extended community, pulled and pushed us up the rough side of the mountain. Thank you.

You, our readers and friends, know of the travail and troubled waters the Open Door Community waded through as we made the decision to close down our lives and work in Atlanta and scatter to other places. All of our residents were cared for generously, and we continue to be in contact with several former residents. One failure was our work with Winston Robarts. We made financial arrangements for him to live with his sister. Sarah Humphrey had spent hours working with a lawyer for Winston to get SSI. Winston gladly moved to live with his sister, but the arrangement did not last two weeks. Winston went to the streets. We and Barbara Schenk, his closest friend for 13 years, have yet to hear from him. However, loving and creative former Open Door Community residents and a staff person have rallied to help Winston. We know that God is working through these folks to “never leave Winston alone.” We are thankful for this outcome and only wish he had remained with his lawyer and lived with his sister till the slow-moving waters of justice had granted Winston what should be a human right for us all.



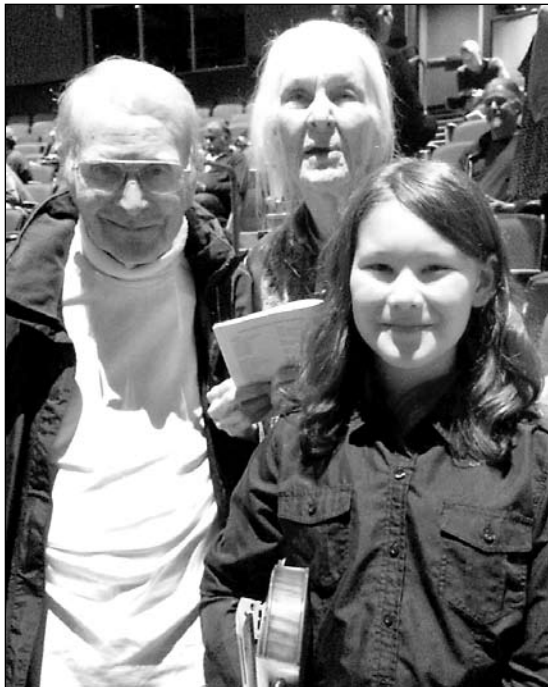
Louis Jordan

Nelia and Calvin Kimbrough in the Belmont United Methodist Church booth at Nashville PRIDE '17.

In September 2016, Nelia and Calvin Kimbrough moved to Nashville, Tennessee. Both have roots and family in the area. They

are doing well and finding justice work in the streets to be about. Friends, church and art sustain and empower them as they move into this new phase of their lives. As I write this morning, our daughter, Hannah, her husband, Jason, and their daughter, Michaela (mine and Murphy's granddaughter. Hooray), are visiting Nelia and Calvin in their home.

Calvin continues to perform his gifted work as layout editor of *Hospitality*. Calvin and Nelia will come to Baltimore around Labor Day for a much-anticipated visit. We are thankful for the 12 years we lived together and shared community and mission. Nelia and Calvin would love to hear from you. Why not a postcard or letter? 1900 Acklen Avenue, #904, Nashville, Tennessee 37212



Dick and Gladys with their grandson Miles at one of his concerts in California.

Dick and Gladys Rustay, beloved by all, are having a difficult time. Dick and Gladys (who developed Alzheimer's over the last couple of years at the Open Door Community), departed for Vancouver, Washington in January 2017. They were welcomed into the home of Scott and Joan Rustay. Scott is Dick's younger brother by 13 years. Immediately, Dick began to volunteer and lead Bible study at The House of the Carpenter. Departing from the life and work of the Open Door Community has broken Dick's heart. He, like Nelia and Calvin and Murphy and I, had believed God called us to die in that Open Door Community of

Atlanta with our sandals on. We have all had to struggle with the radical changes in our lives after confessing and promising that we



Murphy and her friend Robin Haley (right) both finished radiation treatments on Friday, July 14. The tradition at Johns Hopkins Hospital is that patients ring a big bell at the completion of treatment, so they teamed up to give that bell a good couple of dings. Next thing they knew, several other patients, radiation techs and several nurses joined in the celebration. It was a good day!

would stay steadfast in our vow of stability at the Open Door. Over the last few weeks, Dick has decided to move into an assisted living facility soon. He needs more care with his beloved Gladys and a simpler life for himself in the 89th year of his loving, musical, servant-hood life. Why not drop them an epistle or a postcard? If they move before you have a chance to write, Scott and Joan will deliver their mail to them. 10917 NE 39th Avenue, Vancouver, Washington 98686

On February 14, 2017, a tumor was discovered on Murphy's scalp. On February 15, Murphy and Hannah flew to Baltimore where we now live and where the small and new Open Door Community is settling. This was a significant change of plans, for we were to drive up together. On February 16, the Open Door Community of Baltimore (sans Murphy and David Payne) — Ed Loring and Robert Lee — with the blessed help of Nibs Stroupe, departed 910 in a van and automobile for 3008 Fleetwood Avenue in Baltimore.

Hannah, professor of Nursing at Notre Dame of Maryland, went to work to immediately schedule Murphy to see a surgeon. Murphy has Indolent Lymphoma and has been afflicted since early 1995. She has had breast cancer twice and now cancer of the scalp. She has come through seven surgeries and five major regimens of chemotherapy. And this time she tasted some new dishes from hell. From Feb 14 to July 14, Murphy was in treatment: two surgeries, four wound sites, terrible pain and suffering. And four weeks of radiation. Murphy says often and truthfully, “Without Hannah, I would have died.” Hannah was pure grace through our entire ordeal of closing down, packing up, moving and her “mamma care.” Thank you, Hannah. Our three-year-old granddaughter, Michaela, was the best medicine of all, bringing joy, new life and insistent “why” questions to every utterance we make.

Friends. Oh my, what friends. People



ODC/B

who came from places far away to help us. Church folk and new friends from nearby who brought us meals. Letters, cards, prayers, financial gifts. Thank you. Thank you.

We are now at a turning point. Murphy is gaining strength daily. Her scalp is almost healed. We departed our home — the Open Door Community of Baltimore — on August 2 for a trip “South toward home.” We are with Joyce Hollyday and Bill Ramsey for a visit. Joyce, writer and editor, is going to guide Murphy as she completes her important book about her journey.

In a couple of days, we travel to our beloved Montreat with Erskine and Nan Clarke. We will be joined later in the week by Hannah, Jason, Michaela and the entire Davis clan. Then on to Atlanta, where we will visit in prison, meet with friends, share meals and journey on the Hardwick Prison Trip. After the renewing trip to First Presbyterian Church in Milledgeville, we head “North toward home.”

I will continue this Update in our next issue. August 6 was Hiroshima Day. Let us continue to go into the streets for Peace and Justice and to redeem the violent past with Works of Mercy and our clamor for justice.

Thank you. Thank you.

Be Reconciled! Conciliation and the Black Jesus

By Nibs Stroupe

In last month's article, I emphasized that racial reconciliation was a long way off; we first need conciliation before we can have reconciliation. Reconciliation is so distant because all of us, but especially those of us who are classified as white, are captured by the power of race. We who are white have great difficulty acknowledging this captivity. It is from this captivity that the Black Jesus came to free us, but the journey is long and the path is narrow. All of us who enter into this part of the journey should be forewarned — danger ahead, changes coming! In this series on the Black Jesus, we have listed some of those dangers and obstacles, and some of the changes that are necessary. And yet, one of the promises of the Black Jesus in John 10 is that he has come to bring us life abundant, life greater than we ever imagined!

In regard to engaging race, one may feel like a participant in an Olympic platform diving contest. This journey has a high degree of difficulty, and its difficulty is the main reason that racism remains one of the most powerful forces in our society. But, lest we become discouraged and overwhelmed and unable to move, let us recall that God came into the world to reconcile us to God and to one another. God came in the marginalized Black Jesus so that we might seek freedom from our captivity. As Paul put it in the beginning of the fifth chapter of the Letter to the Galatians: "Freedom is what we have — Christ Jesus has set us free. Stand then as free people, and do not allow yourselves to become captives again."

The movement of the Black Jesus is to help us begin to find a degree of freedom from our captivity to race and to so many other powers. In the Second Letter to the Corinthians, Paul emphasizes this captivity in the beginning of the famous verses on reconciliation in chapter 5:16-21: "From now on, then, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though once we knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way." (5:16) For many years, I thought of this verse as referring to my difficulty in accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. However, as I have repeatedly encountered the power of race in my life, I have begun to understand this verse to refer to my refusal to see Jesus as Black, as my refusal to acknowledge that my captivity to race and many other powers hinders my ability to understand the Black Jesus for who he is. This is my context, my "human point of view," the comfortable white male point of view.

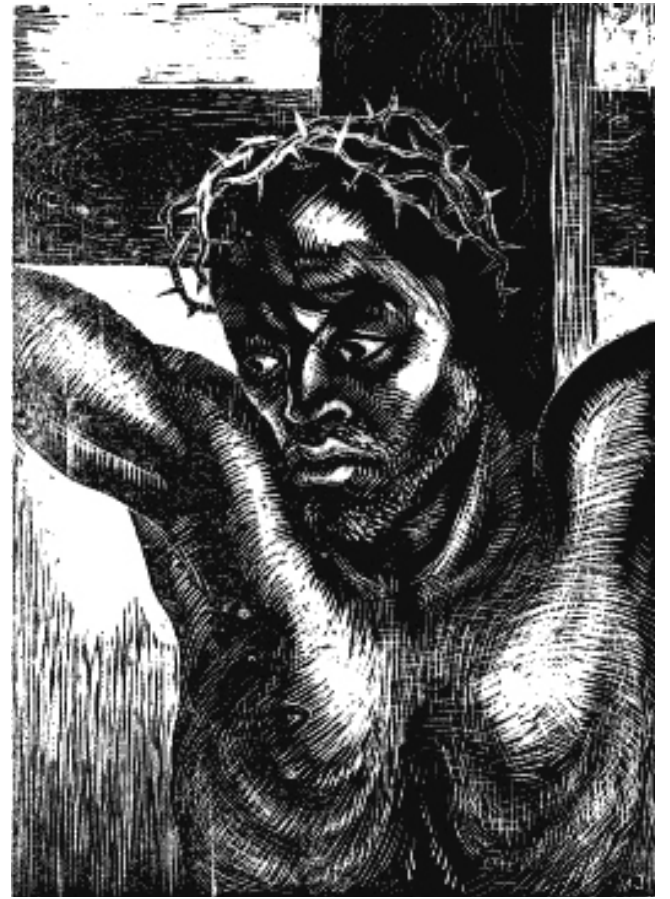
My initial difficulty with the Black Jesus (through James Cone, Jacqueline Grant and others) originated in my thinking in terms of skin color. Although Jesus was not white, he was likely not dark-skinned either. As a Palestinian Jew, he was likely olive or latté, as many Mediterranean, North African and especially Palestinian people were and are. So how could he be considered black? It took me awhile to recognize that in the West, and especially in America, the word "black" is not used to describe skin color. It is used to describe those whom a white supremacist culture wants to marginalize. Not only are black people seen as less than white people, but in English, "black" usually means something sad and depressing and even evil. It is why the phrase "Black lives matter" is so powerful. It affirms that those who would be marginalized in this racialized culture are indeed important and central.

In this series on the Black Jesus, we have emphasized that not only do Black lives matter, but even more important for our purposes, Jesus is Black. So we are not talking about white saviors or being nice to those classified as black. We are talking about a fundamental re-orientation for those of us classified as white. Jesus is Black. Paul nails it at the beginning of these verses on reconciliation in II Corinthians 5:16-21. When he encountered the story of a marginalized Jew named Jesus of Nazareth, who portrayed God as suffering and as One who was at the margins of life, Paul dismissed the claim. Indeed,

Paul hunted the followers of the Black Jesus to arrest them, and he had participated in the lynching of at least one of them. He saw Jesus from a human point of view. On the road to Damascus (could Paul take that road now?), he encountered the risen Black Jesus, and, although he was blinded, his vision changed. He was no longer confined to his context. Paul began to preach and to live the Black Jesus, the marginalized One, the crucified One, the One risen from the depths of being imprisoned, beaten and lynched.

In affluent, white-dominated, Trumpian America, these are hard words to take and to believe. While social media has clearly documented the continuing lynching of Black and Latinx and other marginalized people, we in white America have tended to ask, "What is wrong with the police?" The answer from the Black Jesus is that the police are doing what white America has asked them to do — to keep Black, Latinx and poor people at the margins. Paul reminds us that this is the human point of view, and that we are called by the Black Jesus to see a whole new world, not a colorblind world or a non-racialized world. Rather, in the midst of our kind of world, we are asked to hear and see and acknowledge the Black Jesus, the part of the Trinity who calls us into new life here and now. Because God is in the ministry of reconciliation in the Black Jesus, we are called to be "ambassadors for Christ" (II Cor. 5:20), not in the old individualistic, get-me-into-heaven vein, but in the communal and eschatological vein of working for conciliatory measures of justice and equity and mercy in our lives now. God intends this work to be happening now, in our individual lives, in our communal lives and in our institutional lives. That is the work of reconciliation, and it begins in conciliation, when those of us who are classified as white begin to understand our "human point of view," our context of whiteness and white supremacy.

Of course, this is a dynamic and organic process. Most of us do not have a "road to Damascus" experience, where it all becomes clear. It is more trial and error; going by fits and starts; one step forward, two steps backward or sideways. The beginning point in this journey is to hear that we have a human point of view, a context. There is nothing wrong with having a context; indeed, there is no other way to live our lives. The important point is to recognize that it is a context and that other people have other contexts, as Paul came to hear in his journey. I'm not sure that we can ever not have a



Morgan Johnson

human point of view, but Paul's emphasis in II Corinthians 5:16 is that we must always be aware of it. This is where conciliation begins: the awareness of our context. Once we have taken that step, we can begin to take steps toward reconciling with the Black Jesus and with one another. Ever since I became aware of my context, I have longed for a "road to Damascus" experience, where I get over it once and for all. I long to be like Paul, but I am much more like Peter — stumbling, bumbling, hoping, struggling, trying to find my way. In my experience, most of us are more like Peter than we are Paul, and it is to Peter's experience we will turn next to look at the step of repentance on the road to reconciliation. ✠

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

Redeeming the Times

By Eduard Loring

During the 1960s, the faculty and students of Columbia Theological Seminary sat out the Civil Rights movement. Coretta Scott King and her diminutive husband lived only a few miles away from the seminary. The Presbyterian Church U.S., Reconstruction name of the old proslavery denomination, was the only major denomination (except the Southern Baptist Convention, of course) to refuse to endorse the March on Washington, August 28, 1963. Those Southerners dreamed of the return of the Magnolia Myth. They cried, "Forget, hell." A number of the faculty were Southern liberals who supported integration by sermon and prayer, but were not able to take a stand in the Civil Rights movement. These faculty members were fresh air and turning points for many of us at the seminary. I would not be the person I am today without them. I am thankful. I am a street activist.

Many are the changes since the 1960s. The roots and branches for the Trump election go deep into American history and culture. The evangelicals who believed in the 1960s that faith and politics could not mix are today supporting Trump in overwhelming numbers. Billy sure ain't Franklin, grim as they both are.

Students more bold and faithful to the gospel than I and my generation are acting and demanding justice today at Columbia Seminary. I, one among many, applaud them. I am inspired by their faith and action. Below is a story and proclamation of courage and faithfulness to the Hebrew Prophets who are the backbone for John the Baptist and Jesus the Human One.

Redeeming the Times *continued on next page*

Redeeming the Times *continued*

On 2/27/17 a white student went into the refectory and covered all the portraits with black trash bags (*right*). The student left the following message:

The portraits above are covered this last day of Black History Month as a sign of mourning. Mourning the reality that our school's history has been that of monotone faces — faces that look down on us. These are faces that do not represent us any longer as a school or a community. Recognizing that the small pictures of brave African American men and women who hang below them this month deserve our attention now more than ever. Grieving, going into this Ash Wednesday, for the rift in our nation. Grieving, going into this Ash Wednesday, crying out that Black Lives Matter. Grieving going into this Ash Wednesday, making intentional decisions to mourn our past so that we might accept the realities of our present. Then, remembering that there is hope in grief. There is hope, not by looking to our past, but by seeing the reality of our present.

So celebrating today, this Fat Tuesday, this Mardi Gras, this incredible day of realization! Celebrating that the covered faces do not represent us any longer as a school or a community. For at least today, moving our focus from the above and instead look forward, looking across the table and seeing the beautiful brown and black faces that sit across from us. Celebrating the reality that we have changed even as painted pictures remain the same. We celebrate that our greatest challenge and our greatest strength is what is present today: our diversity. Celebrating, acknowledging the amazing African American men who cook and wash our dishes every day in this refectory. Who come from different walks of life and struggles, but show us love and compassion time and again. Celebrating, acknowledging the amazing faculty who come from so many nations, varied backgrounds and cultures. Specifically acknowledging the African Americans in our midst who have challenged and pushed this community to grow. One of which, will finally grace these walls; who finally bring some color to the pale. Celebrating, acknowledging the amazing black and brown bodies of our staff at this school. Those who encourage enlighten and bring with them understandings that we as a society so desperately need. Who do not shy away from tough problems but face them head on. Celebrating, acknowledging the support staff that fix and repair our issues in housing. Those who clean up our messes and clean our toilets, empty our trashcans. Acknowledging that these positions are disproportionately people of color. Celebrating, acknowledging the African American, Korean, Indian, Canadian and African students who attend this school. Whose amazing minds and brilliant works make this community whole.

Together we join in solidarity.

Together we remain in the present.

Together we rise. ✠



poetry corner



Julie Lonneman

Conjecture on the Stained Glass Image of White Christ at Ebenezer Baptist Church

*For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body —
Jews or Greeks, slaves or free — and all were made to drink of one Spirit.
— 1 Corinthians 12:13*

If in his image made am I, then make me a miracle.
Make my shrine a copper faucet leaking everlasting Evian to the masses.
Make this empty water glass a goblet of long-legged French wine.
Make mine a Prince-purple body bag designed by Crown Royal
for tax collectors to spill over & tithe into just before I rise.
If in his image made am I, then make my vessel a pearl Coupe de Ville.
Make mine the body of a 28-year-old black woman
in a blue patterned maxi dress cruising through Hell on Earth, TX
again alive. If in his image made are we, then why
the endless string of effigies?
Why so many mortal blasphemes?
Why crucify me in HD across a scrolling news ticker, tied
to a clothesline of broken necks long as Time?
Is this thing on? Jesus on the ground. Jesus in the margins.
Of hurricane & sea. Jesus of busted levees in chocolate cities.
Jesus of the Middle East (Africa) & crows flying backwards.
Of blood, on the leaves, inside diamond mines, in under-
developed mineral-rich countries. If in your image made are we,
the proliferation of your tie-dyed hippie doppelgänger
makes you easier to daily see. & in this image didn't we make
the godhead, slightly stony, high enough to surf a cloud?
& didn't we leave you there, where, surely, paradise or
justice must be meted out? Couldn't we see where water takes
the form of whatever most holds it upright? If then this
is what it's come down to. My faith, in rifle shells.
In Glock 22 magazine sleeves. Isn't it also then how, why,
in a bucket shot full of holes, I've been made to believe?

— Marcus Wicker

Source: *Poetry* (December 2016)

Marcus Wicker was born in Ann Arbor, Michigan. He is the author of Silencer (2017) and Maybe the Saddest Thing (2012). His work has appeared in Poetry, American Poetry Review, Oxford American, and many other magazines. He is the poetry editor of Southern Indiana Review. He is assistant professor of English at University of Southern Indiana.

A Lonely Pacifist

By Rosalie Riegler

Ben Salmon stands alone in a bare and rocky desert. His eyes are clear, his gaze steadfast, his purpose firm. He knows what “Thou shalt not kill” means and it means he cannot fight in President Wilson’s “war to end all wars.” For his refusal he suffers ostracism, shame, imprisonment, torture, an early death and an unmarked grave.

Today, 100 years after this lonely man was imprisoned for refusing to fight or to perform alternate military service and finally, even to work in what we now call the prison-military-industrial complex, a group of peace activists want to shine a light on this early Catholic conscientious objector, one of only four Catholics out of approximately 5,000 U.S. pacifists who chose alternative service or prison as their form of nonviolent resistance to World War I.

While he lived, Salmon was called a spy, a slacker and a troublemaker. And he was a troublemaker for the cause of peace. After he died in 1932, he was remembered for years only in official government archives and by *The Catholic Worker* in a 1940 article. Years later, Torin Finny wrote *Unsung Hero of the Great War: The Life and Witness of Ben Salmon*. In 1998, iconographer William Hart McNichols presented this icon to Phil Berrigan of Baltimore’s Jonah House when Berrigan was released from prison for a Plowshares resistance action against nuclear war. It remains in the family, a symbol of courage for all who resist, including those men and women in the armed services who come to see the sinfulness of war after they enlist and have such trouble getting out. In 2007, the Catholic Peace Fellowship, a group that counsels contemporary conscientious

objectors, published Ben Salmon’s story in their journal, and now there is an informative website, <http://www.bensalmon.org/>, and a campaign to erect a tombstone on Salmon’s currently unmarked grave located in the large Mt. Carmel Cemetery in Hillside, Illinois, a near suburb of Chicago.

I wish I had miraculously been able to channel his spirit to join the peace prisoners whose stories I recorded and later narrated in *Doing Time for Peace*, as his statements are so clearly the work and the words of the Holy Spirit. Born in 1889 and raised in a working-class family in Denver, Salmon was early alert to justice issues and as a young man became active in the nascent labor movement. Like many Americans, he believed President Wilson’s campaign promise to keep the U.S. out of Europe’s war. So when World War I was declared, he wrote the President: “All men are my brothers. . . . The commandment, ‘Thou shalt not kill’ is unconditional and inexorable.” He wrote that he preferred prison or death to joining any branch of the military. He got both. The suspenseful years of vilification and arrests, forced draft registration, trials, convictions, solitary confinement and torture show prison and military brig conditions to be as bad as or worse than they are today. The war ended in 1918, but Salmon remained in military prisons, with frequent transfers, including time in a hospital for the criminally insane. He was judged sane, a sanity that shines through his many writings, including his “Magnum Opus,” a masterful rebuttal to the just war theory. But the torture and solitary confinement he endured cost him his health, and he died in his early 40s, leaving his wife with three young children.

In a moving ceremony at the Chicago



William Hart McNichols

The Friends of Franz [Franz Jagerstatter] and Ben are collecting funds to place a marker on Ben’s grave. If you wish to contribute, mail checks to:

Friends of Franz and Ben
89 Pine Street
Binghamton, NY 13901

gravesite on June 20, attended by Salmon’s great-niece Charlotte Mates of Moab, Utah, those who came to memorialize Salmon gazed at a large copy of William Hart McNichols’ icon and heard short reflections from peace activists such as Kathy Kelly and Luke Hansen. SJ. Fr. Bernard Survil traveled from Pennsylvania to coordinate the ceremony and held vigil at the gravesite throughout the day as people continued to visit. A campaign to raise money for a permanent headstone is underway, and supporters hope to have it installed in time for a remembrance ceremony on Veterans Day, November 11, 2017. November 11 is also the Feast of St. Martin of Tours, an early Christian who refused to fight in Caesar’s wars of empire. A quotation from Salmon’s writings seems as apt today as when he wrote it in a letter to the Secretary of War shortly before he was finally released in 1920:

America is now not at war, which makes it more sinful than ever to maintain a wholesale killing machine. . . . There is not an instance in the world’s history where military preparation against war resulted in peace. War is the inevitable sequence of military preparation. “As you sow, so shall you reap,” said our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ben Salmon, presente! ✠

Rosalie Riegler is a grandmother, an oral historian and emerita in English from Saginaw Valley State University in Michigan. Now living in Evanston, Illinois and active with *Su Casa Catholic Worker* on the South Side of Chicago, Rosalie’s latest books are *Doing Time for Peace: Resistance, Family, and Community*, and *Crossing the Line: Nonviolent Resisters Speak Out for Peace*.

In the Presence of My Enemies *continued from page 3*

anything, and that is what moved me most of all. Human beings are not meant to be treated like Joe has been treated. Yet somehow, Joe, with his greeting and expression of gratitude, offered us a chance to come back to the table of grace, hopefully to be transformed by the power of love so that we never again subject another human being to what we have done to Joe.

I hope that we who were there on Joe’s behalf were also signs of goodness and mercy to him. That was our call and our intent. We were trying to let him know that he is a child of God and loved despite all the ways that this system has told him for most of his life that he is not.

To live a life of faith, to walk with God, to walk with the Good Shepherd, is to be in the presence of our enemies. The promise of this psalm, however, is that the enemy does not define us, nor does the enemy determine the end. But we must have eyes to see the enemy at work in order to be able to resist

and to imagine life lived in God’s realm. We can keep up our resistance to the enemy not on our own and not by our own strength. But rather, we can resist because we trust the mercy and the goodness of God that chases us down our whole life long.

With the Good Shepherd as our guide, with Yahweh as our Great Banquet Host, with the Black Jesus as our Friend, and with Joe as our Witness, let us not grow weary in our practice of goodness and mercy. ✠

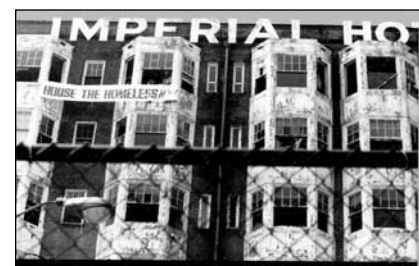
Katie Aikins is Pastor at Tabernacle United Church (UCC) in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. This sermon was preached as part of a series on Psalm 23. She and her wife, Heather Barger, are members of the Vine and Fig Tree Community. Katie was a volunteer at the Open Door during her years as a student at Candler School of Theology. (tabunitedpastor@gmail.com)

Raising Our Voices, Breaking the Chain

The Imperial Hotel Occupation as Prophetic Politics

by Terry Easton

The Open Door Press



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Breaking the Chain

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Water is Life

By Weldon D. Nisly

In the beginning ... God said, "Let the waters ... be gathered together into one place and let the dry land appear." ... And God saw that it was good. (Genesis 1)

God knows that Water is Life!

Jesus encountered the Samaritan woman at the well revealing the distinction and intersection of living water and life-giving water. (John 4)

Jesus and the Samaritan woman know that Water is Life!

The Standing Rock Water Protectors proclaim that water is sacred, and warn that water is threatened by the Dakota Access Pipeline. They rightfully remind us, "You can live without money. You can live without oil. But you can't live without water."

The Standing Rock Water Protectors know the truth: *Mni Wiconi* — "Water is life" in Lakota.

People who are homeless, displaced, poor, sick, or caught in the crossfire of war or the ravages of famine know the consequences of being deprived of water.

Those who are deprived of clean water know that Water is Life!

Watershed Discipleship followers preserve watersheds by embracing a triple *entendre*:

- 1) recognizing this watershed moment triggered by our toxic ways of despoiling creation;
- 2) calling us to nurture watershed consciousness for our watershed and all watersheds;
- 3) compelling us to know and care for the watersheds we inhabit.

Paraphrasing Baba Dioum, Senegal's former Director General of Water and Forest, Watershed Discipleship's mantra is: *We won't save places we don't love, we can't love places we don't know, and we don't know places we haven't learned.*

Watershed Disciples know that Water is Life!

During the 1991 U.S. war in Iraq, I invited two friends, Duraïd Da'as, a Palestinian American, and Ben Kauffman, a Jewish American, to speak to Cincinnati Mennonite Fellowship, where I was pastor. We invited them to help us understand the Middle East in historical context and political perspective. They shared that war is terrorism and true peace means just peace for all peoples. But their most surprising revelation was that water more than oil will be the impulse for future wars as water is increasingly polluted, politicized, controlled and commercialized.

Duraïd and Ben know that Water is Life!

When I served with the Christian Peacemaker Team (CPT) in Iraqi Kurdistan from April through June, my Kurdish friends taught me to not take water for granted and never go anywhere without water. Occasionally we ran out of water in the CPT house and called a water truck to come fill our rooftop water tank. Having no water to drink, cook, wash, or flush for a few days or even a few hours is a hard lesson to learn for those of us accustomed to instant and endless water at the turn of a tap.

Kurdish people know that Water is Life!

Inspired by biblical and contemporary witnesses who know that Water is Life, I share a story from my time with the CPT Iraqi Kurdistan team this spring.

Springs flowed with water for the desert village of Kormor. For generations, cool, clean water bubbled from the ground to quench the thirst of people, plants and animals.

No more! Where refreshing spring water endlessly flowed, now only thistles abound in sunbaked ground. The spring water flowed until Dana Gas Company arrived. With little concern for village life, Dana drilled a well to draw all the water needed to pump gas and oil from deep under-

ground. So much water has been drawn from the well that it lowered the underground water table and dried up the springs. Kormor's water of life was sacrificed to unquenchable corporate thirst for profit, political thirst for power, and global thirst for energy.

After the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, Dana Gas arrived in Kormor to drill for gas. Blessed by political leaders, foreign and domestic, Dana confiscated land owned by villagers. They closed off a few miles of the main road to the village for their own exclusive use, forcing villagers to drive 25 miles farther over very rough, rocky roads, adding an hour of driving



Photographs by Weldon Nisly



Above: Kormor village leader Kak Hassan (left) shows CPT delegation leader Annika Spalde the thistle patch that used to flow with fresh spring water.

Left: The water tank that now supplies water for Kormor village.

**The spring water flowed until Dana Gas Company arrived.
With little concern for village life, Dana drilled a well
to draw all the water needed to pump gas and oil from deep underground.**

time. Dana built a large water storage tank for their own use and a small tank for the village. Water stored in an above ground water tank is not refreshing, abundant, underground spring water.

When I previously served with the CPT Iraqi Kurdistan team in September 2014, our team was invited to visit Kormor for the first time to see and hear how Dana was endangering village life and livelihood. In addition to water, air and noise pollution, drilling caused a jagged crack in the wall of the small school, endangering children's lives.

In May 2017, village leader and CPT partner Kak Hassan invited us to return to Kormor to see and hear the current situation. Over tea and watermelon, he shared how Dana confiscated their land and spurned attempts to seek just compensation. Kak Hassan had even been arrested when he organized a village presence at the Dana Gas entrance. He thanked CPT for accompanying him in his trial where he was vindicated when the judge ruled in his favor.

After listening to Kak Hassan and another villager who had his rock quarry confiscated by Dana, Kak led us on a walking tour of the village to see the dried-up springs replaced by an above-ground water tank warmed by the hot desert sun.

Kak Hassan asked CPT to accompany villagers seeking

just compensation, greater consideration and even employment opportunities from Dana Gas Company. He also asked CPT to investigate the ownership and operation of the United Arab Emirates-based Dana Gas Company. And he asked

us to accompany them in meetings with Kurdish officials to make known the suffering caused by the sacrifice of the community's spring water and the loss of their land.

CPT is following up with these requests for accompaniment consistent with our mantra: *Building partnerships to transform violence and oppression.*

Kormor villagers know that Water is Life!

But the villagers know they will not have refreshing spring water to quench their thirst and sustain their livelihood so long as their thirst is sacrificed to others' thirst for profits and power.

Water is Life — quenching a thirst that profits and power can never quench — a thirst that can be quenched by the Living Water that is the Just Peace of the Black Jesus. ✚

After 40 years of Mennonite Church ministry that included community, pastoral and peace ministries, Weldon Nisly currently devotes himself in "retirement" to Contemplative Just Peacebuilding and work with Christian Peacemaker Teams. He is a Benedictine Oblate. His life is devoted to the abolition of war.

Lunch With the Law

By Joyce Hollyday

Three-year-old Enrique’s favorite toy — a plastic helmet with a dark face shield, emblazoned with the word “POLICE” — was parked on his head. As he toddled up to our burly, 6-foot-8 county sheriff, with his mother Rosita watching nervously, the irony about did me in.

For three hours every Thursday, a group calling ourselves *Mujeres Unidas en Fe* (Women United in Faith) gathers at a church on the other side of the mountain from my home in western North Carolina. Ten Spanish-speaking women and an equal number of English speakers share Bible study, exchange language lessons and enjoy a potluck lunch.

At the first meeting I attended in mid-January, we crowded into the kitchen while Carmela gave us a lesson in making *mole verde*. Beatriz moved among us with a photo album from her daughter Gabriela’s *quinceañera*, the 15th-birthday celebration that is both religious ceremony and party — a very big event in Mexican culture. Laughter and animated conversation were abundant.

A week later, the mood was starkly different. The executive order calling for increased raids against undocumented persons had come from the White House, and North Carolina was among the states targeted in the crackdown. A sense of terror hung in the air.

School in our county had been canceled that day due to a flurry of snow and patches of ice on mountain roads. So several older children joined Enrique and the few infants and preschoolers who regularly bless us with their joyful and boisterous presence. The day felt like a reprieve to them; some



www.mallatts.com

had tearfully told their families that they no longer wanted to go to school, fearful that they would return home to find their parents gone.

What a terrible burden to put on children, I thought as I watched a grinning boy push giggling Enrique, with the

The word we got that day was that immigrants are welcome in our county and local law enforcement has no plans to cooperate in deporting them.

police helmet askew on his head, around the room in a toy car. That day, instead of sharing language lessons, we passed out documents labeled *Plan Familiar de Emergencia* (Family Emergency Plan) and discussed who would care for Enrique, Gabriela and their siblings and friends if their mothers get deported.

Understandably, when facing such a terrifying situation, many people choose to lie low and keep to the shadows. But the following week Rosita announced over lunch, “I think the best way to keep from being sent back is to introduce ourselves to local law enforcement — let them see our children and get to know our families.” It seemed to me audacious and brave — and very frightening for my friends.

Indeed, a few weeks later when the sheriff and nine of his deputies, the chief of police and the head of campus security at our local university showed up for an event we called “Lunch with the Law,” the fear was evident on the faces of the women. Only Enrique in his helmet stepped right up to the towering sheriff, who bent down to shake his hand. Then the handshakes continued around the room, and smiles slowly began to replace fear.

The *mujeres* had prepared an amazing feast of tamales and empanadas, rice and beans, tortillas and salad, flan and sweet *dulce de leche* caramel cake. As we ate, they found their voices. Rosita, in tears, spoke about her beloved nephew who was kidnapped and murdered by a gang in Mexico. With Enrique perched on her lap, she voiced her terror about the possibility of being torn from her children and sent back to violence and poverty.

As she spoke, I recalled my visit across the Mexican border a few years ago. I had walked down the dusty, rutted roads of Nogales among dark, dilapidated shacks without running water, where children with the distended bellies of malnutrition begged for food. I sat in a tiny home constructed entirely of worn-out car tires and heard stories about life for the workers in the *maquiladoras*, the U.S. production and assembly plants located on their side of the border. One million Mexicans are employed in more than 3,000 factories, earning on average 70 pesos per day — that’s about eight dollars and fifty cents.

They endure these oppressive and exploitive jobs because they feel that they have no choice. Many migrated to the border after NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement, went into force in 1994, opening the way for U.S. corn and other heavily subsidized staples to flood into Mexico, undercutting and destroying their livelihoods as small farmers. U.S.-based transnational corporations began taking over land that had supported families for generations, forcing more than two million Mexicans to leave their farms. One-fourth of Mexican people now lack access to basic food, and one-fifth of the children suffer from malnutrition. Increased poverty has led to the breakdown of communities and the rise of gangs, organized crime, illegal drug activity and domestic violence.

So, when we wonder why so many people are risking their lives, paying dangerous smugglers exorbitant fees, crossing deadly desert land to get here, we have to look at ourselves, at our own country and its policies. The White House proposes spending an estimated \$15 billion to build a wall on our southern border. Imagine how much better off and more secure we all would be if we took those billions and instead paid a living wage to all the workers in the *maquiladoras*, allowing them to live with dignity in their own country. Or, better yet, how about returning the land to the farmers

we’ve displaced? And while we’re at it, we might consider giving back Texas, which we stole from Mexico in 1845.

The law officials listened to the women and responded in ways that made them feel heard and safe. The word we got that day was that immigrants are welcome in our county and local law enforcement has no plans to cooperate in deporting them. The sheriff pointed out that federal money isn’t exactly pouring into our rather isolated pocket of North Carolina, and the U.S. government has little leverage here to tell him what to do. The chief of police swept his eyes around the room and declared wryly, “I can guarantee to you ladies that I’ve put more members of my wife’s family in jail than Hispanics.”

I recognize that relational dynamics with folks in power in our small, poor, rural county are somewhat different from those in typical urban centers. And we don’t know what new directives or pressure may be in store. But the fact that the meeting took place, and the open and gracious spirit that prevailed throughout it, felt near-miraculous to me. I was convicted again that, like the bold *mujeres* of my county, we all need to step across boundaries, face down our fears and open ourselves to being vessels of transformation. These audacious women remind us that we have more power than we imagine. ✦

Joyce Hollyday is an author and founding co-pastor of Circle of Mercy church in Asheville, North Carolina, where she is active with the immigrant community and the Sanctuary movement. She has been a friend of the Open Door for four decades. Her blog can be found at www.joycehollyday.com.



Becca Conrad

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Where Are Your Wounds? *continued from page 1*

nearby suffering in our midst. As if there are no poor widows getting left in the cold by Caesar's tax policies. As if there are no peacemakers beaten up on the lawns of the powerful in our country. As if there are no Christians executed simply for gathering together in Bible study. As if there are no Christians who pay a price for loving their neighbor — pay in their workplace, or in their neighborhood, or in their school. I am truly grateful for our First Amendment. The fact that we can wake up on a Sunday morning and gather together to worship our God — it's a beautiful achievement toward peace; but that's only half the effort for Christians. The world needs to see the church willing to suffer wherever Jesus is.

It's no wonder we find it so difficult to relate to a book that assumes that to be a Christian means to expect suffering for your beliefs, not when we've constructed a faith where the trials and tribulations of [Jesus] and many like him are irrelevant to our purpose. Not when we've constructed a faith to go hand in glove with our local deities. We want to be able to eat our little cracker and drink our little wine *and* bless the rich and give them the keys to our kingdoms. We want to be able to give glory and honor and praise to the peacemaking God on Sunday morning *and* go and praise the war-making gods the next day. We want to be able to hear those freeing words, "You are forgiven," on Sunday *and* preach "law and order" to vulnerable aliens and "work makes freedom" to the poor the rest of the week.⁵

Maybe the reason that we don't connect with Peter's expectation that suffering comes with being a Christian isn't so much because our nation has a First Amendment, but because the church hasn't developed enough relationships worth suffering for. We haven't risked enough of ourselves for Christ's way in the world.

South African author Alan Paton wrote a story about a principal in Soweto, where the 1976 uprising began. The principal was a gentle guy, not controversial, not one who goes to protests. "Very much like me," said Allan Boesak, the great theologian of the South African anti-apartheid movement, who reflected on Paton's book a year ago in Atlanta. The principal had many friends in the white community because he did not come to their tea parties to talk about politics. He was reasonable.⁶

But one day the whites saw him sitting on a stage at a rally. The next time they saw him, he spoke at the rally. Then he was in the front leading a march. And they said to him, "What has happened to you? We depended on you! Now you are making things worse."

He responded to them, "One day I will die and the Great Judge in heaven will ask me, 'Where are your wounds?' And I will have to say, 'I don't have any.' And when I say, 'I don't have any,' the Great Judge will say to me, 'Was there then nothing to fight for?'"

Which brings me back to Jesus Peraza. The nation asks questions: What policy is fair? What's the best way to keep us safe? What's the best way to discourage illegal immigration? What's the best way to preserve jobs for Americans? You could argue that we have decided entire elections on the basis of these several questions with more to be decided in the same way. But the Christian has to start with a different question. One that I hardly ever hear voiced by Republicans or Democrats: Who is suffering and how can I be a part of shouldering it? Who is suffering and how can I help to prevent it, alleviate it, share it? That's where we'll find God, according to the New Testament. Wherever the crosses are. Wherever the wounding is taking place. Wherever love is threatened, peace is denied and God is mocked. That's where we'll find Jesus, if we really want to be close to him. We'll know him by his wounds, and he'll want to see which ones we've taken on in his name.

The good news is that there is no shortage of opportunities to get close to those wounds. The soldiers at Walter Reed, whose injuries are a result of our too easy consent to the hell

of war. They're worth fighting for. The children of Baltimore cut sharply from the Mayor's budget only months after she committed to do the opposite. They're worth fighting for. The newest immigrants to our land; they're worth fighting for. People of color whose unemployment figures we have never owned, whose wealth inequality we have never truthfully faced, who still can't be certain that a walk on the street or a drive in the car won't be their last.⁷ They're worth fighting for. There is no shortage of opportunities to love even a fraction as deeply as Christ loved all people — getting close to their hurts, their grief, their anger and their suffering.

In the end, Boesak told a gathering of us a year ago in Atlanta, the one who will ask you about your wounds will not be me, will not be #BlackLivesMatter, will not be the women, will not be the children. It will be the one who appeared before Thomas and said, "Look at my hands and my feet and put your hand in my side."

"I pray to God," Boesak said, "we will have something to show." ✠

1. I met Jesus' brother this week at a rally against his deportation. See also <http://www.wbaltv.com/article/undocumented-baltimore-man-faces-deportation-to-honduras/9180176>.
2. I use [] to differentiate [Jesus] Peraza from the Jesus of the Bible, though the connection is as biblical as they come.
3. "Coptic Christians: Islamic State's 'Favorite Prey,'" *The New York Times*, May 26, 2017. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/26/opinion/coptic-christians-islamic-states-favorite-prey.html?_r=0.
4. "Christians in the Middle East: And Then There Were None," *The Economist*, January 2, 2016, <http://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21684795-fed-up-and-fearful-christians-are-leaving-middle-east-and-then-there-were>.
5. "Arbeit macht frei" — "Work makes freedom" — was the Nazi slogan over the entrance to several concentration camps.
6. Allan Boesak recalls the story at the NEXT Church Annual Gathering in Atlanta, 2015. I could not identify the precise story that Boesak references. Alan Paton is most well-known for his critically acclaimed novel, *Cry the Beloved Country*, published in the 1940s. He did co-write a play, *Sponono*, published just before the 1976 uprisings in Soweto. The play includes a character who is a principal. Paton, himself, served as a principal of a school prior to writing his first novel. <http://nextchurch.net/2016-national-gathering-allan-boesak-keynote/>, mark 1:30:00.
7. At the writing of this sermon, a twenty-two-year-old white student at the University of Maryland was being investigated for the murder of a twenty-three-year-old African American student at Bowie State. The murder was being investigated as a possible hate crime. The Bowie State student, Richard Wilbur Collins, III, had just been commissioned as an Army lieutenant. <http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/crime/bs-md-college-park-monday-20170522-story.html>.

Andrew Foster Connors is Senior Pastor of Brown Memorial Park Avenue Presbyterian Church in Baltimore, Maryland. This sermon was delivered there on the seventh Sunday in Easter, May 28, 2017. Andrew and his wife, Kate Foster Connors, were volunteers at the Open Door during their years as students at Columbia Theological Seminary. (andrew@browndowntown.org)

Love in Action *continued from page 1*

I also find it difficult to love some guests as I watch them slowly kill themselves with drugs or alcohol. I see the addiction eating away their lives. I learn from them how they have burned bridges with every family member and friend. I know the death that awaits them. Twelve years into this work, I know that my love will likely not end their addiction, just as the love of their family and friends did not.

I try to get some strength to love the unlovable guests by acknowledging the harsh and dreadful experiences they endure. Guests from the streets arrive at Manna House with their dignity repeatedly assaulted. They are told in words and actions that they are homeless because of their failure, their lack of faith, their lack of willpower. They are thrown out of restaurants, restrooms and other spaces. They wait in lines for ill-prepared food. They have to endure the ministry of well-meaning but misguided people who want to "save" them. They feel the lash of laws aimed against them: no panhandling (despite no jobs), no sleeping on a park bench (despite no free shelter), no public urination (despite no access to public toilets). And sometimes the disparagement comes in physical blows, as people on the streets are easy targets for bullies cruising around looking for victims.

But this understanding of the conditions of life on the streets is not enough for me to consistently love the difficult guests. The guests who are easy to love come with smiles and pleasantness despite the horrors of life on the streets. So why love the difficult guests who under the same conditions cannot manage the same sociability?

I need something beyond myself and beyond my understanding in order to love those difficult guests. So I turn to prayer. In prayer, I encounter God who knows me as difficult and yet who promises to love me despite my faults, failings and foibles. As Paul wrote, "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:38-39) In prayer, God's love informs and reforms me so that I can hope to love others as God loves me.

God's gracious love takes an enormous burden from my shoulders. I no longer have to find the resources within myself to love those I find unlovable. I can love them because God loves me, someone who is also unlovable. God does not love humanity in the abstract; God loves each one of us, including me. In Christian faith, this love is made very concrete, is made incarnate in the life of Jesus. In Jesus' life, I see God's love in all of its willingness to enter into and redeem the harsh and dreadful realities of human sin, my sin and the sin of those I find so hard to love.

In prayer, Manna House becomes a place in which I am schooled in God's love. There I am confronted by my own failures in loving. But there too, God does not give up on me, and in that Divine love I will not give up on the individual guests who teach me that "love in action is a harsh and dreadful thing." ✠

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



St. Cedd

Grace and Peaces of Mail

Thank you, Ed, for the Upbeat, Un-bent Murphy news! (See Open Door Community Facebook post June 11, 2017.) A REAL drama is playing out, comparable, Yeah, to the one “played” out on Holy Thursday and Good Friday, of many moons ago. We continue to hope-pray that, unlike, YES, unlike, Jesus “Whom God did NOT spare” that (S)he will spare our Murphy for another stint with the poor and suffering in our cities, and with you!

Today is Trinity Sunday in our Catholic Liturgical Calendar. Only in the 14th century was it put into the Liturgical Calendar, and then the next question was where to put it. The liturgists finally advised the Pope to put it as the First Sunday after Pentecost! Actually, this Mystery of the Triune God is the Source, Center and Summit of all the Events and Feasts of the Life of Jesus and the Liturgical Year.

I myself “celebrate” it every day and all through the day, especially with the many “signs of the Cross” we Catholics do before every public or private prayer. Peace and many blessings be to all those who believe and pray to our Triune God.

Tom Francis

Conyers, Georgia

Father Tom Francis is a 99-year-old monk at the Monastery of the Holy Spirit. He has been a mentor to Ed and Murphy for 33 years. Tom is a Baltimorean by birth.

Dear friends,

Thank you for the recent edition of *Hospitality*. I’m glad to hear that the move to ODC/B will soon be blessing those in Baltimore who so need such kind and giving souls as are found in the Open Door Community Catholic Worker movement.

I know that you are very busy, so I just want you to know that you are in my prayers.

John Corby

Norfolk, Massachusetts

Dear Murphy,

Some years ago, good friends sent me a birthday card which I have treasured so much. They sent it because they knew of my more than 50 years of working for racial and social justice since my life was transformed by being involved at the March on Washington with MLK and all the others.

The card contained these words: “If you asked me what I came into this world to do, I will tell you: I came to live out loud!” (Emile Zola)

As I pondered what to say to you as you continue to deal with your major surgery procedures, which are enormously difficult, it occurred to me that these words are meant for you. You came into this world to live out loud! And even now you are doing that, as you witness to Ed and all those you love, and who love you, in the large Open Door Community family.

You have witnessed for so long that God’s door is open to all people. And now you have your hand firmly on that doorknob, and continue, even in this time of great pain and questions for you to be God’s “out loud” witness.

Some years ago, my wife Sue and I were able to visit the Open Door Community on our way back from Florida. I had known of the important witness you all had been doing and was so glad to meet you and Ed and so many others. We shared a meal and a service with you. And you all have strengthened me to carry on God’s “out loud” work.

In my “retirement” I pulled many other concerned persons together to start a Dialogue on Racism in our city of Youngstown.

So dear friend, know that my prayers are with you.

Peace and Justice,

Jim Ray

United Church of Christ Pastor, Retired
Poland, Ohio

Dear Ed and Murphy,

I join with all the others who are grieving the closing of the Open Door Community in the form it has had for the past several decades. Your collective work and inspiring writings have been rich blessings to me as a reader and teacher over the years. I first heard you speak, Ed, at a conference at the Carter Center many years ago when you reminded President Carter of the contradiction between his opposition to the death penalty while signing it into law in Georgia. I was deeply impressed by your courage and forthrightness then and thereafter. Needless to say, I am happy that both of you plan to keep the spirit of the Open Door community alive in a new form. I pray God’s continuing blessing on you both and your community.

With thanks for all you have done and continue to do.

Peter Paris

Princeton Seminary Professor Emeritus
of Christian Social Ethics
Middletown, Delaware

Dear Murphy and Ed,

Just received *Hospitality*. Thank you for keeping it up. Yes, it is not common to have young people give their lives to helping the poor as it was 40 years ago. The Catholic Church has very few vocations to their convents, monasteries or seminaries in these times. There are still many holy people around us. Spouses caring 24/7 for their sick loved one for many years, parents loving their sick or mentally challenged child for decades, volunteers, people like you — these are the saints who should be presented to the common man and woman, not the founders of hospitals or schools.

Thank you,

Al Brown

Hamilton, Montana



Ade Bethune

Reclaiming Hope Through Remembering: A Memorial Pilgrimage to a Martyrdom Site

October 28, 2017 ✠ Athens, Georgia

*Enlarge the conversation on race through remembering
our martyred sisters and brothers and by creating brave spaces
where racial healing becomes possible.*

**The Beloved Community:
Commission for Dismantling Racism
for the Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta
and
The Absalom Jones Center for Racial Healing
invite you on pilgrimage.**



*The Rev. Naomi Tutu
will preach at the Holy
Eucharist service.*

The day's activities will include a Liturgy for Martyrs at the historic Chestnut Grove Baptist Church in Athens. The Rev. Naomi Tutu will preach. Following the service will be a screening of the documentary film *13th*, a tour of the Chestnut Grove School (founded in 1887) and the cemetery containing graves of slaves.

Register online:
www.episcopalatlanta.org/Dismantling_Racism/

\$10 includes lunch

Bus departs from St. Augustine's Episcopal Church in Morrow, GA at 7AM for pilgrims leaving from Atlanta. Pilgrims traveling from other locations should meet at Chestnut Grove Baptist Church (610 Epps Bridge Parkway) at 6:45AM.



Without memory, our existence would be barren and opaque, like a prison cell into which no light penetrates; like a tomb which rejects the living. If anything can, it is memory that will save humanity.

-Elie Wiesel-

