

# HOSPITALITY

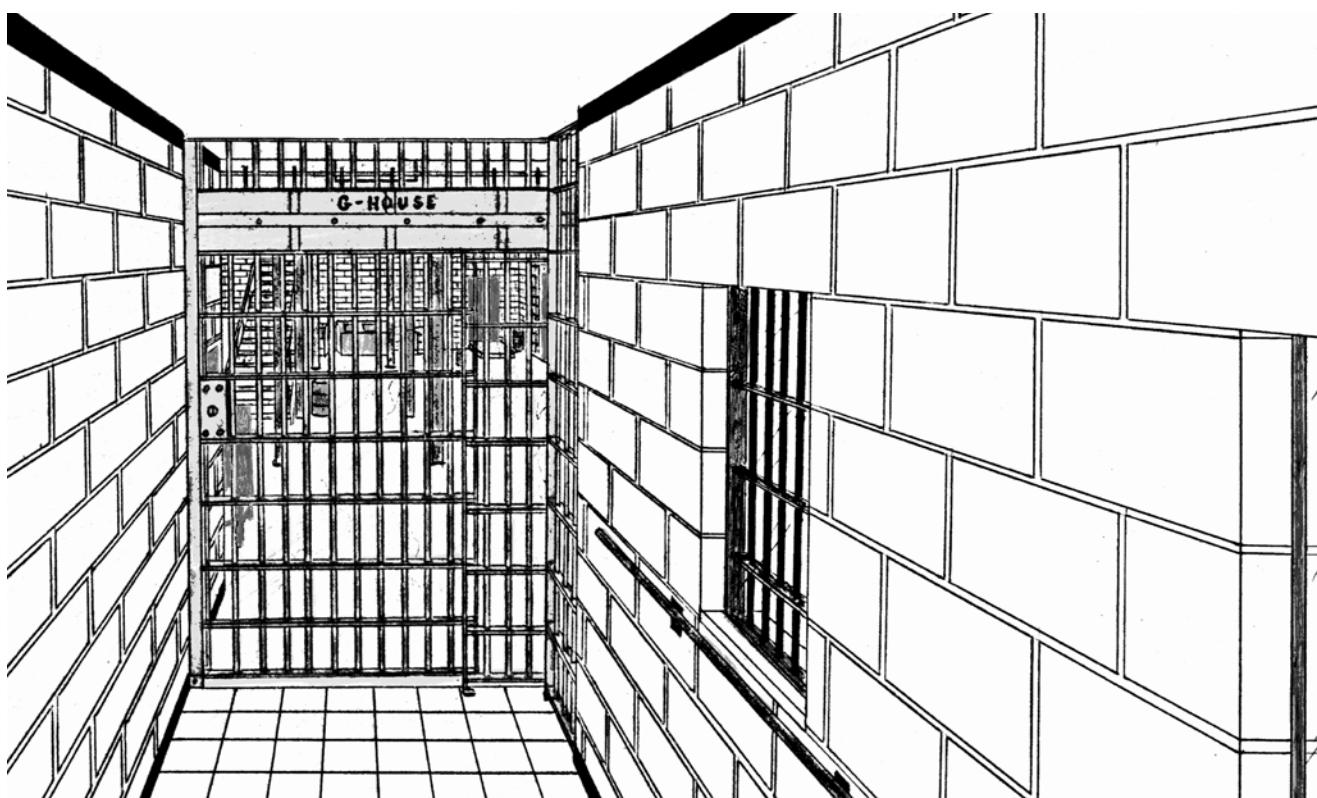
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**The Open Door Community – Hospitality & Resistance in the Catholic Worker Movement**

**Vol. 31, No. 10**

910 Ponce de Leon Ave. NE Atlanta, GA 30306-4212 404.874.9652 [www.opendoorcommunity.org](http://www.opendoorcommunity.org) **November-December 2012**



## Another Christmas in a Cage

**Beauty in the Cracks and Between the Lines**

By Murphy Davis

*"There's a crack in everything;  
That's how the light gets through."*

— Leonard Cohen

We will be preparing soon to pack up Christmas boxes to take into one of the prisons of Georgia, as we have done for more than 30 years. We would like to send something to everyone we know in prison, but this is a particular opportunity in our relationship with one prison.

Every year on the third Sunday of Advent, some of the nearly 400 boxes are stacked in the middle of our worship circle to fashion a table of sorts for our Eucharist. As always, the ordinary and the holy are mixed in our midst. It is hard to say which of these objects — cups, plate, Eucharist cloth, boxes — are ordinary and which are holy. And of course the answer is yes. Yes, all of it. Yes, all of it.

The Eucharist table is always, as they say of Scotland's Isle of Iona, "a thin place" — a place where there is only the thinnest width between the holy and the everyday "stuff" of life.

What is this? An ordinary loaf of bread, probably a day too late to sell, so it was given to us to serve to the poor, and it is the Bread of Life, broken for us. What is this? Plain old grape juice from the shelf at our neighborhood grocery store, but it is the blood of our brother Jesus, made holy by his courage in the face of torture and death which is never the last word, made holy because it will be shared in love and

hope, made holy because when we taste it we struggle again and again to appropriate the courage of the Liberator to stand up against the forces of death, violence and oppression. And what is this? A wooden circular form, with candles from the health food store: three are red for the blood of the martyrs, the green one is for the earth our mother and for Mary, and the black one in the center is the color of the people, all colors together, and Jesus who is born the Human One, one of the people. The evergreens are from Dayspring Farm, red holly berries from the shrubs in our front yard. All the parts work together to form the Advent wreath, with which we mark the sacred time of Advent and the coming of the Light of the World which is the Light of Life.

And what are these boxes? Cardboard and packing tape: boxes filled with navy stocking caps, white socks, a white towel, cookies, candy, nuts, writing tablets. Simple gifts. Ah, but they are gifts given in love! They are transformed into a holy thing: a thing of beauty!

They are small acts of kindness and compassion. They are gestures of solidarity. They represent our solidarity with those who must spend Christmas in a cage.

In 2003 I requested a short writing from Jack Alderman. I asked him to reflect on "Christmas in a cage" after his more than 30 years on death row. We published it and it was read, shared and re-published again and again. In 2008, the lethal needle took Jack from us. But his words live on, and so we

**Another Christmas** *continued on page 8*

## It's Time to End the Death Penalty

By Jimmy Carter

For many reasons, it is time for Georgia and other states to abolish the death penalty. A recent poll showed that 61 percent of Americans would choose a punishment other than the death penalty for murder.

Also, just 1 percent of police chiefs think that expanding the death penalty would reduce violent crime. This change in public opinion is steadily restricting capital punishment, both in state legislatures and in the federal courts.

As Georgia's chief executive, I competed with other governors to reduce our prison populations. We classified all new inmates to prepare them for a productive time in prison, followed by carefully monitored early-release and work-release programs. We recruited volunteers from service clubs who acted as probation officers and "adopted" one prospective parolee for whom they found a job when parole was granted. At that time, in the 1970s, only one in every 1,000 Americans was in prison.

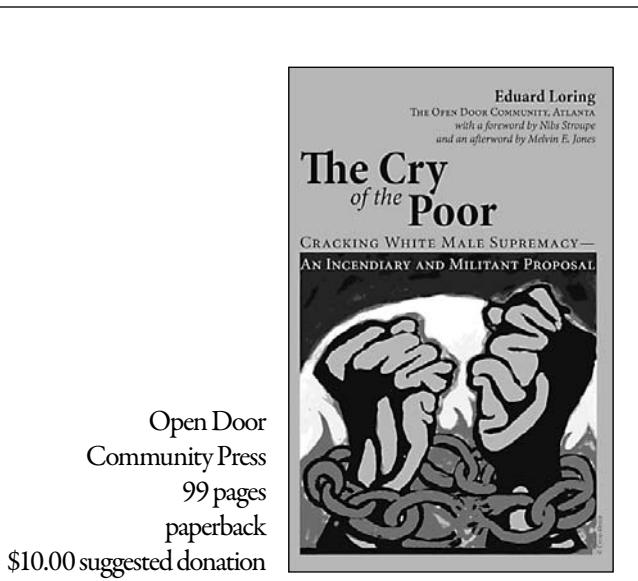
**Southern states carry out more than 80 percent of the executions but have a higher murder rate than any other region.**

Our nation's focus is now on punishment, not rehabilitation. Although violent crimes have not increased, the United States has the highest incarceration rate in the world, with more than 7.43 per 1,000 adults imprisoned at the end of 2010. Our country is almost alone in our fascination with the death penalty. Ninety percent of all executions are carried out in China, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United States.

One argument for the death penalty is that it is a strong deterrent to murder and other violent crimes. In fact, evidence shows just the opposite. The homicide rate is at least five times greater in the United States than in any Western European country, all without the death penalty.

Southern states carry out more than 80 percent of the executions but have a higher murder rate than any other region. Texas has by far the most executions, but its homicide rate is twice that of Wisconsin, the first state to abolish the death penalty. Look at similar adjacent states: There are more capital crimes in South Dakota, Connecticut and Virginia (with death sentences) than neighboring North Dakota, Massachusetts and West Virginia (without death sentences). Furthermore, there has never been any evidence that the death

**It's Time** *continued on page 9*



## The Cry of the Poor

Cracking White Male Supremacy —  
An Incendiary and Militant Proposal

By Eduard Loring

*I read "The Cry of the Poor" and was deeply impressed by Ed Loring's truly prophetic voice. The U.S. may need a new revolution of freedom!*

— Jürgen Moltmann,  
Professor Emeritus of Systematic Theology,  
University of Tübingen, Germany

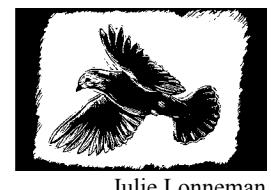
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## poetry corner



## If I Forget Thee, O Birmingham

Like Florence from your mountain  
Both cast your poets out  
For speaking plain

You bowl your bombs down aisles  
Where black folk kneel to pray  
For your blacker souls

Dog-torn children bled  
A, B, O, as you  
Christ's blood not more red

Burning my house to keep them out  
You sowed wind: hear it blow!  
Soon, you reap....

One day we will sleep  
Braver and beloved  
In our souls to keep  
Angry angels reaping  
One day we will sleep

— John Beecher, 1963

*John Beecher (January 22, 1904-May 11, 1980) was an activist poet, writer and journalist who wrote about the Southern United States during the Great Depression and the American Civil Rights Movement.*

*Hospitality welcomes poems from people in Georgia prisons or living on the streets in Georgia. Send submissions to Eduard Loring, Open Door Community, 910 Ponce de Leon Ave. N.E., Atlanta, GA 30306-4212 or by email to [hospitalitypoetrycorner@gmail.com](mailto:hospitalitypoetrycorner@gmail.com).*

# HOSPITALITY

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

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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Diane Wiggins

*Murphy Davis invites you to the Welcome Table at the Open Door Community.*

## Newspaper

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**John McRae:** Food Coordinator

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**Sarah Humphrey:** Coordinator for Administration, Volunteers, Hardwick Prison Trip and Resident Volunteer Applications

**Murphy Davis:** Southern Prison Ministry

# Following the Undocumented God and the Refugee Christ

Book review by Heather Bargeron

In June, I was elated when President Obama issued a directive granting temporary deportation relief to an estimated 1.4 million undocumented immigrant youth. It was a bold step in the movement toward justice for the immigrant community in our country, after Republicans in Congress had prevented the DREAM Act legislation from passing for over a decade. The president's directive gives these "dreamers," brought to the United States often as very young children, a chance to stay here without the constant fear of being deported to their "home country," which in their experience is not their home at all.

Just a short two months later, the Obama administration made a much less publicized decision that these same young people would not be eligible for health insurance coverage under the new Affordable Care Act. The White House ruled in August that these young immigrants are specifically excluded from the law's definition of "lawfully present," thereby denying them access to government subsidies to buy private insurance, a major piece of the law. Apparently these young people, whom Obama in June called "Americans ... in every single way but one: on paper," were not American enough in August to deserve affordable health care.

To be sure, these contradictory policies are evidence of the president's playing both sides of the political fence on immigration, especially as the election approached. But I

**The book reminds us that the biblical tradition presents some startling characteristics of God as related to immigrants. God often shows up in the Hebrew Scriptures as a stranger (or strangers) seeking hospitality and shelter.**

think they also reflect the dominant cultural attitude toward immigrants. Immigrants are not American enough. They are not full members of our society or our communities. Essentially, they are not full human beings deserving the same hospitality, rights and privileges that we deserve. These claims arise from deep-seated nationalism and ethnic segregation that shape the North American identity.

In "Our God Is Undocumented: Biblical Faith and Immigrant Justice," Ched Myers and Matthew Colwell challenge Christians to claim a different identity — as followers of the refugee Jesus and as citizens of the kin-dom of God, which wreaks havoc on notions of nativism and ethnic boundaries. This identity manifests itself in the practice of prophetic hospitality and the construction of a church whose boundaries are built on ethical behavior, not walls or documentation.

Myers' and Colwell's aim is explicitly theological and ecclesial. They do not attempt to explain or advocate a particular immigration policy. Rather, they are concerned with the biblical and discipleship resources for a faithful response to the "sojourner" in our midst. Myers and Colwell contribute alternate chapters of biblical reflection and portraits of contemporary faith practitioners for immigrant justice. This integrated approach illustrates how Bible study and discipleship practice interpret each other, and how both instruct us in our spiritual and political formation.

The book reminds us that the biblical tradition presents some startling characteristics of God as related to immigrants. God often shows up in the Hebrew Scriptures as a stranger (or strangers) seeking hospitality and shelter. One of the first and most well-known stories of God's appearance is to Sarah and Abraham in the guise of "three guests" (Genesis 18:1-8), an encounter that leads to the promise of a child and the beginning of the liberation story of an entire people.

Going further, the book asserts that the God of the Hebrew Scriptures is consistently stateless, or *undocumented*. Unlike the patron gods of surrounding empires, who reside in the temples of kings, the God of Exodus appears in the wilderness and doesn't even have a name, much less papers. When Moses asks what to call this God who pops up in a burning bush outside the borders of the Egyptian empire, the response is "YHWH" or "I will be who I will be" (Exodus 3:14). YHWH then calls the Hebrews to flee and wander as refugees in the desert, with no legal status or claim to national identity.

The New Testament continues this tradition, beginning with Mary, Joseph and the infant Jesus fleeing to a foreign land to escape the violence of the imperial powers of their day. "Our God Is Undocumented" also points out that the

adult Jesus not only characterizes himself as homeless ("the Human One has nowhere to lay his head," Luke 9:58), but stateless. "My kingdom is not of this world," he tells Pilate when questioned on whether he is the king of the Jews (John 18:36). The Gospel writers portray Jesus as a constant dependent, even intruder, on the hospitality of others. Likewise, he instructs his disciples to conduct their mission as vulnerable migrants, relying on the generosity of strangers for their survival (Mark 6:8-11).

But Jesus calls not only for radical hospitality, but resistance to all forces of exclusion that pretend to protect the community. He and his disciples regularly violated the purity codes central to Pharisaic Jewish practice in first-century Palestine. Sharing table fellowship with the poor and non-Jews, he exposed those social rites for what they were: false boundaries that validated social inequality and protected the religious and political elite.

Myers calls this Jesus' most radical and yet most widely ignored teaching. It rejects all external boundaries as incapable of protecting the integrity of one's community. Social practices and policies that exclude the racial or class "other" do not make our communities safer. Only our own ethical behavior can do that (see Mark 7:1-23). As Myers notes, this was as radical a proposition for first-century Jews as it is for modern North Americans. Imagine redefining U.S. citizenship by one's commitment to the struggle for civil rights instead of one's legal documentation!

Colwell's rendering of the testimonies of several contemporary disciples offers concrete hope for living out our identity as followers of this radically inclusive God.

Some are stories of immigrants themselves, such as Moises Escalante, who came to the United States from El Salvador in the 1970s. He was once consumed with the

## Our God Is Undocumented Biblical Faith and Immigrant Justice

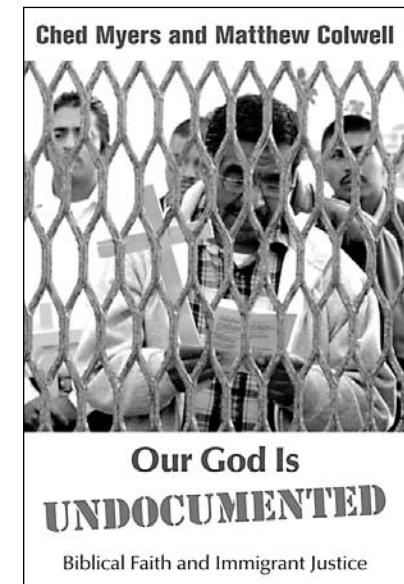
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personal struggle to find work and support his family, but his eyes were opened to the political violence taking place in his home country in the 1980s. Thus he began a new journey, hosting refugees from Central America as part of the Sanctuary movement and later as an advocate for immigrant rights.

Others stories are of North Americans, such as Delle McCormick, called out of the numbness of a privileged life into solidarity with the poor and immigrants. Delle became a colleague and friend of mine at a center for social-justice education in Cuernavaca, Mexico, the place where she had begun her exposure to the realities of poverty and violence in Mexico a decade before. She continues her discipleship in Tucson, Arizona, working for humane border policies and calling others out of the heart of empire to meet Jesus among the immigrant poor.

For those who have eyes to see and ears to hear, "Our God Is Undocumented" both inspires and convicts. Through shrewd biblical analysis and truth-filled testimony, Myers and Colwell invite us to reflect critically on the biblical story and our own story of exclusion and inclusion, hostility and hospitality, domination and justice. In this era, every community and every church is on the borderland. There is simply nowhere in the United States today where the cry of the immigrant poor cannot be heard. If we seek to embrace our identity as followers of a radically inclusive, undocumented God, this book should be our first resource for study and practice.

*Heather Bargeron is a graduate of Emory University's Candler School of Theology and a former Resident Volunteer and Resident Scholar at the Open Door Community.*

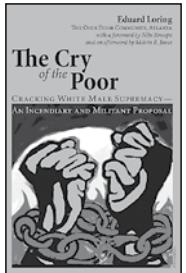
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we need blankets!

Thank You!

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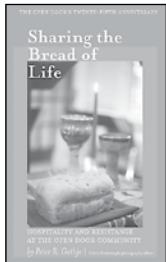
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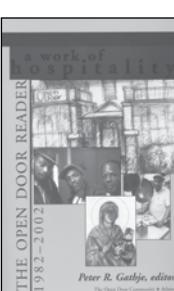
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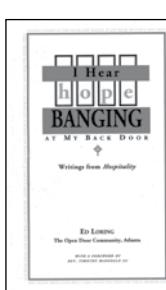
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# Moving Toward Abolition Must We Also Torture Those We Plan to Kill?

By Mary Catherine Johnson

The death penalty is something I think about every day. I read as much about it as I can, and ponder and act on ways to bring about its demise as soon as possible. What began as an opposition to capital punishment in theory has, for me, become a highly personal issue as I have come to know, through the Open Door Community, some stories of the people impacted by this most brutal and devastating of practices.

One story that has been weighing heavily on my heart is that of Raymond Burgess, #395895 on Georgia's death row. On Saturday, September 15, Raymond had just finished a visit with his dear friend Carolyn when his head started to hurt and he began to vomit. Two other prisoners in the visitation area called out for assistance and were told by a guard that they were understaffed that day: Raymond would have to wait to receive medical attention.

As Raymond's pain escalated, he lay down on the cold, dirty floor of the visitation area, and his friends pleaded with the nearest guard to get help. When medical staff finally arrived at the door, they refused to enter until Raymond was handcuffed. The other prisoners had to lift his semi-conscious body so his hands could be cuffed through the opening in the

**A death sentence explicitly states the date of death for an inmate, but it also implicitly states that the prisoner's body and soul will be subjected to various degrees of torture and degradation until that date arrives.**

door. Once the medical team was in the room, they yelled at Raymond to get up onto the stretcher. Unable to do this, he had to be lifted onto the stretcher by the other two prisoners. By the next day, Raymond Burgess was dead.

When Raymond was sentenced to death in 1992, was such inhuman and degrading treatment intended to be part of his punishment as he awaited his execution date? Perhaps not explicitly, but we know that from the moment he was arrested for murder, he became part of the U.S. prison-industrial complex, whose first priority is the concentration of power and privilege, not the well-being or rehabilitation of those entrusted to its care. A death sentence explicitly states the date of death for a prisoner, but it also implicitly states that the prisoner's body and soul will be subjected to various degrees of torture and degradation until that date arrives.

The dismal reality is that Raymond's story is not unique. How many other prisoners have met an untimely death because medical attention was delayed? How many are dying a slow death without access to proper medical care, medications or even a healthy diet? The men on Georgia's death row report that they are frequently served rotten beans that, if eaten, cause severe gastrointestinal problems. Does a death sentence mean that they are not entitled to decent meals?

Does a death sentence mean that brothers and sisters must endure cells that reach over 100 degrees in the summer and have insufficient heat in the winter? That they must be locked down for 23 hours a day? Does it mean that, when the telephone system in any given cell block is broken, they must wait one or two weeks, and sometimes longer, for phone contact with the outside world to be restored? Does a death sentence mean that, if you have a friend or family member who is unable to climb stairs, they can't visit because the prison's only elevator to the visitation area has been out of service for months? Does it mean that the inmate has no real voice in the face of abuse or misconduct, and will be forced to pay a fee

to file a grievance? If you have no money to pay that fee, does your grievance go unacknowledged?

The answer to all these questions is a resounding "yes!" on Georgia's death row, and no doubt on death rows across the country. As isolated incidents, these examples may seem insignificant, but taken as an aggregate over the lifetime of any given prisoner on death row, they become human rights violations of the highest proportions. It's bad enough that our society tolerates death sentences, which are the ultimate, irreversible denial of human rights, but we also tolerate the way those on death row are treated on a daily basis. We live in a society that does not like to think about prisons, and those who do so without compassion typically rationalize that whatever treatment prisoners receive is deserved, even warranted: they brought this on themselves.

If Dostoevsky is correct that the measure of a society's civilization can be determined by its prisons, then our society is mired in the darkest of ages. What can be done about the myriad of ways we denigrate the bodies and spirits of the men and women on death row?

We must storm the prison gates to stand as witnesses to all that occurs inside. We must flood the prison mailrooms with our messages of love and support. We must place our

bodies where they are most visible to stand in opposition to the death penalty. We must cast our votes for those who will uphold the rights and dignity of all human beings. We must insist that prison guards be trained to know the difference between a human being in need and a dangerous situation.

We must remember Raymond Burgess's story, and do everything in our power to ensure that it never happens again. If there's a silver lining to his death, it's that he did not die by execution at the hands of the state of Georgia, and that he, along with everyone who loved him, did not have to endure an agonizing death watch. But even as we take some comfort in this silver lining, we must vehemently reject the unnecessary circumstances in which Raymond died. We must wake up to the realization that the very essence of the current prison system in the United States is death, every day.

*This column is dedicated to Raymond Burgess and everyone who loved him. For a beautiful tribute to Raymond by his friend Bill Moon, see page 7. ♦*

*"Moving Toward Abolition" is a monthly column that tracks the fight to end capital punishment. Mary Catherine Johnson is on the Boards of Directors of Georgians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty ([www.gfadp.org](http://www.gfadp.org)) and of New Hope House and is a volunteer at the Open Door Community. She can be emailed at [mcjohnson78@yahoo.com](mailto:mcjohnson78@yahoo.com).*



Erwartung (Expectation)



# Our Holy Bowls

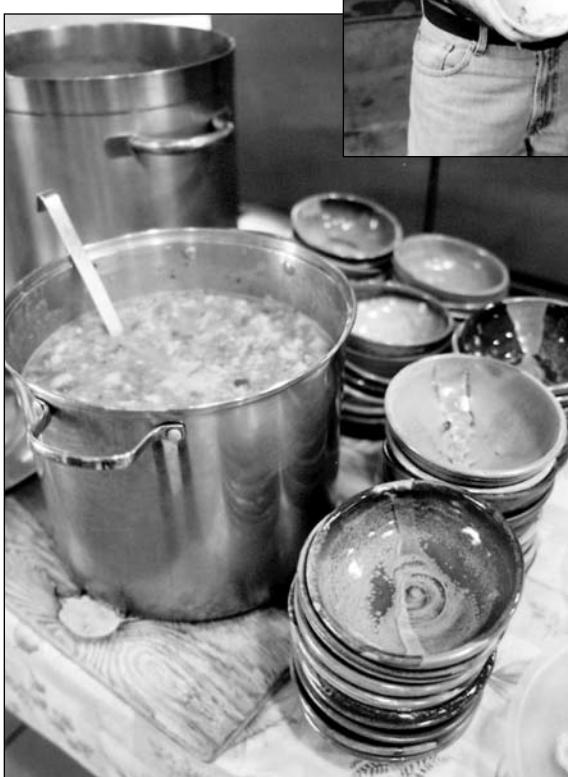
By Murphy Davis

Stanley Vishnewski, one of the early New York Catholic Workers, is often quoted as saying, “*Nothing* is too good for the poor.”

It’s a helpful place to start, especially because we see that some “charity” is just passing along to the poor whatever food, clothing or other items are no longer useful to people with money. It has been a helpful discipline for us always to eat the same food we serve to our homeless and hungry friends. What is left of the soup and sandwiches we serve this morning will stay on the table for our lunch as we gather with volunteers for prayer and discussion. And we try not to ever serve on disposable plates or with plastic spoons, forks and knives. (We do make exceptions when we serve 500 folks for our holiday picnics.)

But some months back, Ed Loring and Nelia Kimbrough agreed that our white soup bowls were just, well, *boring*. Nothing pretty about them. Institutional looking — bowls you could eat from at the Waffle House. A plan emerged.

Bruce Bishop, recidivist Resident Volunteer and member of our extended community, has gone through four years of hideous and debilitating pain from a neurological disorder — never specifically diagnosed, much to the frustration of his many doctors and especially to Bruce and his family. (See Bruce’s article “The Suffering God” in our May 2008 issue, available on our Web site.) The good news is that the pain has for the most part receded and Bruce is working at the potter’s wheel again.



Photographs by Calvin Kimbrough



Bruce and Suzy Bishop offer you a bowl for your lunch.

The long and short of it is, we commissioned Bruce to handcraft 120 pottery soup bowls, and he has done it. On September 15, Bruce and his mother Suzy, who at 93 is still working on the potter’s wheel, drove from their home in Goshen, Indiana, to Atlanta to deliver this precious cargo. We all oohed and ahhed as the boxes were opened and the bowls unpacked from the layers of paper that protected them for travel. Each bowl is different, and together they make a rainbow of blues, browns, greens and almost purples. They were washed and stacked on the shelf, ready for action. Truth be told, we were all eying them and thinking how we’d love to have one or two in our own rooms. But no — these beautiful bowls, each one a real piece of art, are for our guests.

As our guests came into our dining room the next day, Bruce handed each of them one of the bowls. Exclamations and appreciation rang out. One of our guests proclaimed with pride, “Why, even in the finest restaurants in Atlanta, you’re not served on handmade pottery!”

It was a joyful day. They are holy bowls because they hold the soup that is served to the Holy One who comes to us in the presence of the poor and the stranger.

The joy continues. Please come share a bowl of soup with us. It will be served to you in the most beautiful bowls in town. ♣

*Murphy Davis is a Partner at the Open Door Community.*

**Stanley Vishnewski, one of the early New York Catholic Workers, is often quoted as saying, “*Nothing* is too good for the poor.”**

# The (De)conversion of Saul

By Nathan Dorris

Conversion stories are powerful things, not only for people of faith but for all those who live through stories — that is to say, all of us. They evince the possibility of change; they validate belief systems and reinforce philosophical and faith commitments. They provide a sense of comfort that one is on the right path, security that one has chosen the correct way of life. Most well-known conversion stories are religious in nature, but not all; they can also be ideological.

Perhaps the best-known conversion story, especially in a culture such as ours, so profoundly shaped by the Judeo-Christian narrative, is that of Saul of Tarsus, who became St. Paul. The story is told multiple times throughout the New Testament (twice in the Book of Acts alone) and has been the subject of numerous works of art over the centuries, from paintings to choral pieces. For all intents and purposes, the conversion of Saul stands as the paradigmatic conversion story for many. Yet for every conversion story there is an equal and opposite deconversion story,

and perhaps Saul’s ought to agitate us a bit more than has traditionally been allowed.

St. Paul is loved by many, and despised by a probably comparable number. Many who know me well know of my somewhat idiosyncratic affection for him, so let me paint a picture of what I see going on in the conversion of Saul.

To begin, I note that Saul was a profoundly religious man, a “Pharisee of

Jew. Saul’s was a religion based on violence, power and state support. But after his conversion, those three things were radically altered in his view.

Before conversion, he was a man committed to exclusion, with no qualms about using violence or the law (either Roman or Jewish) to throw Christians into prison or murder them (cf. Acts 7). After conversion, he became a champion of peace, urging

**This man, who had previously relied on the law and state-backed power to imprison and murder, began traveling around setting up subversive communities against the very Empire upon which he had once relied.**

Pharisees.” Devout and sincere, he tirelessly persecuted what he perceived to be a harmful sect that had broken off from Judaism. According to the ninth chapter of Acts, where Saul’s conversion story is first recorded, he was a man “breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord.” Actively pursuing and imprisoning them, he was doing what he believed to be his God-given duty as a Pharisee and devout

his brothers and sisters to “bless those who persecute you” and “not repay anyone evil for evil,” forsaking both the physical and emotional violence of exclusion for the radical call of Christ to inclusion and peacemaking. This man, who had previously relied on the law (in all its forms) and state-backed power to imprison and murder, began traveling around setting up subversive communities against the very Empire upon which he had once relied.

His understanding of power was entirely overthrown by and subsumed into the cross of Christ and a renunciation of the world’s power. *For we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles.*

Some of those working within the “New Perspective” on Paul, especially what is considered the “radical” New Perspective, hold that Saul, in fact, never left Judaism but

remained a Torah-observant Jew. Even if this is untrue, the most important thing that the New Perspective has provided is a serious engagement with Saul’s Judaism. It is essential to acknowledge that this is the framework from which he operates. In a very real sense, the conversion of Saul was *not* a religious conversion but an ideological one.

**(De)conversion** *continued on page 10*

# When the Saints Go Marching In



foolforchrist.com

## Sarah Melici, 1928-2012

By Murphy Davis

We had heard about Sarah Melici's one-woman play "Fool for Christ: The Story of Dorothy Day," about the co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement, for some years before we finally got to meet Sarah in 2005. After meeting Sarah through our friends Willa Bickham and Brendan Walsh at Viva House in Baltimore, we knew we must bring "Fool for Christ" to Atlanta. She came and she performed the play at Oakhurst Presbyterian Church. Sarah had a long career on the stage, but she found her greatest calling when she wrote and began to perform this play about the life of Dorothy Day.

It was wonderful, and she performed it all over the country for churches, Catholic Worker houses and in theaters. But we fell in love with Sarah herself. She spent several days with us at the Open Door, and at one point she exclaimed, "Oh my, this is a happy house! Maybe I'll stay!"

For the past seven years, she had stayed in close touch by letters and phone as she continued to travel with the play. She struggled with seven different cancers over the years, and the most recent onslaught ended her travels. We give thanks that before her last tour was done, she was able to have "Fool for Christ" filmed. It will continue to be a resource for us as we teach and learn about Dorothy.

About a year ago, Ed and I were able to visit Sarah at her home in Red Bank, New Jersey. We were not surprised to find her space filled with art — including many of her own paintings — and beauty. She was beginning her final struggle with lung cancer, and we talked all day

about the most important things in life.

Thank you, Sarah, for "being" Dorothy Day to so many. Thank you for your passionate zest for life. ♦

*Murphy Davis is a Partner at the Open Door Community.*

## Al Winn, 1921-2012

By Murphy Davis

Al Winn died in July at his home in North Carolina. He was one of the most thoughtful and courageous Presbyterian ministers I have ever known. He held many positions of honor in his lifetime — Moderator of the Presbyterian Church, President of Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, and he probably had a suitcase full of awards and honors — but he was a pastor and prophet with a heart of humble compassion.

I had heard of the Rev. Dr. Albert Curry Winn and his wife Grace when I was growing up, because my parents greatly admired them. Al stepped out as few white clergy did to join the civil rights movement and taught for many years at Stillman College, a historically Black college.

I got to know Al myself during the Vietnam War. At a Presbyterian General Assembly, he made a fiery, passionate speech against the war. He caught hell for it, but he stood his ground, and he prayed, fasted, preached and worked for the rest of his life for a just peace and an end to war.

We were very blessed to have Al and Grace in Atlanta for a number of years when he was Pastor of North Decatur Presbyterian Church. They were wonderful friends and generous supporters of the Open Door Community through thick and thin. As they grew older, they moved to Winston-Salem, North Carolina, to be closer to their daughter. Grace died there several years after their move.

One Christmas in the mid-1980s, we marched to Atlanta City Hall to protest Central Atlanta Progress' proposed "vagrant-free zone." Mayor Andy Young had greeted the proposal with support until public outcry made them change the name of the proposal to the "sanitized zone," and it went on from there. It was a bitterly cold afternoon, but Al marched with us. When we got to the City Hall steps and several people had spoken, Al leapt up onto the steps and shouted, "If we are Christian people, then our leader is a vagrant!" Thus the phrase "the Vagrant Christ" was born.

It was one of many considerable gifts that Al Winn gave to us, to the prisoner and to the homeless poor. Wise elder, teacher, leader, radical peacemaker, friend of the poor, friend to all. Deo Gratias. ♦



Calvin Kimbrough

*April 1, 2006: Eduard Loring, Al Winn and Murphy Davis at an anti-war march in Atlanta.*



## Mary Pace, 1937-2012

By Gladys Rustay

A family gathering was planned for Mary Pace's 75th birthday. It was to be a surprise, but it was not to be. A few weeks before, she stopped breathing and was resuscitated while being rushed to the hospital. The next day she was found on her bed brain dead. One member of the family was missing when they gathered for her funeral: her son Lyndon, who is on death row.

I was privileged to pick Mary up to go to Jackson to visit her son in prison when I would visit Exzavious Gibson and later Dallas Holiday there. Mary was always full of stories.

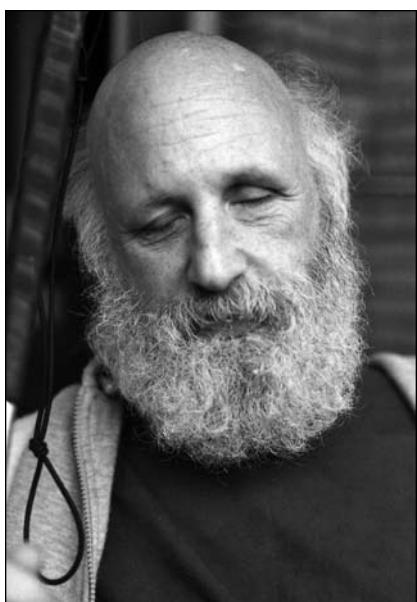
The one I liked best was about going to her cleaning job in a corporate office at 8:30 p.m., when she would find folks still at their desks. They were working late to try to ensure that their jobs wouldn't be cut. Mary would find many aspirin wrappers in their wastebaskets. She commiserated with them and tried to counsel them. She also would collect stamps from other countries from their wastebaskets and give them to the Open Door for our "Stamp Out Hunger" project.

Once she told about having to go to the restroom while on her way to visit relatives by bus years ago. The only restroom was for whites, but she went into it without incident in Atlanta, and it happened again at the bus station in Anniston, Alabama. She knew she was challenging the status quo but did it anyway. What a gutsy woman.

During the years when Mary visited her son in prison, she began to need the elevator to take her up to the visitors' floor. Then she got to the point where she needed an oxygen tank with her on the visits. All this slowed her down a bit, but only a bit. I understand that, the last time a trip was made, the guards asked where she was.

She will be missed by all. ♦

*Gladys Rustay is a Partner at the Open Door Community.*



Calvin Kimbrough

## Adam Shapiro, 1953-2012

By Murphy Davis

None of us can remember exactly how long Adam Shapiro was with us. He just showed up one day, not long after he had moved into the Briarcliff Summit building down the street. He heard that there were some political progressives down the street, so he came.

The Briarcliff is home to many who are poor and disabled — perhaps the only remaining Section 8 housing in our neighborhood. Housing for the poor, the mentally ill, the blind, the halt and the lame has largely disappeared from this would-be-gentrified neighborhood. Adam did his part to help keep the space open and to speak out and speak up for those who were, like himself, generally excluded. It was in his apartment at the Briarcliff that Adam died in September.

Adam was Jewish and he was blind. Born prematurely, he was incubated with pure oxygen, as was done in those days, and it blinded him. He walked with a folding white cane and went wherever he wanted to go, determined not to let a little problem like blindness prevent him from living life to the full.

He learned early to record with his memory what he could not see with his eyes. He “read” in many ways: Braille, talking books, radio.

Ah yes, radio. Adam was a fixture at WRFG (“Radio Free Georgia”), at 89.3 FM, Atlanta’s community radio station. He started with the station in the early 1980s, creating a progressive program he called “Capped but Able.” He made connections first among various segments of the local disability community; then he made connections between the disabled and other elements of the progressive community, especially those involved in struggles supporting the poor and homeless and those working for large-scale social change to move our society beyond capitalism.

That program was succeeded in the 1990s by “Current Events,” where Adam interviewed local progressive activists and took on-air phone calls from listeners. He usually began by declaring that “Current Events” was a program where “we talk about the news of the day from a progressive point of view,” and he usually signed off with a string of three pronouncements that composed the show’s mantra: “Freedom is a constant struggle. The hour is getting late. Speak up while you still can.”

Adam was a dedicated member of Atlanta Democratic Socialists and was active all over town at progressive events and meetings. He often carried a tape recorder and would record events and interviews. One year he attended the annual protest at the School of the Americas at Fort Benning with us, and Dick Rustay thought he was going to “help” Adam get around for his interviews. But he quickly lost Adam, who wasted no time finding his way through the thousands of people to get his interviews.

Tony, a former member of our community, remembers “helping” Adam cross the five lanes of busy Ponce de Leon Avenue one day. A car pulled far up into the pedestrian crosswalk. Tony said, “Adam, I’m going to steer you around this car that pulled into the crosswalk.” Adam replied, “Don’t worry about it; I’ll handle it.” To Tony’s amazement, Adam flung himself onto the hood of the car. The driver nearly jumped out of his skin, thinking he had hit a blind pedestrian. Adam picked himself up and walked on, muttering matter-of-factly, “I bet he won’t do that again.”

But we remember Adam best with his guitar and at our supper table. He loved to play his guitar and sing, especially labor songs. And he loved to eat, especially to eat *with others*. Eating alone in his apartment held little appeal. So he was often at our dining table talking, and especially looking for conversations about progressive political theory and praxis.

He often worshipped and sang with us — what a delight to have his Jewish presence! — and he never missed our annual Seder meal. He eagerly took part in reciting some of the questions, and at the end of the celebration every year he would proclaim, “I’m Jewish, all right, but this is my *favorite* Seder.”

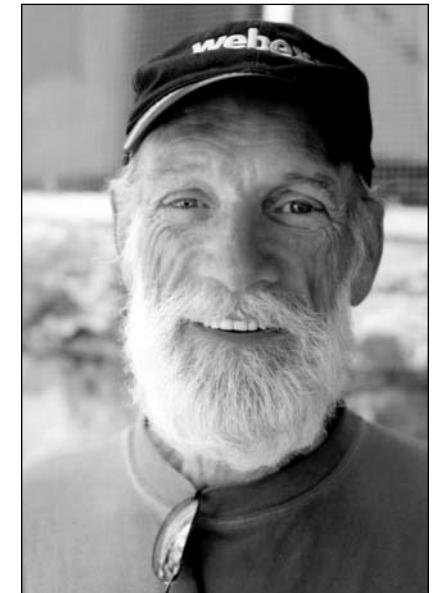
We miss Adam terribly. On September 20 at his synagogue, Bet Haverim, we gathered with a diverse crowd of at least 200 people for his memorial service, organized by his family to include the many communities of which he was a part.

Shalom, dear brother, Shalom. ♦

(Thanks to the remembrances of Adam by WRFG radio and Atlanta Progressive News, from which some of this information came.)

## James “Harvey” Schaechtel, 1951-2012

By Murphy Davis



James Schaechtel was known on the streets as Harvey, and that is what most of us called him. To say that he was a character would stretch the meaning of the word. He was with us for many years and died in October after a long battle with various illnesses.

He was remembered in a gathering of friends at St. John’s Lutheran Church by folks from the Open Door Community and Mercy Church.

“Wow,” said Terry back home after the service, “I hope people have that many good things to say about *me* when I die!”

Harvey lived on the streets or in marginal housing for many years. But Nelia Kimbrough remembers that every time you asked him how he was doing, he replied, “I’m blessed.”

Perhaps the happiest we ever saw Harvey was during November and December. He loved to come in and help Dick Rustay roast turkeys for our holiday meals. He would don an apron, sharpen the knives, and cook and carve for days on end.

There will be a hole in the kitchen and at the table this holiday season, and we will miss the stories and “tall tales” that Harvey was always anxious to tell. From all his labors, may he be at rest. ♦



## Raymond Burgess, 1958-2012

By Bill Moon



Calvin Kimbrough

For eight years my wife Mary and I were friends of Raymond Burgess, a death row inmate in Georgia. We exchanged many letters, talked frequently on the phone and were able to visit at the prison on several occasions. On Saturday, September 15, Raymond suffered a massive cerebral stroke, and he died at the Atlanta Medical Center the next day. [See also “Moving Toward Abolition,” page 4.]

Raymond was a man who, like so many others on death row, had no real support or guidance as a child and teenager. Without a high school education and with little or no legitimate means to make a living, he, like so many others, fell in with a crowd and followed a code of asocial behavior, which led finally to two murders during holdups and a felony murder conviction and death sentence more than 20 years ago.

The Raymond we knew was gentle and solicitous. In the face of his daunting circumstances, he was humble and repentant. He would often say, “I just try to stay clean, stay out of trouble, do the right thing. I leave others alone, even though sometimes they insult me and try to get me to fight.”

Raymond had a very low IQ, below 70, and because the U.S. Supreme Court has pronounced that mentally retarded people cannot be put to death, his lawyers, especially Gretchen Stork, were appealing for clemency after the 11th Circuit Court turned down his last appeal.

Perhaps the state would have executed him in early 2013, but our friend Raymond jilted the state and rebuked those longing that he “suffer for his crimes.” We pray for Raymond and we pray with him for mercy on us all, all of us sinners who nevertheless struggle “to stay clean, to do the right thing.”

Kyrie Eleison, Christe Eleison, Kyrie Eleison. ♦

## Another Christmas in a Cage: Beauty in the Cracks and Between the Lines *continued from page 1*

offer them again. And we have asked several other friends, all of whom have been imprisoned for many years, to reflect on the same subject. We are glad to share these reflections with you.

During November and December, we remind ourselves often that the holidays are probably the most miserable time of the year for our sisters and brothers and children in prison. Loneliness grasps the heart, and the absence of warmth of friendship is particularly sharp and at times devastating. Even "out here in minimum security" (as our friend Billy Mitchell always said), the holidays are the time when more people commit suicide than any other. The cultural assumption that we are all merry, merry, merry is too much for many, in prison and out. It is a complex and confusing time of the year.

And yet what strikes us is the courage that those who have written for us show us in finding the truth of these days in the midst of the madness. To welcome the light that comes through the cracks and know it as one recognizes the flickering flame of a small candle in a very dark night.

The powerful forces of darkness would impose despair on everyone: the despair and numbness of an endless appetite for consumer items, the despair of abandonment, the despair of a meaningless existence. It all spells death and oppression, and when we celebrate the light there is victory. But beware! Those who refuse to succumb to despair, those who celebrate a deep and authentic joy, become suspect. They are not so easily controlled; they sometimes ask questions; and they do not make good consumers. True in prison and out.

Please pray for those who must endure another Christmas in a cage. May all of us see the light that comes through the cracks in mangers, mansions, "cat holes" and cell blocks. And may we all know the coming of the Liberator as a season of deep joy.

*Murphy Davis is a Partner at the Open Door Community.*

### Christmas Under the Shadow

**By Marcus Wellons**

Despite modern-day commercialization, Christmas remains a very special joyous season. Hearts are tenderized. Charity and volunteerism increase. Unfortunately, the downside for many is loneliness and despair. Not to mention the spike in suicide rates.

My first Christmas here on death row was 1993. I was amazed by the spirit and the way guys embraced and celebrated the season. We had contact visits and three to six hours daily of runaround — out-of-cell time. Family and friends could send a 30 pound Christmas box. We had supplies for crocheting so that we could give gifts. Picture 30 guys going from cell to cell sharing goodies every day. Old grudges were buried under food and fellowship. The embodiment of the Christmas spirit of love, peace, joy and

generosity permeated the air.

Now fast-forward to the present. Little by little, all those privileges were arbitrarily stripped away, causing a tremendously painful paradigm shift for us and our loved ones. To no longer hear my mother's loving voice ask, "Son, did you like your box I sent?" Robbing her of all the personal care, love and pride put into it was difficult for both of us to accept.

Now we must order our boxes from one centralized, super-expensive, state-approved vendor in Missouri, if our families can afford it. This severely hampers the warm flame of sharing, but even this does not totally extinguish it.

Fighting off the onslaught of feelings of oppression and depression is a constant battle. Nevertheless, even in our dungeon-like world, a cold, dark place of concrete, steel, gray bars and fences where we are locked down 23 hours of every day, there are moments of happiness and belly-aching laughter. There is a discordant cacophony of guys talking — yelling from one end of the cell block to the other, or two neighbors

concerning his son John the Baptist and the coming of our unborn Messiah, our reason for the season, and offers a word of hope for every soul that lives under the dark shadow of this world: "Through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the day spring [rising sun] will come to us from heaven, to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet in the path of peace." Shalom! Namaste!

Merry Christmas to all and a blessed 2013!

### Christmas in Spite of Prison

**By Janice Buttrum**

I have been in prison since 1981. I have experienced more Christmas seasons in prison than I ever knew outside. And until the age of 17, when I went to prison, Christmas was never what I would call a "good" time. In spite of prison, I would say that Christmas for me is still about the birth of Christ.

All of us in the women's prisons look forward to our food packages. We get

**In many ways, the atmosphere in prison is closer to the original than the traditional one is. I wonder about that manger — crowded spaces, confused faces, dimly lit, poorly heated.**

might be conversing. All this helps to deal with a harsh reality.

But the sporadic joy inevitably gives way to sadness. Loneliness. Christmas songs sometimes evoke nostalgia: missing family and friends, thinking about our miserable condition. When it gets thick here, there sometimes is a deathly silence, reminiscent, I regret to say, of an execution night. Then comes a rumbling in the tomb: the Resurrection.

The sweet, smiling, angelic faces from HeartBound Ministries, passing out glad tidings of "Merry Christmas, God loves you" and handing out bags of Christmas goodies. Later we go to the gate with our pillowcases to receive our gift box from the Open Door Community, filled with everything we need. Revival! Resurrection! Once again the place is brimming with joy, life and the activity of guys swapping this item for that one. Eating, laughing, sharing, telling lies — it brings me back! Then comes the vendor package. Many thanks to both of these caring ministries and the volunteers and donors who make these benevolent acts possible. God bless you all.

Some guys here don't celebrate Christmas. For others, it's just another same ol', same ol' challenging day. Regardless, the experience of having plenty to eat, needs met and someone who cares sure makes the holidays happy and provides a temporary reprieve from a perennial dark shadow. I like to read all my cards, listen to carols, scan all the faces in the Open Door's annual group photo and breathe in the love and thank God for each of you and await my visit with lovely friend Mary Catherine.

In Luke 1:78-79, Zacharias prophesied

together on Christmas Day with our friends to eat lunch. Sometimes the whole hall or dorm eats together.

My favorite Christmas memory is Christmas of 1981. It was my first Christmas in prison. On December 21, the officer came to my door and opened the flap and handed me three zip-lock bags filled with all sorts of "girly" things. I asked where they came from. She said, "Ms. Hatcher," on the staff of the prison, "makes sure that every female inmate gets a Christmas gift."

I fell to my knees and cried out to God and gave thanks for the mercy of showing me love even on death row. That's where my walk with God started.

Another memorable time was Christmas 1985. My attorney, George Kendall, and Patsy Morris of the American Civil Liberties Union sent me a package and there was no "package slip" in it. A package slip, with prior approval from the counselor or warden, is required for us to receive the contents of a package.

George came to see me and told me they had sent the package. I told him I wouldn't be able to receive it, because the mail room would follow the rules and wouldn't let me have it. He went to the warden's office.

Lo and behold, on Christmas Eve I was taken to the mail room. There was no one but me, my escort and one mail room officer. I was told very grudgingly, "The warden says to give you every item in this box unless it's a security issue."

I got a Christmas stocking, but not the jingle bell that was attached to it. I got everything in the package except that bell! And

I decorated my cell with that stocking every year until 1992, when it was taken from me.

So Christmas in prison for me is still about celebrating. I refuse to let this place steal my love of Christmas. It's all about saying thank you to God for sending Jesus to earth: Jesus, who grew up and chose to lay down His life for all of us.

### Not Just Another Day After All

**By Jack Alderman**

The halls are never decked with boughs of holly. Colorful carols do not fill the air. There are no ornamented trees or decorative lights. Beyond the concertina wire, behind the concrete, beneath the steel, there is feigned indifference. Christmas is just another day.

Maybe the attitude is a desperate act of self-preservation. Maybe the mindset lessens the heartache — as if denial diminishes sadness and pain.

Whatever it is, it is not just another day. Despite the efforts of Ebenezer Scrooge and the antics of the Grinch, Christmas survives.



Chad Hyatt

In many ways, the atmosphere in prison is closer to the original than the traditional one is. I wonder about that manger — crowded spaces, confused faces, dimly lit, poorly heated. It could have been called inhumane were it not constructed for animals. It was difficult and demanding, yet the presence of God's Chosen One ensured it a holy and sacred occasion.

On death row, the past and the future, both precious commodities, collide in an unreachable unknown, while the present looms, too often dark and foreboding. Amazingly, in this circumstance, grace abounds.

Cultural practices and religious customs struggle to find a footing here. Prison regulations and physical restrictions contribute to the frustration. We can receive little and give even less, so the convention of gifting is challenged. Praise and worship must be structured to the prison's convenience, testing the mettle of sincerity.

The emphasis ultimately focuses on that which is truly central to the holiday: faith, hope and love. The beauty transcends the

**It's Time** *continued from page 1*

miles, penetrates the barriers and touches our spirits. Peace and joy are blessings gloriously wrapped with care and compassion. Our importance is celebrated.

Prison is intended to be a miserable place, and its architects have succeeded, but there have also been instances of failure. When Christmas is not just another day, we, the caged, triumph. It may be a small victory, but the rewards improve the present and ensure eternity.

Pray for those of us with a need. And do not be afraid to express your love; it strengthens our faith and deepens our hope.

Thank you.

**The Meaning of Christmas Is Love**

By Tony Amadeo

‘Tis the season of good cheer. Songs fill the airwaves wishing everyone “a merry little Christmas.” Feelings of mirth and glad tidings abound. At least this is the atmosphere experienced by those in free society. God’s love and joy are shared by all.

Yet our nation has over two million souls confined in the dark world of prison. For most so confined, Christmas is the low point of a dark spiritual tunnel. There are no fragrant trees of evergreen. No decorating activities shared with the ornaments of joy, then wrapped with the light of laughter. No shining tinsel of love sprinkled liberally and strung from limbs of glee. No gaily wrapped gifts. No peals of joy. No hugs and kisses from family and friends.

For those of us who live in a concrete cage, the Christmas season is a time of soul-wrenching sadness. We recriminate ourselves over bad decisions and tragic mistakes. Our days are filled with thoughts of failed dreams and lost hope. Our nights we lie awake questioning ourselves, questioning life and questioning God.

Because of harsh sentencing laws passed by politicians seeking votes, we will have many Christmases to experience alone. In the beginning of a lifelong sentence of living hell, we are filled with self-pity and questions of “why me?” As the years pass into decades and decades roll by in a blur of pain, our thoughts turn from ourselves outward toward a deeper meaning of life, others and what God intended by this sacred season.

The core message of Christmas is love. We do not last very long on this earth. I don’t know whether that is good or bad. But I can tell you that a person who is not loved is dead.

But what is love? We learn of love’s existence very early, but where and how do we learn to give it? God’s gift of love to humankind is the eternal peace promised and given by God’s Son. This strengthens us if we can comprehend it. People who know how to love are able to conquer anything they desire. Life without love given to another is failure. Somehow love given to another emancipates us from self-destructive hatred.

It takes extraordinary courage to reach out to others. It is gestures of compassion and love that provide the joy that makes life precious: a thought, a simple word of kindness, a small helpful deed. This is the epitome of Christmas. Showing love to others provides us with immeasurable joy.

Tricky things, love and joy — massive, subtle and tenuous all at once. But it is this love and joy that make Christmas possible.

Holidays like Christmas remind us of how much is missing from our lives. From the shattered pieces of our lives we try to assemble some sense of normalcy, of acceptance. It is finding the part of our tragedy that can be a blessing. A blessing that can be given away to another. It is enduring the entire prison experience to its dregs and then turning your loss into a rebirth — into Christmas. ♦

penalty reduces capital crimes or that crimes increased when executions stopped. Tragic mistakes are prevalent. At this writing, DNA testing and other factors have caused 138 death sentences to be reversed since I left the governor’s office.

The cost for prosecuting executed criminals is astronomical. Since 1973, California has spent roughly \$4 billion in capital cases leading to only 13 executions, amounting to about \$307 million each.

Some devout Christians are among the most fervent advocates of the death penalty, contradicting Jesus Christ and misinterpreting Holy Scriptures and numerous examples of mercy. We remember God’s forgiveness of Cain, who killed Abel, and the adulterer King David, who had Bathsheba’s husband killed. Jesus forgave an adulterous woman sentenced to be stoned to death and explained away the “eye for an eye” Scripture.

There is a stark difference between Protestant and Catholic believers. Many Protestant leaders are in the forefront of demanding ultimate punishment. Official Catholic policy condemns the death penalty.

Perhaps the strongest argument against the death penalty is extreme bias against the poor, minorities or those with diminished mental capacity. Although homicide victims are six times more likely to be black than white, 77 percent of death penalty cases involve white victims. Also, it is hard to imagine a rich white person going to the death chamber after being defended by expensive lawyers. This demonstrates a higher value placed on the lives of white Americans.

It is clear that there are overwhelming ethical, financial and religious reasons to abolish the death penalty. ♦

*Jimmy Carter was the 76th governor of Georgia and the 39th president of the United States and is the founder of the Carter Center, located just a few blocks from the Open Door. As governor, Mr. Carter sponsored and signed the Georgia death penalty law in 1973. We celebrate his transformation and courage in opposing further use of the death penalty. This essay was originally published by the Associated Baptist Press and is reprinted with permission.*



Rita Corbin

Shall all wanderers over the earth, all homeless ones,  
All against whom doors are shut and words spoken —  
Shall these find the earth less strange tonight?  
Shall they hear news, a whisper on the night wind?  
“A Child is born.” “The meek shall inherit the earth.”

— Carl Sandburg

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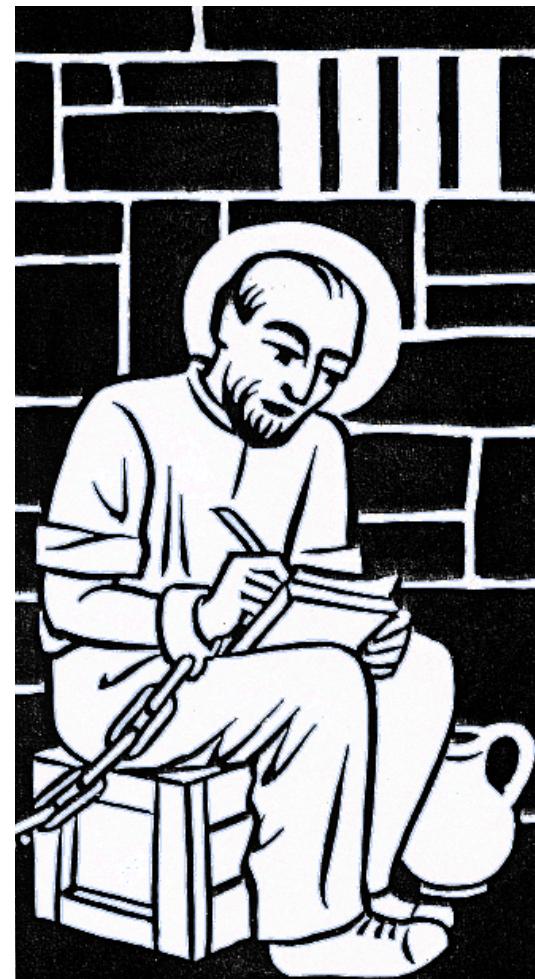
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**The (De)conversion of Saul** *continued from page 5*

Saul remains firmly within his Jewish framework. He continues to worship in the temple, he frequents synagogue, and he reasons with his fellow Jews from a common canon. While it is certainly true that, after his conversion, he engages in creative reinterpretation of his faith tradition, there can be no question that either he or *any* of the early Christians saw themselves as anything other than in line with Jewish hopes and prophecy. This is made abundantly clear in his defense before Felix in Acts 24. In his conversion, Saul has his world upended, and he reinterprets his entire faith system *through the lens of that experience*. And this sets him at odds with the majority of those who claim that very same faith tradition.

After his conversion, Paul, as he is thereafter referred to in the biblical text, continues to enter into synagogues. He reasons and argues with his fellow Jews about the importance of this Jesus he has encountered. He is frequently cast out by his own because of his



Saint Paul

Ade Bethune

to side with the crucified, the one denounced by both the religious and political communities for treason and blasphemy. To side with inclusion, to embrace. To renounce my political and class privilege in order to become more fully human, in solidarity with those who are consistently the victims of oppression and discrimination by the religious and cultural elites.

This conversion has been difficult, and the deconversion from religious fundamentalism equally so. I am in opposition to the ways I have previously approached the Other, and this bears itself out in familial relationships, among others. I am not considered a Christian any longer by many. I'm too "liberal." I read the Bible "dishonestly, only seeking to justify my own and others' sinful lifestyles." Yet I remain a Christian, and I follow this Christ whom Saul met on the road to Damascus.

And what was so special about that encounter on the road? What exactly took place there? In

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allegiance to the Way. "How could this Saul, who was such a good defender of the Jewish way of life, turn to the other side?" "How could he possibly find himself in agreement with that ridiculous sect of disciples?" "Doesn't he know that they read the Scriptures dishonestly, only interested in proving their own points and justifying their sinful lifestyle?" "Those aren't *real* Jews." Paul is ridiculed and cast out by those in his own fellowship. On several occasions there are plots to kill him.

The power and privilege he once wielded are now being used against him as he identifies with a ragtag bunch of radicals who follow a state criminal, a group made up largely of the poor, women and former slaves — those without the resources of wealth and class at their disposal. The world always looks different from below, and Paul's renunciation of his former ways, his conversion, brings him into direct conflict with and opposition to those ways. They lead him to a critique of the driving forces behind such exclusion and violence that is, at times, quite brilliant. Saul's conversion leads him to a worldview-shattering inclusiveness — one might even say *universalism* — through which he reinterprets his entire life and faith.

One of the reasons this story is so powerful to me is that it is, in some ways, my own story. I was never as physically violent as Saul, nor am I now as politically or hermeneutically savvy and subversive, but I have done my fair share of violence through out-grouping, exclusion and verbal offense. But I have undergone my own conversion.

I have seen the Christ in the faces of those whom I previously sought to distance myself from. I have heard the anguish in the voices of those who are denied their humanity and are discriminated against from day to day. No longer could I see their faces or hear their voices and continue to tell myself that the appropriate response was to maintain my place of privilege at whatever cost. I choose, like Saul and others before me,

his book "Saved From Sacrifice," S. Mark Heim articulates it thus:

Paul meets Jesus, and the means by which Jesus is revealed to him are through Jesus' identity with the persecuted victim. This is the answer as to who Jesus is. The divine voice raises only one issue with Paul: violence. Paul will go on to confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and his own letters will develop many dimensions of theology. But the simple, original substance of Saul's conversion is his change from orchestrating violent animosity against a minority to joining in community with those who were his victims. This is hardly a minor point. For Paul, to accept Jesus is to be converted from scapegoating persecution to identify with those against whom he had practiced it. This pivot point is so important to the writer of Acts that it appears three times, once as a narrative and twice as part of Paul's testimony offered when he himself is on trial for his life. On all three occasions, the divine words to Paul — "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting" — are the centerpiece. ♦

*Nathan Dorris is a Resident Volunteer at the Open Door Community.*



Anna Hogan

# Grace and Peaces of Mail

Eduard,

I have mailed over 20 copies of "The Cry of the Poor" and shared them with [many friends] — professors, pastors, free thinkers and other folks who love justice and peace. I want to give them an opportunity to support the Open Door.

Recently I asked for 10 additional copies, and now I need 10 more, which will be a total of 20 more. The message in that book needs to be read and heard all across this land. In fact, I think the book should be required reading in every seminary classroom.

Some years ago I heard the Pastor of First Methodist Church in Houston, Texas, say in the morning worship service, "There are some people who profess to be Christians, and they stand before the world saying, 'I love God, I love my family, and the rest of you can go to hell.'" Those are words of condemnation upon the average person who sits in the pews on Sunday mornings. I thought he was a very bold minister to make that statement in that rich folks' church.

From 1970 to 1977 I lived in Lowndes County, Alabama, and pastored Benton Baptist Church, where I learned how to really be a Christian. I saw and heard things that were opposite to Christianity and said that, if that was being Christian, then I am not a Christian. I met racism squarely in the face, and it helped me change a lot.

Jonathan Daniels was an Episcopal seminarian from New Hampshire who was killed in Alabama in 1965 for his work in the civil rights movement. I asked a Baptist deacon if Lowndes County was where Daniels died, and he replied, "Yes it is, and he should have been killed for coming in here trying to change us. He should have stayed home minding his own business." WOW.

As you know, Lowndes County is known as "Bloody Lowndes," and there is even a book with that title. The folks in the book are people I knew and know.

You remember the journalist Edward R. Murrow, who was at CBS for decades. Before America entered World War II he interviewed Hitler, and he wanted to know where Hitler got his ideas for genocide. Hitler told Murrow that he learned it from the Americans when we killed the Indians to steal their land. Murrow asked Hitler where he got his hatred for the Jews, and he replied, "I will tell you where I got it," reached into his desk drawer and took out a book of editorials and columns written by Henry Ford in the *Dearborn Independent* newspaper, which Ford owned, and the book was nothing but hatred of Jews. Edward R. Murrow got a first-class education in American history that day.

Will D. Campbell once asked a Ku Klux Klansman in Tennessee, "Tell me how you say you believe in Christianity, freedom, justice and equality while going around shooting into folks' houses, burning churches and hating Black people, Jews and Catholics." The proud fellow replied, "Will, I was in the Vietnam War, and we were fighting for liberty, justice, peace, democracy and the Christian way of life. We blew up houses, burned down temples and killed people left and right, and Will, that is the American way. I was paid to do that in Vietnam, and I'm proud of it."

Will learned that the KKK is no different from America itself.

Take care.

Wendell Franklin Wentz  
Rockwall, Texas



Dear, dear ones,

Because of you, four, not two or three, were "gathered together" today, not explicitly "under a name," but "where love is, God is." It was probably not a typical Open Door-initiated call, but I thank you profusely for this wonderful day.

Some time ago you published a note I wrote in appreciation of you and your work, and as a result a college classmate of yore, Sally Sheffield Palmer, who had worked in your soup kitchen and now lives in Portland, set out to locate me and via a long, roundabout search did so. What an amazement to hear from this dear person of the past. (We went to see JFK when he spoke in Nashville, and I think were the only two in our house who voted for him.)

As a result of your connecting us, a reunion breakfast at always-loving Kathy's home was held this morning, also including Mary Ann, returned to Atlanta this week from California, sharing the news of her progressing to the book of Luke in translating the New Testament from Greek while her retired M.D. husband is preparing to enter seminary at Berkeley this fall. Delightful dancing granddaughters and other kin were met. You would have loved the music shared later at Sally's sister's, where her fiddle, Sally's mandolin, Joe's guitar, Edwin's banjo and my autoharp rang out "The Ash Grove." (A line in one version: "The friends of my childhood again are before me / Each step wakes a memory as freely I roam.")

You all are fantastic professors — and enactors — ever grateful to your Source, the Friend opening the gate to green pastures, giving time to rest.

Murphy, your adaptation of the 23rd Psalm is beautiful.

Love and appreciation to you and all yours,

Judy Collins  
Freedonia, Alabama

Dear Open Door,

I have a copy of "The Cry of the Poor" but would like to give another to Liz Maxwell (Interim, St. Michael's Episcopal Church, New York City). She read "A Leading Black Pastor Speaks Out on Gay Marriage," by the Rev. Otis Moss, in the July *Hospitality*, and I think she'd like "Cry of the Poor." By the way, that article is now on our parish bulletin board.

Blessings on Murphy — I pray each week at our informal Eucharist (6 p.m.) service for her full recovery.

In Christ,

Charlotte Patton  
New York, New York

I read "The Cry of the Poor" and liked it very much. It's quite powerful. I'm planning to pass it on to a friend at church, who is currently leading our Adult Forum, to see if she would be interested in using it as a discussion topic.

Our church has recently bought an old house in a poor, primarily black neighborhood, and we are trying to become more involved with the community. Church members have been remodeling the house and have hired neighborhood residents who were out of work to help.

The county's homeless shelter is a block from our church, and within a few blocks are a Catholic church and six black churches. We have talked with neighborhood churches about working together in efforts to help the residents and have also talked with the shelter coordinator about mutual efforts. Small steps, but we hope to make an impact for the better.

Elbert Hill  
Denison, Texas

*Elbert Hill is a member of Red River Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Denison and Professor of English Emeritus at Southeastern Oklahoma State University.*

It is easy to despair of the ways in which the gospel gets wrapped around the flag, reflected in a "Jesus Saves" slogan and confined to a "sheltered piety," and then becomes incarnated in a community that God has long since abandoned. But resurrections occur through the Open Door Community and remind us where God is at home. And provide a lens through which to name "breakthrough of God" elsewhere.

Peace and Power,

David Woodyard  
Professor of Religion  
Denison University  
Granville, Ohio

Thank you so much, Open Door Community! I was so moved by Murphy Davis' "Keep Your Eyes on the Prize," about the Koinonia Community, in the September *Hospitality*. Thank you for printing it, and thank you for your continuing mission.

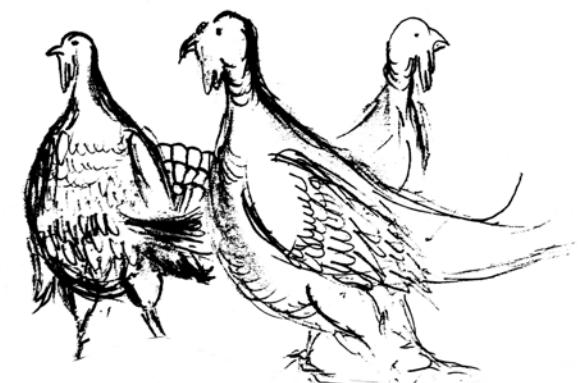
Please know that you are a beacon of light and inspiration to many people out there, including many like me whom you may not know you are reaching. "The arc of the universe is long but it bends toward justice," in large part because of individual efforts like yours to push us toward God. Thanks again.

Sincerely,

Jay Myers  
Atlanta, Georgia

## Turkeys & Hams

The Open Door Community needs turkeys and hams to serve for our holiday meals for our friends from the streets!



Leo McGuire

**turkeys for our Thanksgiving Meal**

**Friday, November 25**

**Christmas Meal**

**Monday, December 26**

**Turkeys already cooked and sliced are most helpful.**

**hams for our New Year's Day Meal**

contact **Sarah Humphrey** at  
**opendoorcomm@bellsouth.net**  
**or 770.246.7618**

# Open Door Community Ministries

**Soup Kitchen:** Tuesday and Wednesday, 11 a.m. – 12 noon

**Men's Showers:** Tuesday, 10:45 a.m.

**Trusted Friends Showers & Lunch:** Thursday, 10 a.m.

**Women's Showers:** Wednesday, 3:00 p.m.

**Harriet Tubman Free Women's Clinic:**

Tuesday, 7 p.m.

**Harriet Tubman Medical and Foot Care Clinics:**

Wednesday, 7 p.m.

**Mail Check:** Tuesday – Wednesday, during Soup Kitchen

Monday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, 1 p.m.

**Use of Phone:** Tuesday – Thursday, during services

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

**Prison Ministry:** Monthly trip to prisons in Hardwick, Georgia, in partnership with First Presbyterian Church of Milledgeville; monthly Jackson (Death Row) Trip; pastoral visits in various jails and prisons.

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

**We gratefully accept donations at these times.**

**Sunday:** 9 a.m. until 3 p.m.

**Monday:** 8:30 a.m. until 8:30 p.m.

**Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday:** 8:30 until 9:30 a.m. and 2 until 8:30 p.m.

**Friday and Saturday:** We are closed. We are not able to offer hospitality or accept donations on these days.

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

## Join Us for Worship!

We gather for worship and Eucharist at 4 p.m. each Sunday, followed by supper together.

If you are considering bringing a group please contact us at 770.246.7628.

Please visit [www.opendoorcommunity.org](http://www.opendoorcommunity.org) or call us for the most up-to-date worship schedule.

December 2 4 p.m. Advent Worship at 910 Eucharistic Service

December 9 No Worship at 910 Advent Retreat at Dayspring Farm

December 16 4 p.m. Advent Worship at 910 Visioning Christmas in a Cage Murphy Davis & Eduard Loring leading

December 23 4 p.m. Advent Worship at 910 Service of Lessons & Carols Nelia & Calvin Kimbrough leading

December 24 6 p.m. Christmas Eve Eucharist & Supper Monday (please call ahead if you would like to join us)

December 30 No Worship at 910

January 6 4 p.m. Worship at 910 Eucharistic Service

January 13 4 p.m. Worship at 910 Eucharistic Service

January 20 4 p.m. Worship at 910 Eucharistic Service

January 27 No Worship at 910 Winter Retreat at Dayspring Farm

## Clarification Meetings at the Open Door

We meet for clarification on selected Tuesday evenings.



Daniel Nichols

**Tuesday, November 27, 5:30 pm**

"The Cross and the Lynching Tree" by James Cone

**Tuesday, January 8, 5:30 pm**

"Native Guard" by Natasha Trethewey

For more information email  
Mary Catherine Johnson  
at [mcjohnson78@yahoo.com](mailto:mcjohnson78@yahoo.com).

## Medical Needs List

### Harriet Tubman Medical Clinic

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

### Foot Care Clinic

Epsom salts  
anti-bacterial soap  
shoe inserts  
corn removal pads  
exfoliation cream (e.g., apricot scrub)  
pumice stones  
foot spa  
cuticle clippers  
latex gloves  
nail files (large)  
toenail clippers (large)  
medicated foot powder  
antifungal cream (Tolfanate)

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



Rita Corbin

## Needs of the Community



**Pill containers:** Your generosity has supplied us with enough pill containers for the next several months. We ask that you **NOT** send any more until we again request them. **Thank You!**

**Living Needs**  
 jeans (30-34 waist)  
 work shirts  
 short & long sleeve shirts with collars  
 belts (34" & up)  
 men's underwear  
 women's underwear  
 socks  
 reading glasses  
 walking shoes (especially sizes 11-15)  
 T-shirts especially XL through 5XL  
 baseball caps  
 trash bags (30 gallon, .85 mil)

**Personal Needs**  
 shampoo (all sizes)  
 lotion (all sizes)  
 toothpaste (all sizes)  
 lip balm  
 soap (all sizes)  
 disposable razors  
  
**Food Needs**  
 fresh fruits & vegetables  
 turkeys/chickens  
 hams  
 sandwiches: meat with cheese on whole wheat bread

**Special Needs**  
 backpacks  
 MARTA cards  
 blankets  
 postage stamps  
 single box springs and mattress  
 a scale for our medical clinic  
 sweaters, jackets and winter coats  
 gloves, scarves, hats, and socks  
 prayers for housing for all homeless people