

FREE

HOSPITALITY

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Atlanta, Georgia
Permit No. 1264

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

Vol. 34, No. 7

910 Ponce de Leon Ave. NE Atlanta, GA 30306-4212 404.874.9652 www.opendoorcommunity.org

September 2015

Black Lives Matter

This Is an Emergency

By Murphy Davis

More than a year has passed now since young Michael Brown was shot down in the streets of his own neighborhood by a white police officer in Ferguson, Missouri. Police killings of citizens occur approximately every 28 hours in the U.S., but the killing of this particular unarmed young Black man was a turning point. The streets of Ferguson exploded with angry citizens, determined to seek justice for Michael Brown and for their community. Other towns and cities joined in. New voices have emerged every day in the streets and courageous young Black people are taking risks to interrupt business as usual with the message that Black Lives Matter.

I would venture to guess that most Americans who are not among the white supremacists can agree — black, brown and white — that Black lives matter even though most would hasten (like Martin O'Malley) to add, "All lives matter." This qualification shows the lack of understanding of what the activists are saying. Black lives are at risk every single day

Black lives have been cheap from the time the first chained black feet walked off of ships onto the shores of Virginia.

in the United States of America. Black mothers and fathers tremble with fear when their young ones leave home to play or go to school. Will they return alive? Can they walk from here to there in safety? The stress of daily life is incomprehensible to those who grow up believing that "the policeman is my friend." The young Black leaders are not asking to be heard; they are demanding to be heard; and there is rage in this demand. It is long past time, and their patience is thin. We of the white power structure have had opportunities again and again. We will ignore them this time at our own peril and at the peril of our still-waiting-to-be-born democracy.

Black lives have been cheap from the time the first chained black feet walked off of ships onto the shores of Virginia. They came as commodities, for sale as laborers. Slavery was soon racialized, and thenceforth black skin was equated with servitude. When chattel slavery was abolished, white supremacy found other ways to accomplish its evil. The short years of Reconstruction meant the vote for Black men and forward movement for former slaves with the protection of federal troops. But when the "Redemptionist" white Southerners had their way, the protection disappeared. The Klan enforced terror in the Black community; the vote was snatched away,

Black Lives Matter continued on page 7



Ann Borden/Emory University

Jürgen Moltmann, Kelly Gissendaner and Jenny McBride at Lee Arrendale State Prison in October 2011.

My Kelly Gissendaner Story

By Jürgen Moltmann

Jürgen Moltmann has been for more than 55 years one of the world's leading Protestant theologians. In June, he spoke on Karl Barth's understanding of Predestination at a conference at Princeton Theological Seminary in New Jersey. Conference participants had heard of Professor Moltmann's friendship with Kelly Gissendaner on Georgia's death row, and they asked him to speak about that as well. He did and he sent a copy of his remarks to us. We are happy to share this story with you, our readers.

I learned to know Kelly Gissendaner by chance or providence, which is very much the same. In 2005, I gave a lecture in Charlottesville and met Jenny McBride in Charles Marsh's Bonhoeffer House. She had written an excellent dissertation on Bonhoeffer and was asking my advice about what to do after years of academic life. My advice was: Go to the Open Door Community in Atlanta and work with jobless and homeless people and with the prison ministry of Murphy Davis. After a year she was engaged in the "Theology Studies Program in Prison" and taught Bonhoeffer and Moltmann in a women's prison. There she met Kelly Gissendaner, who had been on death row for many years for the murder of her husband. Kelly wrote a paper on Bonhoeffer that Jenny sent to me; I found it astonishingly good. Then Kelly asked if she could write to me and I received her first letter. With this, a theological correspondence emerged. Up to now there are at least 30 letters and cards on theological and personal questions, but none on confessions. The prison chaplain hears her confessions, and I admire Kelly's strength of faith in Christ with such a stone of guilt on her shoulders. My desire is to

build her up as a theologian and pastoral caretaker for her fellow prisoners. She has developed from a bitter and self-centered human being to a mentor and a mother figure for the other prisoners who have breakdowns and ideas of suicide. "Momma Kelly," she is called in prison.

In October 2011, I was invited to speak at the graduation ceremony in the Arrendale Women's Prison for those who had completed the Theological Certificate program. I saw an American prison from the inside for the first time: No inhuman signs, but no human signs either. The Voices of Hope choir of prisoners sang, and then Kelly spoke through tears about what theology meant to her. I gave a speech about the church in prison, and remembered my own three years as a prisoner of war behind barbed wire, the temptation to give oneself up, and the consolation of finding Christ there.

After the ceremony, Jenny and I had one hour to talk to Kelly privately in a room without door handles. She had a real hunger for theology, and I sent her all my books in English translation. For her examination she wrote a spiritual book, *The Journey of Hope in Faith*. In my opinion she has become a compassionate, reflective and spiritual person, and has overcome bitterness, despair and the sense of victimization. I think she has found her calling in prison to be a sister and a pastor for the other, especially the very young, prisoners.

In December 2014, Kelly received the date of her execution: February 25, 2015 at seven in the evening. I wrote some words of consolation, and as a sign of my solidarity I sent her a handkerchief with the words "And when the tears are coming, take my handkerchief." She answered, "The handkerchief that you sent was the most heartfelt thing that I

My Kelly Gissendaner Story continued on page 7

Reflections on a Holy Week

By Catherine Meeks

My first Annual Samuel DeWitt Proctor Institute for Child Advocacy Ministry gave me a gift that I have never received before. The gift of a second Holy Week in one year. This grace-filled blessed week has been presented for the past 21 years by the Children's Defense Fund under the leadership of the indomitable Dr. Marian Wright Edelman.

I had no idea what to expect, but was willing to trust that it would be a significant week for me and I was ready to experience whatever gifts might come. The Institute began on Monday night with powerful and inspiring words from Dr. Edelman, followed by a sermon from Reverend Dr. William J. Barber II, president of the North Carolina NAACP and founder of the Moral Monday movement. Each day ended with outstanding preachers speaking out of their deep faith, commitment to social justice and understanding of the call of Jesus to live a radical life of faith in the world.

The morning sessions began with meditations and sermons from Reverend Dr. Otis Moss, Jr. and his son, Reverend Dr. Otis Moss III. While they are great preachers in their own right, we were very blessed to have them present a sermon duet in one of our morning sessions. While their wisdom words of inspiration were a delight to our souls, it was equally wonderful to witness their love and respect for one another. In this country where African American people and especially men are being so negatively characterized by racist stereotyping, it was a joy to see these two men standing together with such grace and so much obvious love and respect for one another. This was made even clearer by the manner in which they delivered their challenge to us to remember that "nothing can separate us from the love of God."

Of the daily plenary sessions covering a variety of topics, the most powerful was the panel of young African American males who shared their stories of survival. They chronicled hardships including poverty, dysfunctional families and the indifference of school officials as part of what they overcame in order to succeed. One of the

young men will soon be going to college. They made it clear that the mentoring that they had received was the primary reason for their survival. It was an emotion-filled morning for all of us as we listened to these young men and felt their deep pain about the ways in which they had been failed, and their deep sense of hope and commitment to make a difference for others.

This event and the Freedom School presentation comprised of young children whose parents were attending the Institute were the two most powerful events of the week. Our children are our greatest resource and this was demonstrated clearly in all of the events involving young people



End Conscription Campaigne

throughout the week. We owe them a better chance. It was amazing to see the dances, to hear the songs and chants that the children had learned in three days, and to watch the marvelous way their teachers worked with them. The enthusiasm was contagious.

The Thursday morning Bible study with Reverend Dr. Gregory Ellison II was dynamic and engaging as he involved the audience in an interactive series of short conversations with one another about issues around invisibility and presence. This was the best lesson that I have

ever heard on the Good Samaritan story, and reinforced what I know about the efficacy of participatory learning. The fact that we interacted with one another will make this event stay with us much longer and help us pay more attention to everyone we encounter.

The plenary session by Bryan Stevenson, founder and CEO of the Equal Justice Initiative, was another important highlight for me. The introduction of Mr. Stevenson was made by a gentleman whose release from death row had been facilitated by Stevenson a few months earlier. Mr. Stevenson presented facts about crime and its relationship to poverty and racism, and told amazing stories from more than two decades of being a lawyer and death penalty abolitionist, exhibiting the deep passion that calls him to the work that he does. I did get to meet him and let him know that we are looking forward to having him in Atlanta next year. He is a gracious and humble man whose presence is a blessing.

On the last day, we were blessed with words of wisdom as a charge from Dr. Edelman, and with words of Bishop Desmond Tutu. These and the celebration of Holy Communion in the ark-shaped chapel on the holy ground of the Haley Farm were a fitting conclusion to a week of inspiring words, stories of hope and the amazing experience of being with hundreds of people from across the country who are committed to making life better for our children.

As a rule, I tend not to seek out events like this one because they are hardly ever valuable enough to me and my work to justify the time, resources and energy required, but this was not the case with the Proctor Institute. It was worth every bit of the investment that I made to be there. It will be informing my thoughts and blessing my soul for many months to come. Thanks be to God. ✠

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

volunteer needs at the Open Door Community



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

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

Individuals to accompany community members to doctors' appointments.

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

People to cook or bring supper for our household on Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday evenings.

For more information, contact Sarah Humphrey at sarah@opendoorcommunity.org or 404.874.9652 option 4

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.

Open Door Community
910 Ponce de Leon Avenue NE
Atlanta, GA 30306-4212
www.opendoorcommunity.org
404.874.9652; 404.874.7964 fax



Calvin Kimbrough

Connie Bonner's Eucharist loaves — fresh from the oven!

Newspaper

Editor: Murphy Davis
Managing Editor: Mary Catherine Johnson
Photography and Layout Editor: Calvin Kimbrough
Poetry Corner Editor: Eduard Loring
Associate Editors: Terry Kennedy, Eduard Loring and Catherine Meeks
Copy Editor: Julie Martin
Proofreaders: Gladys Rustay and Julie Martin
Circulation: A multitude of earthly hosts
Subscriptions or change of address: Sarah Humphrey

Open Door Community

For more information about the life and work of the community, please contact any of the following persons.

Gladys Rustay: Jackson Prison Trip
Dick Rustay: Dayspring Farm Coordinator
Terry Kennedy: Food Coordinator
Lorna Mauney-Brodek: Harriet Tubman Foot Clinic Coordinator
Eduard Loring: Street Theologian
Nora Leslie: Administration and Finance
Nelia and Calvin Kimbrough: Worship, Art, and Music Coordinators
Sarah Humphrey: Coordinator for Administration, Volunteers, Hardwick Prison Trip and Resident Volunteer Applications
Murphy Davis: Southern Prison Ministry

White Christ/Black Jesus

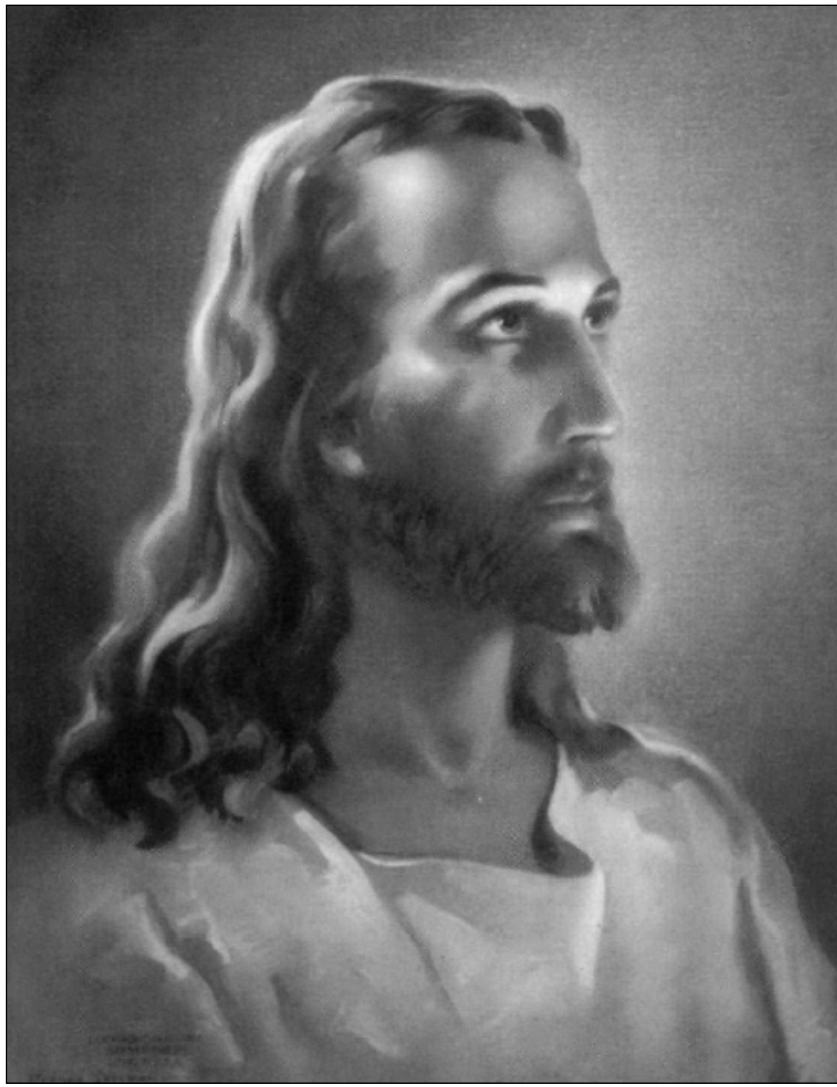
By Eduard Nuessner Loring

Chapter 1: Introduction

Part A

The times they are a-changin'. For better or for worse? We may get rid of the Confederate flag on the statehouse, but Confederate white supremacist rage flames across the land as Black churches flare against the night skies. The white Christ holds discussion groups in some churches or plans Ku Klux Klan rallies in other churches or is simply quiet in still more churches. The American Civil War, which is really The War for Freedom, as the Black Union soldiers named the aims and purposes of defeating and abolishing the treasonous Confederacy and race-based slavery, can only come to an end with a revolution of the heart. The laws — even good laws, the laws for justice and equality — are not enough. How can we, the advocates and activists for the Black Jesus, who still comes preaching about breaking down dividing walls, make it so that Jew and Gentile, and Black, White, Brown and Native can come together as one new humanity — as one new society based on a sharing of the Common Good for all?

How can we reach those of us who are caught in the webs of prejudice and who benefit from white supremacy and the oppres-



The Head of Christ by Walter Sallman 1941

The white Christ has furthered white supremacy and racial slavery and Black subjugation from the beginning of American history, and he wrote slavery and inferiority into the U.S. Constitution.

sion and hate and murder of African Americans — the white supremacist, the Ku Klux Klan, the Sons and Daughters of the Confederacy, Fox News, the Republican Party and so many other hate groups and their minions? The revolution of the heart is now the last frontier for love and equality, even as we fight daily to dismantle white racism/white supremacy in our political, economic and social spheres.

Love is the only solution and love comes with community. *E Pluribus Unum*. “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that **all people are created equal**, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

Like the Confederate flag and the burning of Black churches, the white Christ must go. The white Christ has furthered white supremacy and racial slavery and Black subjugation from the beginning of American history, and he wrote slavery and inferiority into the U.S. Constitution. The white Christ is but a reflection of the presence of the Evil One in white life in the U.S.A. What a hard fight we Christians have. Can we save Jesus in America? How can we get out of white Christianity? Why is the God of the white Christ still killing, burning and hating?

Strangers and We Welcomed Them

On Wednesday night we had a new volunteer for the Open Door's free foot clinic. He is young, tall and very engaging. After a bit of prompting he told me that he is a graduate of Austin Seminary. This excited me; a new conversation partner, perhaps? A mainline wealthy seminarian who has the will to wash the feet of the very poor? Could be cool (and it was).

This young man told me that he has been in Atlanta for a while. He came to the Open Door after serving on the staff of a rich downtown Presbyterian Church in Asheville, North Carolina. After a year he had no more use for the parish ministry. Though he is disaffected with the mainline church's failure to follow Jesus, he has not lost his faith. In fact, the call to a discipleship gospel that puts the teachings and faith of Jesus into practice brought him to the Open Door that night, where he was kneeling before a homeless man with no toes on his right foot. *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for radical justice, for they shall be satisfied*. He plans to join us for worship on Sunday.

Speaking of worship: On Pentecost Sunday we felt the Wind, Fire and Tongues which began the life of the Discipleship Community with the widest diversity imaginable over 2,000 years ago. And unlike the members of the Open Door Community, all those folks could understand each other! That night three visitors drove 253 miles to attend our worship service and stay for the Eucharist Expansion which is Sunday night supper. Justice is important but supper is essential.

These pilgrims came for healing and companionship, if only for a few hours. The text for the day was Ezekiel 37:1-14, The Valley of Dry Bones. It's a story of new life rooted in a new breath/wind/spirit. A standing up. A speaking out. A marching forward to the Beloved Community/Kingdom of God.

Read from the center of the Jesus Movement: The land is not that earth which belonged to the Canaanites/Palestinians or the Apache (mineral drilling on sacred lands began this summer) or the Navaho, whose earth is now covered with sand with the assurances of Ted Cruz and company that

climate change has nothing to do with it. In fact, the Jesus Movement is not land-based; it is a tabernacling community. A house here, a tent there. No pews, so buildings have multi-use space. The Beloved Community/Kingdom of God is not land-based, nor is it nation-based; therefore the U.S. flag in a church makes the church a servant of the Evil One, who is the Anti-Christ.

These visitors journeyed to the Open Door Community because they love the poor and want to find a concrete, liberating way to serve them and fight for justice. One of the three had prepared a Pentecost meditation for Bible study in his local church. Using a beautiful portion from Martin Luther King Jr.'s “I Have a Dream” speech (without paying the King children a penny) he called for diversity and the critique of racism and segregation in their small town.

Diversity: the very mark of Pentecost in the Book of Acts even if not in the mainline white and Black churches. *Segregation*: the denial of Jesus' message and of Paul's theology that breaks down the dividing walls. Diversity, including race, sexual orientation, gender, ethnicity and class, is the foundation of the Church as the Body of Jesus Christ.

When his pastor learned of the plan it was quickly quashed. The frightened Reverend said such meditating would cause controversy in the church, and some members might leave. “The congregation is not ready for such ideas to be spoken in the church,” said the misguided shepherd.

So this man who dared to speak the truth in church, along with his two fellow travelers, came a-limping to the Open Door Community because a former resident volunteer had told them about the faith and practice of this tiny mustard seed collection of sinners who are not in the hands of an angry god (The white American God). We embraced these weary travelers and filled them with the Bread of Life.

The following Tuesday we received a long email from the one who was silenced in his church. He is in a quandary. Can I be a Christian in the Church? Should I leave with nowhere to go? Why must the church be so craven? Why do the rich control the session and will not allow the pastor to tell the truth of Jesus? What, dear reader, would you say? Jesus asks, “Who do you say that I am?” Am I a white Christ or the Black Jesus?

Walking Together Toward Liberation

We received unmerited grace the day the Open Door received a poster with a powerful quote from an Aboriginal Woman. This mantra is now a part of the rock upon which we stand when the winds blow and the sea waves crash upon our house which is our home.

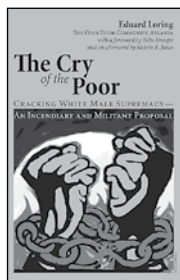
If you are coming here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you are coming here because your liberation is bound up with mine, then come and let us work together.

If you are going to a church that is rich, where the poor and marginalized are pushed out, or if you have chosen to live somewhere in which there are no poor or no diversity of human beings, where your preacher does not preach the word of God in a way that jolts, judges, joins and gives you new life, then you are wasting your time. You are dying in the name of life. As Dylan sings, “The one who is not busy being born is busy dying.” Tell me of your new life and what you do to reduce the distance from the poor so you too will be on the margins. “Where do we go from here?” Martin Luther King Jr. asks.

To be continued.

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

The Open Door Community Press Books



The Cry of the Poor
Cracking White Male Supremacy —
An Incendiary and Militant Proposal

By **Eduard Loring**
foreword by Nibs Stroupe
afterword by Melvin Jones
99 pages
paperback
\$10.00 suggested donation

The Festival of Shelters
A Celebration
for Love and Justice

By **Eduard Loring**
with Heather Barger
preface by Dick Rustay

66 pages
19 color photographs
Paperback
Free for the asking



Sharing the Bread of Life
Hospitality and Resistance
at the Open Door Community

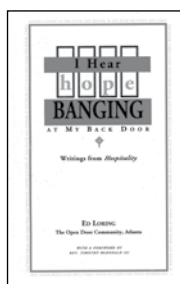
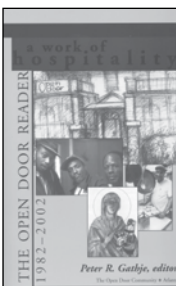
By **Peter R. Gathje**

272 pages
45 photographs
Paperback
\$10.00 suggested donation

A Work of Hospitality
The Open Door Reader
1982 - 2002

Peter R. Gathje, editor

384 pages
Bibliography and Index
Paperback
\$15.00 suggested donation



**I Hear Hope Banging
at My Back Door**
Writings from *Hospitality*

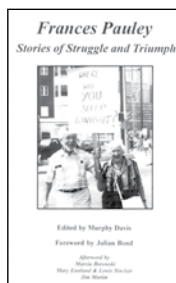
By **Eduard Loring**
Foreword by Rev. Timothy McDonald III

82 pages
21 photographs
available only online at
www.opendoorcommunity.org

Frances Pauley
Stories of Struggle and Triumph

Edited by **Murphy Davis**
Foreword by Julian Bond

89 pages
28 photographs
Paperback
\$3.00 suggested donation



to order:
The Open Door Community
910 Ponce de Leon Ave., N.E.
Atlanta, GA 30306-4212
404.874.9652 option 4
www.opendoorcommunity.org

If funds are not available,
copies will be sent at no expense.

The Removal of the Statue of Nathan Bedford Forrest

By **Peter Gathje**

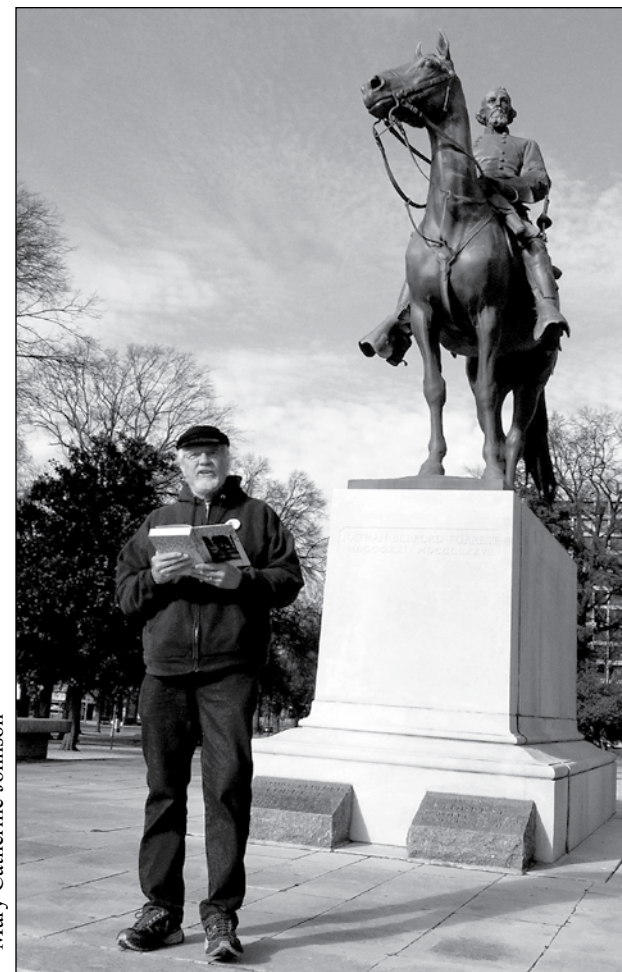
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, "The moral arc of the universe is long but it bends toward justice." In July of this year, the Memphis City Council voted to remove the statue of Nathan Bedford Forrest from a park in Memphis. Since Forrest and his wife, Mary Ann, are buried under the statue, the City Council also authorized that their remains be re-interred at Elmwood Cemetery. A legal battle will determine when or if this will happen.

Memphis Mayor A.C. Wharton said in regard to the removal of the statue, "We can't change history. We can't unring a rung bell. But how long do we have to pay fealty to it? That's what this monument represents. I'm resolved we are going to remove it."

Less than a mile from Manna House, the statue of Forrest is located in the former Nathan Bedford Forrest Park. In 2013 the park was renamed Health Sciences Park. The Memphis City Council hurriedly changed the name and that of two other parks (Jefferson Davis Park and Confederate Park) because the Tennessee State Legislature was about to pass a bill to prohibit name changes to parks devoted to "military heroes." The new name reflected the location of the park, directly across the street from the University of Tennessee Medical School. The park is more famously located one block from Sun Studio where blues musicians such as Howlin' Wolf, Junior Parker, Little Milton, B.B. King and Rufus Thomas recorded, and where Johnny Cash, Elvis and Jerry Lee Lewis got their start.

The old name of the park reflected white supremacist efforts in Memphis and other Southern cities in the early 1900s to memorialize Confederate leaders and the "War Between the States" as part of a strengthening of Jim Crow oppression of African Americans. In 1904, the Sons of Confederate Veterans dug up Forrest and his wife and moved their remains to the new Forrest Park, where they also erected the statue of Forrest and his horse King Phillip, which was unveiled in 1905. The statue faces south, as if yearning for the rise of the Confederacy once again.

Before the war, Forrest was a slave trader and plantation owner. He became a millionaire by selling thousands of human beings in a "Negro Mart" he owned on Adams Avenue, then a popular street for slave



Mary Catherine Johnson



www.WMCActionNews5.com

Top: Eduard Loring reads from his Bible in front of the Nathan Bedford Forrest statue in Memphis. Above: Recently "Black Lives Matter" was painted on the base of the statue.

In 1904, the Sons of Confederate Veterans dug up Forrest and his wife and moved their remains to the new Forrest Park, where they also erected the statue of Forrest and his horse King Phillip, which was unveiled in 1905.

trading and around the corner from present-day Memphis City Hall.

During the war, troops under Forrest's command massacred three hundred African American Union soldiers who had surrendered at Fort Pillow. Almost all of those soldiers were former slaves. After the war, Forrest helped found the Ku Klux Klan. He served as its first Grand Wizard. (A grandson, Nathan Bedford Forrest II, also became a Grand Dragon in the Klan.) Toward the end of his life he oversaw a prison camp near Memphis filled with African Americans swept up under the new "Black Codes" which brought back slavery under a different name.

Myron Lowery, Memphis city council chairman, in reflecting on this history has rightly said of the statue of Forrest, "It is a symbol of racism, of bigotry and hatred — there's no need to honor a man that massacred people at Fort Pillow, there's no need to honor a man who received his millions of dollars and fame from being a slave trader." ♦

Peter Gathje is a professor and assistant dean at Memphis Theological Seminary; a founder of Manna House, a place of hospitality in Memphis; and a longtime friend of the Open Door (pgathje@memphisseminary.edu).

What Does Housing Have to Do With Racial Justice?

By Claire Bolton

The unfinished story of racial justice in this country is a story about where we live. Trayvon Martin was murdered because his body looked out of place in the suburbs, spaces which were built on the premise of racial exclusion. Michael Brown became a victim of police violence, his body lying on the street in the open sun for four hours, in part because he lived in Ferguson, Missouri. Once a white suburb, Ferguson now has more in common with inner city Baltimore than with wealthy neighboring towns, with its deeply segregated Black neighborhoods and heavy policing. All of us are shaped by our geographies. Some of us live in prisons, while some of us live on the street. Some of us live in clean, safe, quiet neighborhoods, while some of us hear gunshots in the midst of July 4th fireworks. Some of us wonder if we will still be able to afford our neighborhoods if they become clean, safe and quiet. Where we put our heads down to sleep at night is intimately tied to our positions in a society heavily organized along racial lines. The connections between race and housing have a long, strange history that still lives with us in the present, that shapes what streets we walk on, whom we know, where we go to school and where our lives end up.

The history is long, but the early 20th century is a good place to jump in. In this period, a wave of Black families moved from the rural South to the urban North as part of the “Great Migration.” The conditions they encountered were



David Klein

The connections between race and housing have a long, strange history that still lives with us in the present, that shapes what streets we walk on, whom we know, where we go to school and where our lives end up.

not, generally speaking, much of an improvement over the ones they experienced in the South. Explicit anti-Black racism awaited them in cities like Chicago, St. Louis and Cleveland, and they were cornered into deeply segregated living conditions. Urban ethnic enclaves like “little Italies” were not as segregated as we might imagine today, but Black neighborhoods were. In the early 1930s, urban sociologist Robert Burgess found that European ethnic groups never even comprised a majority of the population in these enclaves. African Americans, however, comprised 82% of the population in Black “ghettoes.” In short, Black neighborhoods were much more segregated than other ethnic neighborhoods.

Some residents of those European ethnic enclaves would soon become suburban homeowners. While homeownership used to be the provenance of a privileged few, the Federal Housing Act (FHA) of 1934 radically changed this reality. By backing private home sales with federal credit, the FHA brought homeownership within reach of millions of Americans for the first time. Official, federally sanctioned guidelines actively steered this pool of mortgage money away from minority communities, primarily through a process called redlining. Redlining marked “undesirable” neighborhoods as bad places in which to invest mortgage funds, and assessors based desirability almost entirely on racial makeup. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Black neighborhoods were marked as the most undesirable. Blacks thus found themselves widely

shut out from homeownership. In the case that a Black family did manage to get a mortgage, new suburban neighborhoods could legally exclude unwanted minority residents on the basis of race alone. As a result, Black communities tended to stay in the cities as renters, while groups considered white increasingly migrated out to the suburbs as homeowners. Because homeownership is the cornerstone of most Americans’ wealth, this meant that white communities became upwardly mobile, while minority communities, especially Black communities, stayed behind.

In this period, the parameters of whiteness were also radically changing. As David Roediger shows us in his seminal book, *Working Toward Whiteness: How America’s Immigrants Became White: The Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs*, immigrants from Ireland, Southern Europe and Eastern Europe were considered racially inferior when they first came to the United States. They eventually assimilated, Roediger argues, in part because they learned to discriminate against Blacks. Their movement to the suburbs allowed them to cash in on the benefits of their newly minted whiteness. Along with other groups considered white, they could now build wealth and pass it down to the next generation. At times, Black households seemed to access the same benefits of homeownership. They would “buy” homes on contract in segregated neighborhoods, but soon realize that the houses were of poor quality, and that they had been charged

unfairly high prices. They found themselves owing unsustainable debts, rather than building wealth. Ta-Nehisi Coates writes about contract lending in *The Atlantic* magazine as a central plank in his argument for reparations. He contends that such unjust housing practices and policies, and the dramatic ways in which they have siphoned wealth from Black communities, justify a contemporary reparations project. We tend to talk about reparations in terms of slavery’s legacy, but Coates wants us to think about housing, too.

Did unfair, racially biased practices come to an end? Did the Civil Rights period, which gave rise to the Fair Housing Act of 1968, resolve these issues? The post-Civil Rights period has seen some forms of explicit discrimination fade away, but new forms of exclusion, perhaps more “colorblind” than those that came before, have emerged. Michelle Alexander argues in *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* that the public struggles to see the criminal justice system as racially biased because, of course, white people go to prison as well. The issue, she demonstrates, is that people of color are criminalized and imprisoned in radically disproportionate numbers. The picture of unfair housing today is somewhat similar. A perfect example is the mid- to late-2000s foreclosure crisis, the backbone of the global financial crisis. Many white people were targeted with subprime mortgages, and unfairly lost their homes. However, predatory mortgage lending disproportionately affected Black and Hispanic communities, further decimating their collective wealth. The crisis was not race neutral or colorblind, then, at all. Gentrification is another housing issue that may appear race neutral on the surface, but is shaped by race when we probe just a bit deeper. This movement of class-privileged people into inner city neighborhoods risks displacing the low-income people of color already living there. Of course, they live in such neighborhoods because of historical and contemporary patterns of housing discrimination. People for whom the neighborhood becomes unaffordable, research shows, will likely move to another segregated urban neighborhood that has not yet been gentrified, or even a poor suburb.

What does housing justice look like, then? Community land trusts attempt to stem the tide of gentrification by making fair mortgages accessible to people who would never otherwise qualify, and by keeping rents affordable. Groups like Occupy Our Homes in Atlanta and Minneapolis form eviction blockades to keep people in their homes. The new Turner Field Community Benefits Coalition, formed as developers prepare to profit from the Braves’ imminent departure from Atlanta’s south side, uses community organizing tactics to win concessions from landlords and city hall. Fair housing organizations have long acted as watchdogs for the real estate industry. The movements to end mass incarceration, the stigmatization of Black bodies, and the death penalty matter to the housing struggle, too, as these issues intersect deeply. Creative, dedicated leaders are already here, learning from their mistakes and growing strong collectively, not just as charismatic individuals. What will be their (our?) next steps in the movement for racial justice, of which housing is such an integral part? ♦

Claire Bolton is a graduate student and instructor at the University of Georgia, where she is critically examining the intersections between evangelical Christianity, racial formation and the politics of community development. She is a longtime volunteer at the Open Door Community.



Rita Corbin

A Prayer for My Son Dylann Storm Roof

Oh, Jesus, we people of your Eucharist say the name of your betrayer, Judas, each time we say the words of institution, you who command us to pray for our enemies and those who curse us, you who cried from the cross at the moment of your lynching by the state, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do."

I pray for my child Dylann Storm Roof. My young white boy is filled with the hate of our parents and foreparents of the White Supremacist South and our whole white nation. He had gone astray — the way of the Ku Klux Klan and our way when we have betrayed your agape suffering love by our silence and refusal to act. When we deny the power of your cross and have not picked up our own cross.

We have left my child in his jail cell alone and full of the fear that filled him and led him to terrorize and mercilessly slaughter your faithful children at Mother Emmanuel. The fear that has been the root of our raping, lynching and shooting down in cold blood Dylann's sisters and brothers like Tamir Rice and Sandra Bland.

Oh, my Jesus. There are many who call in your name for the state to put him to death for his massacre of your disciples. There are others who want his name and his life and perhaps the hope of his redemption to be erased from our hearts and they are calling for his name to be burned from our lips. Lord God, our way of life and savior, I know that my son is precious to you. Thank you for shedding your blood for my boy. Thank you, O Holy Spirit, for empowering the murdered victims' families to utter the sound of your amazing Grace: "Dylann Storm Roof, you are forgiven." Grant me, your disciple, my crucified and risen Lord, to be not afraid: to pray for my Dylann in private and in public. Help me in my weakness, as I visit on death row and as I help to bury the homeless dead, to never be afraid and to join you to stand with the guilty and the unwelcomed ones at the Welcome Table. Even as I come and sit with blood-stained hands and a sinful heart. In the name of the Blessed One who now asks: How many gallons of Black blood must flow before we white Christians know who we and our children are? Dylann Storm Roof is my son. Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior.

Amen

Ed Loring

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

poetry corner



Julie Lonneman

Kids Who Die

This is for the kids who die,
Black and white,
For kids will die certainly.
The old and rich will live on awhile,
As always,
Eating blood and gold,
Letting kids die.

Kids will die in the swamps of Mississippi
Organizing sharecroppers
Kids will die in the streets of Chicago
Organizing workers
Kids will die in the orange groves of California
Telling others to get together
Whites and Filipinos,
Negroes and Mexicans,
All kinds of kids will die
Who don't believe in lies, and bribes, and contentment
And a lousy peace.

Of course, the wise and the learned
Who pen editorials in the papers,
And the gentlemen with Dr. in front of their names
White and black,
Who make surveys and write books
Will live on weaving words to smother the kids who die,
And the sleazy courts,
And the bribe-reaching police,
And the blood-loving generals,
And the money-loving preachers
Will all raise their hands against the kids who die,
Beating them with laws and clubs and bayonets and bullets
To frighten the people —
For the kids who die are like iron in the blood of the people —
And the old and rich don't want the people
To taste the iron of the kids who die,
Don't want the people to get wise to their own power,
To believe an Angelo Herndon, or even get together

Listen, kids who die —
Maybe, now, there will be no monument for you
Except in our hearts
Maybe your bodies'll be lost in a swamp
Or a prison grave, or the potter's field,
Or the rivers where you're drowned like Leibknecht
But the day will come —
You are sure yourselves that it is coming —
When the marching feet of the masses
Will raise for you a living monument of love,
And joy, and laughter,
And black hands and white hands clasped as one,
And a song that reaches the sky —
The song of the life triumphant
Through the kids who die.

— Langston Hughes

In 1938, Langston Hughes, a civil rights activist, poet and leader of the Harlem Renaissance, wrote "Kids Who Die" to illuminate the horrors of lynchings during the Jim Crow era. In 2015, Hughes' poem became an anthem for the #BlackLivesMatter movement when ColorOfChange.org, which exists to strengthen Black America's political voice, used it to create a video montage of recent images of the ever-growing racist police state, revealing that the assault on Black lives in America has never stopped (<http://colorofchange.org/amovementgrows/>).

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 or by email to hospitalitypoetrycorner@gmail.com.

Black Lives Matter: This Is an Emergency *continued from page 1*

the cruel system of sharecropping instituted, and the use of Constitutionally sanctioned penal slavery kept most of the captive labor force in place. From local law enforcement to the U.S. military, a primary task mandated by white power has been to keep Black citizens “in their place.” Our history as a nation has rested on the assumption that Black life is cheap and expendable. Mass imprisonment, the death penalty and our financial systems have insured that black bodies continue to be under the control of the dominant (white) system.

The lunatic fringe — currently in the person of Donald Trump, who speaks right out what the rest of the Republican candidates are thinking — wants to “keep America for white people.” A large segment of white Americans believe that racial prejudice has been largely overcome; some even refer to “post-racial America,” especially given the election of a bi-racial president. As a whole, we are reluctant to seriously examine the *structure* of white supremacy and white privilege. This leaves us blind and deaf to the cries of our young friends who demand that we listen NOW. We continue to allow “racism” to be about only those who are Neo-Confederates and openly advocate a whites-only America.

Black Lives Matter, Rise Up, Color of Change and other established and ad hoc groups are crying out for us to understand the pain and terror of Black life in the U.S. When Eric Garner can be choked to death on the street by a gang of police, when Sandra Bland can be stopped and jailed and “found dead in her cell” for the crime of an improper lane change, when Walter Scott can be pursued for allegedly failing to pay child support and shot to death in the back, when 12-year-old Tamir Rice can be shot dead by police on the playground — as we know, this list could go on and on. The message is clear: Black Lives Do NOT Matter. Black life is cheap. Black bodies are still a disposable commodity.

A modest proposal: Perhaps a large number of people — black, white, and brown — can agree that we have a great problem with the way police and other law enforcement officers relate to Black people individually and as a community. Perhaps we can even agree that this is a symbol of a much larger problem with our entire system of criminal justice (sic).

If so, why not take this as our starting point? Most people of any race are not political activists. But we have an opportunity here. If we do not listen to our young friends who are pouring their hearts and their lives into this movement, the consequences will continue to escalate. We can begin in new ways to join in to curb the growing police control in our nation. We can examine the policies and practices of our local, county, state and federal police forces. We can ask, “How many citizens have been shot, wounded and killed by the police in *this* town or city?”

We can take a look at our jails — municipal and county jails — and ask who is locked up there. How many people are there and for how long? Why are they overwhelmingly black and brown? How does the bail/bond system operate in our jurisdictions? How many suicides have there been in the past five years? How many prisoners have been killed by other prisoners or by guards? Why is someone’s life at risk when they are arrested and put in jail? Ask the family of Kalief Browder or look up his tragic story in the New Yorker or on the web.

How would we white people feel if the young people at such risk were *our* children and grandchildren? I have a little white grandson who is almost 12 years old. What would I do if he were — God forbid — shot down while playing with other children? Well, the truth is that these *are* our children. In the words of Jonathan Daniels, who sacrificed his own life for the life of a young Black woman named Ruby Sales, “We are . . . one. We are indelibly, unspeakably ONE.”

In the famous words of Martin Niemöller, the German pastor who resisted Hitler:

*First they came for the Socialists,
and I did not speak out —
Because I was not a Socialist.
Then they came for the Trade Unionists,
and I did not speak out —
Because I was not a Trade Unionist.
Then they came for the Jews,
and I did not speak out —
Because I was not a Jew.
Then they came for me —
and there was no one left to speak for me.*

Niemöller reminds us that there is no such thing as walling ourselves off from one another. We belong to God, who gives us to one another. Anytime people are shot down in the streets, slammed to the ground, or killed in prisons or jails, they are our sisters and our brothers. The police who shoot them down (even though they might protest) are our sisters and brothers.

We Are One.

Black Lives Matter. This is an emergency. When will we act? ✦

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

My Kelly Gissendaner Story *continued from page 1*

have gotten in my 18 years that I have been locked up.” Then came February 2015 and the Board of Pardons and Paroles denied clemency because the family of Kelly’s husband demanded retribution. I was deeply disappointed in the state of Georgia and also in God, because I had prayed daily for her life. I wrote a letter to prepare her spiritually for death by execution, and when the time came, I lighted a candle and thought of Kelly. But a surprise came the next morning. There was a snowstorm overnight in Georgia and they couldn’t transport Kelly to the men’s prison in Jackson where they had the facilities for execution. The time of execution was shifted to Monday, March 1. I lighted the candle again and prayed for her, and a second surprise came. Because the lethal injection drug had “spoiled,” the execution was shifted to an undetermined time. Kelly wrote, “O God is so good, so good,” and I blamed myself for not trusting God more.

God’s providence can be so clever, even tricky. But Kelly was within three hours of her execution, had her last

meal, and was prepared, and now is still healthy in her mind and full of trust in her heart. I hope that, next time, clemency will be granted, and she can follow her calling to take spiritual and personal care for the inmates of the prison, both prisoners and wardens.

I am unconditionally opposed to the death penalty. After the suffering and death of Jesus Christ for all the sinners of the world, we can condemn no sinner to death and execute him or her. A democracy is a “government of the people, by the people and for the people.” The people are told, “You shall not kill.” A people’s government is also told, “You shall not kill.” Only dictatorships today execute people.

People can change. Kelly Gissendaner has demonstrated this. There is always and for everybody, hope. We condemn sins, but we love the sinner, because this is our Christian experience — our experience of the God of Mercy and Hope. Kelly must live and continue to share the blessings of God’s mercy in her life with others in need of that mercy. ✦

Join us as a Resident Volunteer



Michelle Bach and John Harrison recently gathered in Atlanta with their families to celebrate their engagement. They met as volunteers at the Open Door in 2012 and will be married in the winter. John just graduated from Austin Seminary and Michelle is studying at Washington University in St. Louis in the MD/PhD program.

Live in a residential Christian community.

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

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

**Enjoy regular retreats and meditation time
at Dayspring Farm.**

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

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

Contact: Sarah Humphrey
at sarah@opendoorcommunity.org
or 404.874.9652 option 4

For information and application forms visit
www.opendoorcommunity.org

Please Help!

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

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

Thank You!



Open Door Community Ministries

Soup Kitchen: Tuesday & Wednesday, 9 a.m.
Women's Showers: Tuesday, 9 a.m.
Men's Showers: Wednesday, 9 a.m.
Harriet Tubman Free Women's Clinic: Tuesday, 7 p.m.
Harriet Tubman Medical Clinic: Wednesday, 7 p.m.
Harriet Tubman Foot Care Clinic: Wednesday, 7 p.m.
Mail Check: Tuesday & Wednesday, during serving;
Monday, Thursday, Friday & Saturday, 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Use of Phone: Tuesday & Wednesday, during serving
Retreats: Five times each year for our household,
volunteers and supporters.
Prison Ministry: Monthly trip to prisons in Hardwick, Georgia,
in partnership with First Presbyterian Church of Milledgeville;
monthly Jackson death row trip; and pastoral visits to
death row and various jails and prisons.

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

We gratefully accept donations at these times:

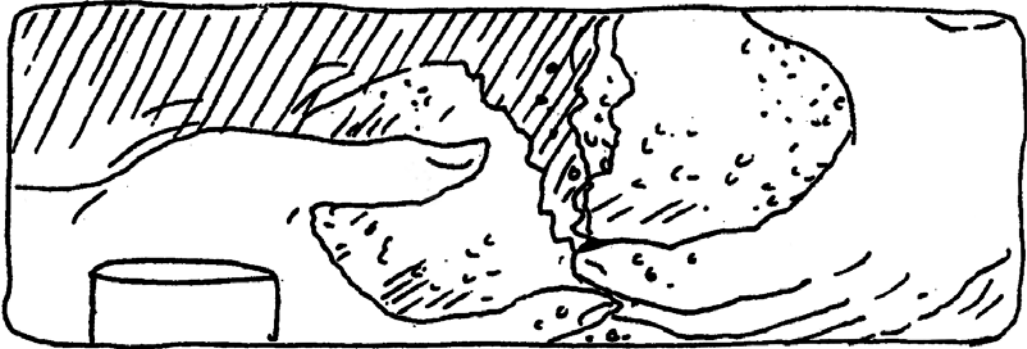
Sunday: 9 a.m. until 3 p.m.
Monday: 8:30 a.m. until Noon and 3 p.m. until 8:30 p.m.
Tuesday: Noon until 8:30 p.m.
Wednesday: Noon until 6 p.m.
Thursday: 8:30 a.m. until 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. until 8:30 p.m.
Friday and Saturday: We are closed. We are not able to
offer hospitality or accept donations on these days.

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

Join Us for Worship!

We gather for worship and Eucharist at 4 p.m. each Sunday, followed by supper together.
If you are considering bringing a group please contact us at 404.874.9652 option 6.
Please visit www.opendoorcommunity.org or call us for the most up-to-date worship schedule.

| | | | |
|--------------|---|------------|--|
| September 6 | 4 p.m. Worship at 910 the Singing Labor Movement Calvin Kimbrough leading | October 4 | 4 p.m. Worship at 910 Terry Kennedy preaching |
| September 13 | 4 p.m. Worship at 910 Nelia Kimbrough preaching | October 11 | 4 p.m. Worship at 910 Eucharistic Service |
| September 20 | 4 p.m. Worship at 910 Catherine Meeks preaching | October 18 | 4 p.m. Worship at 910 Eucharistic Service |
| September 27 | 4 p.m. Worship at 910 Joe Groves preaching | October 25 | 4 p.m. Worship at 910 Bishop Robert C. Wright preaching |



Susan von der Hijden

Clarification Meetings at the Open Door

We meet for clarification
most Thursdays 3 - 5 p.m..



Daniel Nichols

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

Medical Needs List

Harriet Tubman Medical Clinic

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

Foot Care Clinic

Epsom 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.!**

Needs of the Community



Autumn Dennis

we need
T-Shirts
2XL-5XL

Living Needs

- ☐ **jeans** 30-34 waist
and 46-60 x 32 long
- ☐ **women's pants** 16-24
- ☐ cotton footies
- ☐ socks
- ☐ **sweat pants** 1x-3x
- ☐ work shirts
- ☐ hoodies
- ☐ belts 34" & up
- ☐ men's underwear M-L
- ☐ women's underwear
- ☐ **reading glasses**
- ☐ **walking shoes**
especially sizes 11-15
- ☐ baseball caps

Personal Needs

- ☐ shampoo (large)
- ☐ toothpaste (small)
- ☐ toothbrushes
- ☐ lip balm
- ☐ nail clippers
- ☐ disposable razors

Food Needs

- ☐ fresh fruits &
vegetables
- ☐ turkeys/chickens
- ☐ **sandwiches:**
meat with cheese
on whole wheat
bread

Special Needs

- ☐ **backpacks**
- ☐ **MARTA cards**
- ☐ postage stamps
- ☐ trash bags
(30 gallon, .85 mil)
- ☐ **a home for every
homeless person:**
every woman,
man and child

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