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

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June 2008

Lament and Hope

By Don Beisswenger

Editor's note: Don Beisswenger is a retired professor at Vanderbilt Divinity School, a longtime advocate for the poor and against war and injustice, and a longtime friend of the Open Door Community. He recently published the book "Locked Up: Letters and Papers of a Prisoner of Conscience." On April 13, he signed copies of the book (see page 6) and delivered this sermon at the Open Door.

Psalm 140

(I read this Psalm to all the other inmates in my dorm while in the prison on the occasion of being kicked out of my cell and required to live in the hall because of a messy desk, books on my bed and dust balls about. This Psalm caught up my feelings at the time, and I stood on a chair and shared them loudly with the other inmates in the dorm.)

Romans 8:18-27

Think with me, if you will, about lament and hope as they intersect in our life before God.

Nearly half the Psalms are lament and complaint. Life is not going well, and the people tell God about it. The book of Lamentations expressed great sadness, anger, grief and lament over the destruction of their nation in 586 B.C. Lament combines a range of feelings: pain, grief, rage, anger, even hatred.

I have been acquainted with grief these past five years. The death of my wife, Joyce, led me to a year of daily dealing with loss. It was a year in which I learned much about loss and grief. I learned that Bonhoeffer was on target when he said in his letters and papers from prison that when we find a hole in our life, due to a tragedy, and want God to fill the hole, God does not do so for God wants us to remember.

As I suggested, the lament Psalms register rage, grief, pain, anger. Professor Walter Brueggemann says there are six regular elements in these Psalms of lament, a recurring form:

1. There is the naming of God. The Psalm is not just spoken to the sky, but to someone who is known, not a stranger. The utterance arises out of trust that the Psalmist will be heard and that God can handle the situation.

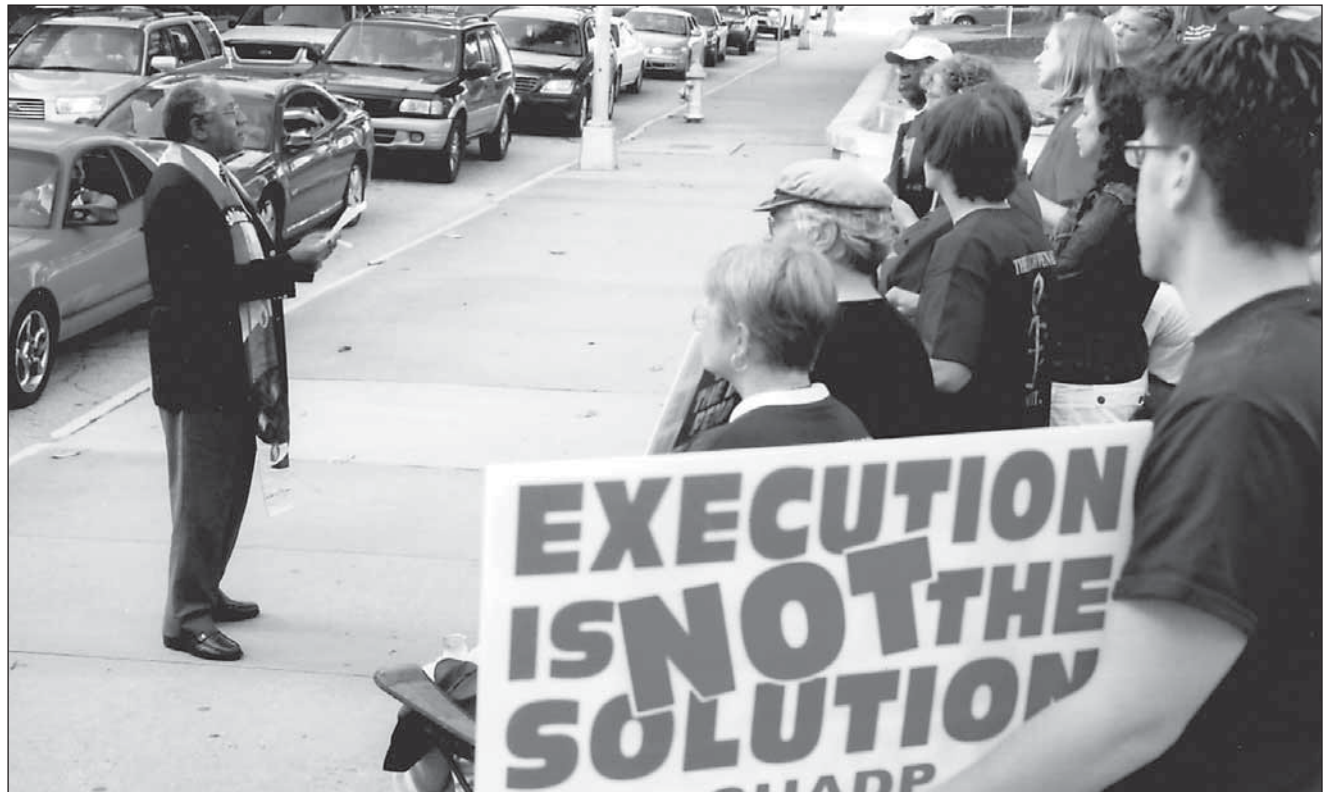
2. The Psalm then follows with the complaint: life is troubled. The complaint expresses rage and pain, and while it may be overstated, hyperbolic, God is recruited to deal with the complaint.

3. Then there is the petition: "God, turn, heal, save. You can do this."

4. This might seem sufficient, but more needs to be said. The Psalmist gives some reason for God to act. There is an appeal, an argument so that God can know what is at stake,

Lament and Hope, continued on page 8

Back to the Killing Fields



Calvin Kimbrough

7:00 p.m. May 6, 2008, State Capitol in Atlanta, Georgia: Rev. Marvin Morgan addresses the group gathered to vigil during the execution of William Earl Lynd (see page 7 for more photographs from the vigil).

By Murphy Davis

William Earl Lynd is dead.

When the U.S. Supreme Court decided the case of *Baze v. Kentucky* in April, pronouncing that lethal injection does not violate constitutional standards, the killing fields were quickly rearranged for action. The death penalty states lined up to fire up the execution chambers once again. And Georgia found a place first in line: Earl Lynd's execution date was set and it was carried out in spite of serious questions raised about the fairness of his trial. The objections from Lynd's lawyers were quickly swept aside, and he died right on schedule.

By the time this article reaches the printed page and the hands of our readers, it is likely that one more or several more from Georgia's death row will have been killed. The Georgia death machine is hungry and demanding victims. Please pray for us.

When I began to work with folks on Georgia's death row in 1977, it was because I believed that every human being is created in the image of God, and that God, the giver of life, is the only ultimate judge. I also believe that every human being is capable and worthy of redemption, no matter how vicious the crime. But beyond that, I became quickly convinced that if you examined any *one* death penalty case carefully, you would find enough to turn you against the use of the death penalty. Every case depends on some levels of bias and deceit.

This is no less true in the case of Earl Lynd. Mr. Lynd

was convicted of killing his live-in woman friend. Both of them had a long history of alcohol and drug use, and they often fought when they were drunk and high. On this particular occasion in December 1988, Mr. Lynd and Ginger Moore were high on alcohol, marijuana and Valium. They fought. Earl Lynd pulled out a gun and shot Ms. Moore in the face. She regained consciousness and followed him outside, where he shot her again. Then he put her into the trunk of his car and drove to a remote location where he buried her in a shallow grave.

At the trial, a non-medical witness testified that Moore was still alive when she was put into the trunk, and that he shot her a third time en route to the burial site. When a medical doctor examined the evidence much later, he testified that she was clearly dead before being put into the trunk, because there was no blood in the car.

Well, why, you might ask, does this gory detail matter? It was an awful and disgusting crime. Yes. But it matters because truth and fairness are supposed to matter.

In a death penalty trial, the jury must find an "aggravating circumstance" that makes the murder a *capital* murder rather than a "regular" murder. Because of the non-professional testimony in the trial (though the prosecutor addressed the witness as "Dr." throughout), the jury found Earl Lynd guilty of murder *and* kidnapping. Kidnapping became the additional felony needed to "aggravate" the case and make it worthy of a death sentence. But if Ms.

Back to the Killing, continued on page 9

See You Later, Leader

By Hank Stewart

Goodbye, **Leader** ... just doesn't seem like it's good enough
For all of your work, and the lives you've touched.

A strong Man, not afraid to go against the grain,
One who stood with such grace and character,
in the snow or the rain.

Leader, goodbye ... just doesn't seem like it's enough
For all of your work, and the lives you've touched.

When you awoke each morning, it was not to an alarm clock.
It was the sound of the Lord's voice telling you your purpose,
and until it was fulfilled you couldn't stop.

Leader, goodbye doesn't seem like it's good enough,
With all the marching and caring, and hearts you touched.
You always had the poor in mind, in whatever you did,
Feeding the hungry, clothing those without,
but even that couldn't hold a candle
to your passion for kids.

So, **Leader**, we won't say goodbye,
but we'll say I'll see you later.
But until we see each other again, do us a favor.
Now I know you hugged and kissed Pam and other family,
as soon as you walked through the pearly gates.
But could you say hello to Dr. King, Dr. Abernathy,
Medgar Evers and Earl Shiholster ...
I'm sure they're talking
about how to be committed
sitting down by the lake.

Say hello to Mahalia Jackson ...
I can hear her singing one of your favorite songs:
If I can just help somebody, as they pass along.
Say hello to John and Robert Kennedy ...
tell them thank you
for putting their lives on the line.
And Dr. Benjamin E. Mays, for helping us to appreciate time.

Editor's note: Hank Stewart, an Atlanta activist and poet, read this poem February 23, 2008, in King International Chapel at Morehouse College at the funeral of the Rev. James Orange, who died February 16. Orange was 15 years old when Dr. King put a hand on his shoulder and brought him into the movement. He spent the rest of his life working tirelessly for civil rights, labor rights and human rights. He was our dear friend and we miss him terribly. James Orange was known for greeting people with the words "Hey, leader," as a way to imbue a sense of purpose and responsibility in others.

*Rev. James Orange by René Hannans,
Atlanta Journal-Constitution 2003*



Say hello to Jackie Robinson and Buck O'Neal ...
tell them thanks for showing them
that we desire a chance.

Say hello to Flip Wilson for making us laugh,
and to Sammy Davis Jr. for showing us how to dance.

And don't forget to speak to Maynard Jackson, Gordon Parks,
Ed Bradley and James Brown.
And tell Coretta Scott King, Yolanda and Barbara Jordan hello ...
I know she looks good in her robe and crown.

Say hello to Rosa Parks and tell her thank you for sitting,
so now in Glory enjoy your seat.
And say hello to Hosea, and we appreciate all his work
he has done in the street.

Say hello to Malcolm and Harriet, and Langston Hughes.
Say hello to Abraham and Isaac, and the three boys from Hebrew.

Say hello to my grandfather, and the four little girls
who were killed
in that Birmingham church.
Say hello to Mary McCloud Bethune ...
tell her we're still down here doing her work.

Give Zora Neale Hurston a kiss on the cheek;
Give Ron Brown a brotherly hug just for me.

And **Leader**, we know that Father has already said,
"Thy good and faithful servant, job well done."
And because you were faithful, dedicated and committed,
you have earned the right to sit in the sun.
SEE YOU LATER, LEADER.

HOSPITALITY

Hospitality is published 11 times a year by the Open Door Community (PCUS), 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 \$7 donation to the Open Door Community would help to cover the costs of printing and mailing **Hospitality** for one year. A \$30 donation covers overseas delivery for one year.

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Calvin Kimbrough
*Nelia Kimbrough and Murphy Davis (left to right) wave the
Peace flags at our Sunday Noon Vigil.*

Newspaper

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The Living Water

The Festival of Shelters:

A Celebration for Love and Justice

By Eduard N. Loring with Heather Bargerion

Preface by Dick Rustay

Reviewed by Wes Howard-Brook

Editor's note: Wes Howard-Brook is an educator, writer and retreat leader based in Washington state, where he was formerly program director of the Intercommunity Peace & Justice Center in Seattle. His books include "The Church Before Christianity," "John's Gospel and the Renewal of the Church" and with Anthony Gwyther "Unveiling Empire: Reading Revelation Then and Now."

I've had "The Festival of Shelters" sitting in a box of Open Door books for a while now, waiting for me to open its pages. One of the two weekly John's Gospel groups that my beloved Sue and I are privileged to lead is just starting John 7-8, where we, at the pace we are moving, will be for many months to come. It is the only place in the New Testament where the biblical Festival of Shelters is even mentioned. A fitting moment to dive into the Word, according to Eduard-the-Agitator and the other folks at the Open Door.

Others have already remarked in these pages on the gift of faithful fire that is ignited by the practice of this Festival among the Open Door folks and its accompanying commentary in the "Festival of Shelters" book itself. I am thrilled to add my "Amen" to the chorus of disciples who find this work and word inspiring in the truest sense.

But there's a bit more to say beyond offering words of worthy praise. Eduard describes how the Festival drew his and others in the community's attention because, unlike the Christian feasts of Christmas and Easter, the Festival of Shelters had not been co-opted by the Powers. A closer look at John 7-8, though, shows us that it had indeed been co-opted, and deeply so, which is precisely what Jesus comes to Jerusalem to blow apart in John's Gospel.

The Festival is named as a commandment in Leviticus 23 and in Deuteronomy 16 and then "remembered" in Ezra 3 and Nehemiah 8. We can easily become confused about the biblical order of call-and-response because of the power of the canonizers to arrange the texts in the order we have them. In terms of order of writing, however, it is different. Deuteronomy is certainly a composition of the Jerusalem elite during the time of King Josiah in the seventh century B.C.E., as part of a compromise with the more radical Exodus group that had rebelled against the Jerusalem-based monarchy two centuries earlier. (For more on this, see my forthcoming "Come Out My People: God's Call Out of Empire From the Beginning to the End.")

Part of Deuteronomy's liturgical program is to move everything from the margins to the center: from family and clan-based practice to priestly, urban, temple-based practice. We see this most clearly in the contrast between Exodus 12 and Deuteronomy 16 regarding Passover.

Leviticus, for its part, is a post-exilic composition of the priestly elite who served the restored Temple in Jerusalem under Persian colonial oversight. This leads us back to the all-too-revealing texts of Ezra and Nehemiah. This is not the place to fully unpack the propagandistic, priestly pap found in those books, but perhaps it will suffice to note that the Ezra/Nehemiah program of rebuilding was financed by the Persian Empire for its own purposes (Jerusalem being to Persia what Pearl Harbor was to the United States: a convenient colonial outpost halfway to the distant enemy, Egypt/Japan).

Ezra the priest (descended from the priestly line of Zadok, Solomon's loyal cabinet member) had a major problem of legitimation if he was going to persuade the folk to come celebrate YHWH's presence in Jerusalem. First, the

people well knew that Persia was paying the bill. Second, the old Temple propaganda had proclaimed that the Ark of the Covenant was contained in the Holy of Holies: YHWH's very home was in the midst of Jerusalem. But in Ezra's time, Jerusalem was rebuilt from highly visible ruins by the labor of conscripted peasants and their families, whose outcry against rape and abuse reached the ear of the Persian governor-in-charge, Nehemiah (see Nehemiah 5). What to do?

The bottom line here is that the priestly elite did what religious officials have always done to get the people to chip in the bucks to support the building campaign: put on powerfully good liturgical shows. Before today's high-tech megachurch extravaganzas was the Jerusalem Temple liturgy for the Festival of Shelters. In Jesus' time, this consisted of, among other things, a fabulously extravagant outpouring of water from the Temple into the streets of the city, in accordance with the prophet Zechariah's vision of YHWH's vengeance on the nations that had resisted Israel:

"On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea; it shall continue in summer as in winter. And YHWH will become king over all the earth; on that day YHWH will be one and his name one." (Zechariah 14:8-9)

It is on this "great day of the feast" that John's Gospel tells us that Jesus "cried out, 'Let anyone who is thirsty come to me! And let the one who believes in me drink! As the Scripture has said, 'Out of their belly shall flow rivers of living water.' " (John 7:37-38) In other words, it is Jesus, not the institutional religion and its priestly elite, that is the true source of "living water" that is to be remembered and celebrated at the Festival of Shelters.

Similarly, the Jerusalem feast offered a dazzling light show of an oil lamp-bearing priestly parade that processed through the city at night to remember YHWH as the pillar of fire in the wilderness that lit the way for Israel out of empire and into the Promised Land. But Jesus says instead, "I am the light of the world! Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life." (John 8:12)

These are fighting words from the Messiah. Whose Festival are the people to celebrate: the one proposed by the folks who want your money to keep the megachurch going, or the one embodied by Jesus in and through us, the Body of Christ, whenever we answer the call to "come out" of empire?

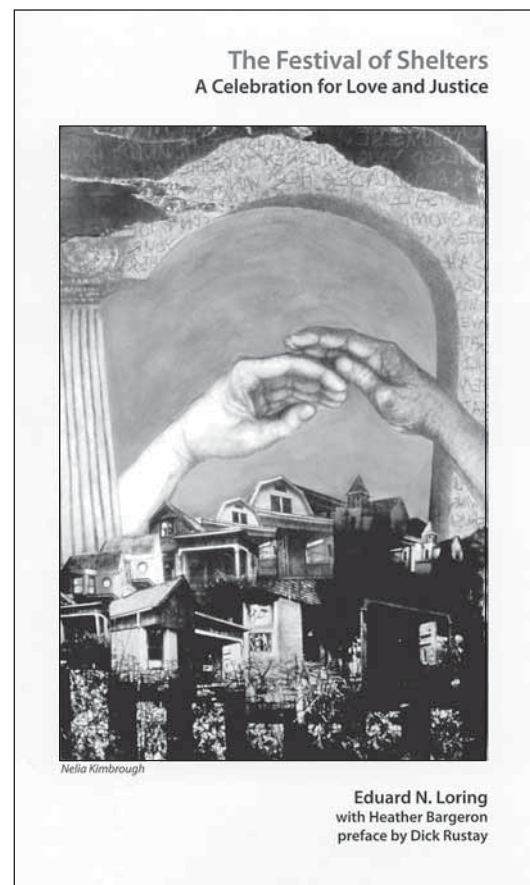
This is more than the blurb Ed asked me to write, I know. But I offer it because the celebration of the Festival of Shelters by Christians is even MORE subversive, necessary and transformative of self and society than might be apparent apart from engaging John's Gospel's radical Word along with the powerful stories contained in the Open Door book.

Throughout John, we find a Jesus who systematically replaces the institutional religious feasts, which are unmasked as reinforcements and legitimations of the unjust status quo, with the Feast that is his holy Body and divine Blood. "Munch my flesh," the Johannine Jesus commands his disciples just before he goes to Jerusalem for the Festival of Shelters, which leads many to "go back to the things behind" at this "hard word" (John 6:53-66). The most intimate possible experience of the sharing of human fleshliness is at the heart of every festival that Jesus' disciples are to celebrate, so that his "joy may be in you" and "your joy may be complete" (John 15:11 and 16:24).

The Open Door's embrace of this sacred Word shows the rest of us a means to follow ever more closely the One who is the Way that leads from the death dealt by empire throughout the ages and into the overflowing abundance of the only true Life. ✠



available now!



The Festival of Shelters A Celebration for Love and Justice

By Eduard Loring
with Heather Bargerion
preface by Dick Rustay

The shrill, summoning voice of Eduard Loring is an important one among us. He is grounded in our oldest poetic memories and rooted in the bodily reality of his community of need and care. His voice and his practice remind us of how it really is with us, how it could be different among us according to God's promises, and how we may, even now, enact our best hopes and our treasured memories in concrete ways. This is a welcome and urgent statement.

Walter Brueggemann
Columbia Theological Seminary
Decatur, Georgia

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People to accompany Community members to doctors' appointments.

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

People to cook or bring supper for the Community on certain Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday evenings.

Volunteers for Monday and Tuesday breakfasts (5:50-9:30 a.m.); Wednesday soup kitchen (9:50 a.m.-1:30 p.m.); Thursday showers (7:30-11:00 a.m.) and bag lunch (8:00 a.m.-12 noon).

Volunteers to help staff our foot clinic on Wednesday evenings (6:45-9:15 p.m.).

**For more information,
contact Chuck Harris at
odcvolunteer@bellsouth.net
or 770.246.7627**

From the Tax Table to the

By Eduard-the-Agitator Loring

Part A

Mark 2:13 Jesus went back again to the shore of Lake Galilee. A crowd came to him, and he started teaching them.

14 As he walked along, he saw a tax collector, Levi son of Alphaeus, sitting in his office. Jesus said to him, "Follow me." Levi got up and followed him.

Part B

15 Later on Jesus was having a meal in Levi's house. A large number of tax collectors and other outcasts were following Jesus, and many of them joined him and his disciples at the table.

16 Some teachers of the Law, who were Pharisees, saw that Jesus was eating with these outcasts and tax collectors, so they asked his disciples, "Why does he eat with such people?"

17 Jesus heard them and answered, "People who are well do not need a doctor, but only those who are sick. I have not come to call respectable people, but outcasts."

Part C

The Open Door Community is in the midst of ups and downs. Transitions are transforming. We are no longer who we were. We are not who we're gonna be. We are returning, reforming, revisioning, revolving and revolutionizing. We are rewriting our covenant, for we are a Covenantal Discipleship Movement seeking renewal. We are returning to the Rock of our salvation through refocused Bible study, Works of Mercy, prayer meetings, Justice Works.

We confess our faith in Jesus. We confess our faith in the faith of Jesus. We are old and we are not afraid. Like Jesus, who walked along the shore of Galilee, we are walking along the sidewalks of Ponce de Leon Avenue, Peachtree and Auburn Avenue, calling folks to get up from their tables of collaboration with the American Empire (where we once were ourselves, every one of us) and join the concert of the blood-washed band.

Part D

13 Jesus went back again to the shore of Lake Galilee. A crowd came to him, and he started teaching them.

How did/does Jesus teach? He walked. He talked. He taught. As he walked along, he saw. A lot of people walk up and down Ponce de Leon and never see anyone, though they pass many folk. Sometimes 175 stream past our front yard. One of the cool things about Jesus — when you walk past him, he will see you. No sweat, nothing to worry about. The question is, "Will you see him?"

Hope we are out there walking in the streets. That's where he is. If you ain't in the streets, likelihood is Jesus ain't gonna see you. Put your body out where God's eyes are. Are our eyes watching God? Gotta be in the streets or jails or in a cathole or soup line, shower line, clothing line, and catch-out corner line to get a glimpse of the Holy One.

14 As he walked along, he saw a tax collector, Levi son of Alphaeus, sitting in his office.

Now, Jewish tax collectors were rich, yucky, yucky folks who made their money from the exploitation of others: friends, Jews, followers of Jesus, the poor and vulnerable.



Ade Bethune

Tax collectors collaborated with Rome and made money for themselves alone. They were like Christians who are in the FBI or the CIA or the military, or a torturer at Guantanamo prison. Or like the Christian who will pour the cocktail into Earl Lynd's arm and kill him before you receive this issue of *Hospitality*. We cannot serve God and mammon. We cannot give our allegiance to the American domination system and the Body of Jesus Christ. Does not fit. Won't work. Can a camel get through the eye of a needle?

Jesus, the radical prophet of God, called Levi the dissolute Quisling of the Roman occupation of Palestine. His name was Levi. The Levites, descendants of the original Levi, were the landless tribe of Israel that took care of the Temple and prepared for the liturgies of sacrifice and blood. Perhaps Levi's name was part of the attraction for Jesus. For one of the primary aims and purposes of Jesus' life on earth was to destroy the Temple. Yea, even more: to destroy religion. Levi was a fitting name

for the inner circle of the blood-washed band.

The dark-skinned Jewish teacher *saw* the tax collector *sitting*. This walkertalker teacher nonviolent resister saw this rich guy sitting. This man whose soul belonged to Empire and the exploitive economic system. Levi was sitting and selling short his sisters and brothers, with a preferential option for the poor peasants. Jesus said to the tax collector what he says to us all in our brokenness, wounds, sins and our status in this security state Empire of ours. While we are yet in collaboration with powers and principalities, in our ill-wrought privileges and pleasures. In our addictions and our lostness, our conformity and apathy, he says, "Follow me." No repentance, no faith, no time to straighten up the desk or hide the money, just as you are, "without one plea" follow me.

**Jesus went
walkingtalking,
teachinghealing,
and he got hungry.
God gets hungry too.**

Levi, who was sitting, got up. The first act of discipleship: Get up. Stand up. Shout as loud as you can. Dr. King, like Jesus before him, all through his short and anguished public life, cried, begged and inspired his followers to Stand Up, which is to Speak Up with the whole body of one's soul. Levi stood up, and his old life was over. He followed Jesus and his new way, truth and life had begun.

So off they walked along the shore of Galilee. And, wow, what a great teaching aid Jesus had. "Hey, ye peasants and poor. Look here. See? Look what we got: we got somebody who collaborated with the Romans. And he is coming along with me and Simon, Andrew, James, John, Mary and Joanna. Can you see? Can you hear? Can you get up and grab a life? Let me tell you about his trust and leap into faith. All I said was 'Follow me,' and he got up. And some people don't believe in miracles? Some folk don't believe the Holy Spirit is on fire?" Then this little group continued walkingtalking along the shore of Galilee, and later, the sidewalks along Ponce de Leon Avenue.

Then time passed. Evening came. And that was step one of the first day.

Welcome Table: Mark 2:13-17

Part E

15a Later on Jesus was having a meal in Levi's house.

Later on Jesus was doing what every single human being must do. He was eating. Hunger is not anything that distinguishes us, because every one of us gets hungry.

The distinction is twofold. First, some of us have access to food. Most do not in this global village which God is giving to us to care for as we care for each other. Do you know where your next meal is coming from? Or do you not?

Second, the mystery of God's grace which creates a hunger for bread and wine. A loaf broken. Grape juice poured out for us through the mystery of the redemptive power unleashed in history against Empire, war, hunger and prison. Bread shared. Cup passed round to each one of us. Where does this hunger, this desire, come from? Is it not rooted in the gift of the hunger and thirst for justice? For righteousness? But why are there so few who feed this hunger? So few who quench this thirst? Why is the band so tiny who opposed the execution of Earl Lynd?

Jesus went walkingtalking, teachinghealing, and he got hungry. God gets hungry too. Now, like the rich today: if you work for the Empire, if you can be counted on to collect taxes or cut taxes for health care, housing and public defenders, you will have a house. Levi had a house. If you work hard, give up your soul, and refuse to pursue human rights in this consumer capitalistic society, you will have food. And if the banks and the government don't screw you, you will have a house just like Levi did on the first day of his discipleship.

Old Mother Hubbard went to the cupboard to get her poor dog a bone. When she got there the cupboard was bare, and the poor dog had none. That shows you Ms. Hubbard was a socialist.

15b A large number of tax collectors and other outcasts were following Jesus, and many of them joined him and his disciples at the table.

Jesus and his disciples and followers are having a meal. What does it mean to you to have access to food? What an attitude of gratitude. Food + meal + house + love and friends = home and the Welcome Table. Food riots are going on in the streets throughout the world. Three hundred Cameroonians are dead from getting up and standing up and shouting out for food as their children's bellies extended outward and death winked his obese eye. Food? What a gift? Or for our Empire, like the Roman, is our overabundance rooted in power and exploitation rather than God's abundance? God bless America? Well, you better be able to run fast.

As the Jesus band were eating, a number of folks decided to drop their belongingness to the Empire, and/or their allegiance to a religion that cast them out for the sake of

purity and segregated them as though they were Negroes in the back of the bus in Montgomery, Alabama, on December 1, 1955, but no more. These tax collectors, lepers with no insurance, and homeless peasants who had to sell themselves for day labor at the Home Depot catch-out corner, came for the meal of their lives and a living giving meal. Never before had they been to a Welcome Table. Never again would they be without one.

Their question was, what is he doing with these stupid, lazy good-for-nothings?

These tax collectors who came into Levi's home, with the windows and doors opened, were being redeemed, healed, born again. These folk who came turned their backs on the domination system. They did not make a big show. (It reminds me of Dick and Gladys Rustay, who gave up everything they had to move into the Open Door Community 18 years ago.)

Outcasts came. They were folk like the man our guests from Memphis Theological Seminary helped last week. When the Department of the Interior police saw someone giving alms in the "Tourist Triangle," they stepped in to stop it. "What are you doing helping a beggar at this National Historic Site for Martin Luther King Jr.? Don't you know you are breaking the law? Do you think the powerful of Atlanta want you coming round here and dishonoring King by helping the poor?"

Our guests engaged the two federal police even as a rent-a-cop walked up to see what she could do to help rid the sidewalk of people who, under the gospel mandate, were giving alms. And the folks from Memphis prevailed. The beggar got a little money, and the police failed to make a single arrest. This land is my land. This land is your land. Thank you, guests from Memphis, for uncovering the mask of evil that shrouds Dr. King's life and death in Atlanta, Georgia.

These outcasts are so different from tax collectors, who have access to the privileges of money, though ill gained. Many tax collectors went to college. Dr. Erskine Clarke told me of three tax collectors who went to seminary until they were grasped by the "prosperity gospel." Then they got down to the real deal: Money, Money, Money, honey.

The outcasts didn't get to go to private school or a charter school. Many of them had dads in prison, mamas on crack. These are the kind of folk who follow Jesus. Who hunger and thirst for justice and bread and grape juice at the Welcome Table.

That is who we are at the Open Door Community. Murphy and I are former tax

collectors. Robert Clayton and Ira Terrell are former outcasts. Together we are a tiny mustard seed in the ground of God's adventure.

Now, there is a hidden cost that these poor outcasts and rich tax collectors don't know: the cost of discipleship. In fact, Jesus isn't going to tell them until the eighth chapter of Mark. Today, Jesus just wants to introduce them to this new food, new table, and the new community of tax collectors and outcasts. They and we are socially and personally sick.

They meet Jesus, the Human One, at the table in a home with a band of folk who break the law by being together. As the streets are basic to experiencing, understanding, knowing and practicing discipleship, so is the table. A table is not a discipleship table unless the invitation is wide and the response is broad. "And many of them joined him and his disciples at the table." Here Jesus feels as much at home as he does out on the streets and beside the lake.

Part F

16 Some teachers of the Law, who were Pharisees, saw that Jesus was eating with these outcasts and tax collectors, so they asked his disciples, "Why does he eat with such people?"

Some teachers of the law — one translation uses "theologians" — were Pharisees, the closest group to Jesus in their vision of reforming Judaism. These religious leaders looked in the open door and paneless windows and saw Jesus eating with the impure, sinners, the rejects, disposable people and, worst of all, with tax collectors. They had eyes to see. But they missed the point in their seeing.

"So they asked his disciples, 'Why does he eat with such people?'" Why not ask the leader? Why beat around the bush? Are they agents of some other power that uses sticks and stones to break bones? Are they just doing their job and protecting the Torah? Why not go to the source? Who knows? But I have seen new volunteers asking other new volunteers why the central office is locked rather than asking a Partner.

What we do know is this. These highly educated seminary professors didn't have any idea who Jesus is. And many do not know

today. We wonder: what in the world is Jesus doing in these million-dollar churches with huge high steeples and red cushy pews for bony or big bottoms? But that was not the question from the teachers of the law. Their question was, what is he doing with these stupid, lazy good-for-nothings? And in a tax collector's home? EATING with them. SITTING at table with them. What kind of man is this?

This "son of man," Human One, son of God, child of David (they had heard). Some said after John the Baptist had been put into prison, "This is the Messiah." This man was mental. No Davidic messiah, no great leader of the next Israeli Empire would be hanging out with weak ones and traitors of the people and Yahweh Elohim.



Meinrad Craighead

The Pharisees were confused. Who is this man who can get folk to leave the American Way of Life by simply saying, "Follow me"? Or, "Here, have a seat and pass your plate"? Of course, these outcasts did not have consumer debt, no student loans, no mortgage payments. Not one rode a horse. What is he doing? He is a Jew. Look at him breaking the law. Eating with sinners and scum. What will this do for the property values of Levi's house and neighborhood?

Bob Watkins of the Poncey-Highland Neighborhood Association suggested that they close Levi's house down and get rid of this brown trash. Not to mention that Levi has opened the door and flung wide the windows so all can see. Scandal.

From the Tax Table, continued on page 10

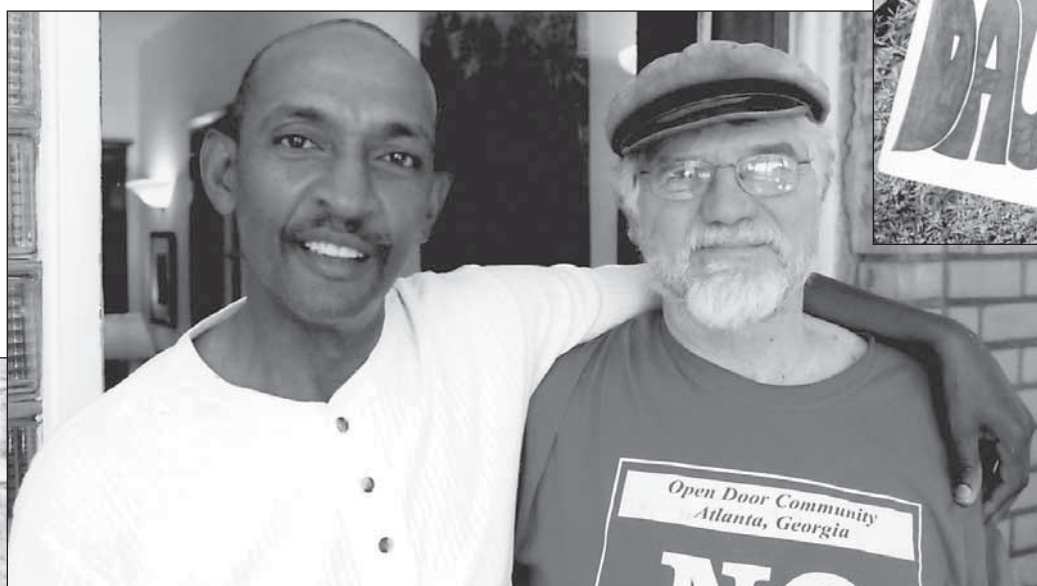
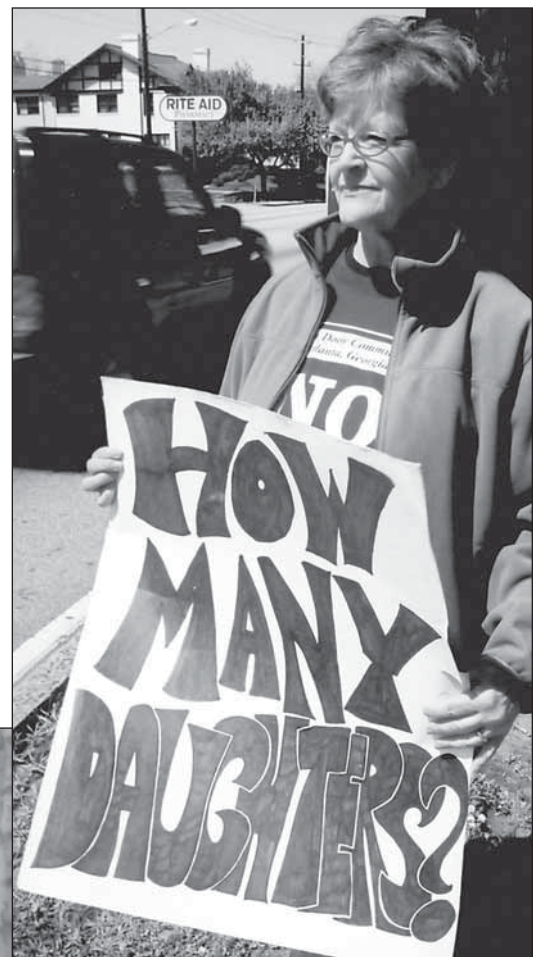


In, Out & Around 910

Compiled and Photographed by Calvin Kimbrough

Locked Up

On Sunday, April 13, 2008 a crowd gathered in the Open Door Community living room to hear Don Beisswenger read from his book "Locked Up: Letters and Papers of a Prisoner of Conscience" and sign books for folks (above). "Locked Up" is about his time in federal prison for the act of "crossing the line" at the SOA Watch action at Ft. Benning, Georgia in November 2003 (www.soaw.org). Don also preached at our worship following the book signing (see his sermon "Lament and Hope" on page 1). Photographs by Amanda Petersen.



Visitors

Margaret Nisly (above, right) came from Seattle, Washington for a week at the Open Door Community in April. Her husband, Weldon Nisly has been here to visit several times. We were happy to meet Margaret, and thankful for her help during the week. **Charlie Young, Jr.** (above), here with Eduard Loring, was once a prisoner on Georgia's death row. During that time, in the early 1980s, Charlie Young, Sr. came to live at the Open Door Community. Father and son, long estranged, were reunited. Charlie was freed on parole in 2003 and stops by 910 for a visit whenever he comes to Atlanta. **Capital X** (left) spent two nights with us while on his 1,700-mile "Walk 4 Life." The purpose of his walk is to raise public awareness about the death penalty and to bring more people into the movement to end it. He is walking from Trenton, New Jersey – a state which recently abolished the death penalty – to Texas, the state which executes the most prisoners in the U.S.A. You may check out his progress at www.onloq.com.

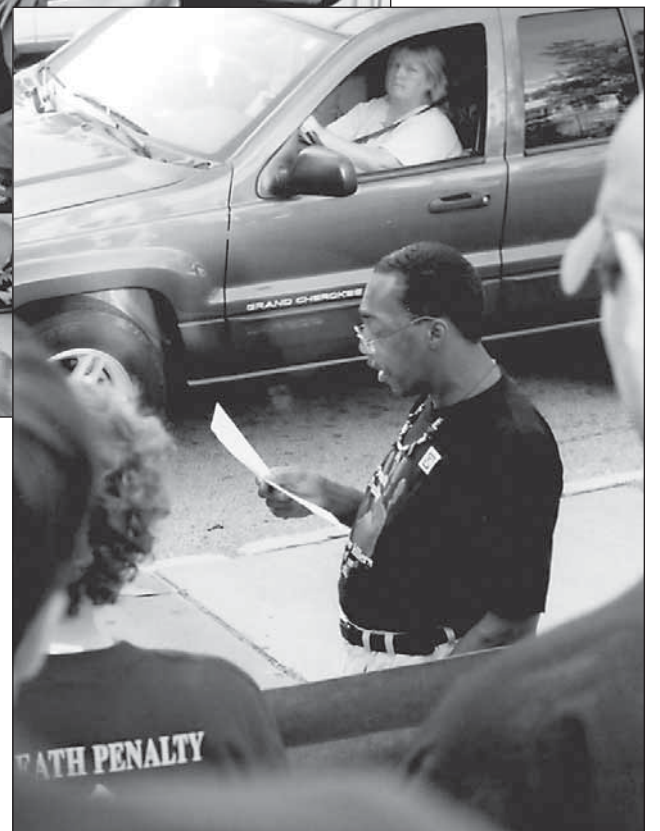
MTS at ODC

Pete Gathje's Memphis Theological Seminary class came for a week of study and work at the Open Door Community the last week of April. They worked hard, had good study times with Eduard-the-Agitator, Murphy Davis and others, and generally brightened up the house at 910. They stopped long enough for a group picture: (front, left to right) David Adams, Alma King, Orlean Smith, Pat Owens; (middle, left to right) Toni Robinson, Leo Chang, Ian Butler, Shannon Capshaw, Gail Baldwin, Stan Neighbors; (back, left to right) Eric Corbin, Pete Gathje, Jathaniel Cavitt, Alex Beaubé.



William Earl Lynd Vigil

Each time the State of Georgia executes a prisoner on death row, the Open Door Community leads a vigil on the front steps of the State Capitol. Dick Rustay holds a vigil candle (left) as Murphy Davis (below) speaks to the gathered group during the vigil for the execution of William Earl Lynd on Tuesday, May 6, 2008 (see Murphy's article on page 1). Open Door Community Resident Robert Clayton (below right) reads Psalm 146 during the vigil. This vigil is one of several regional vigils held during each execution. Georgians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty carries a schedule for these state-wide vigils on their web site: www.GFADP.org.



Lament and Hope, continued from page 1

for the Psalmist as well as for God.

5. There is the move to punish. There is payback time. Psalm 140 echoes the call for punishment of those who have mistreated the people. It was expressive of what my roommate and I felt. Things were bad and punishment for the warden seemed right and proper. There is something problematic, ignoble and unacceptable here. Yet the Psalmist asks God to adhere to the request.

6. After the venom, the hurt and the demonic are expressed, something unusual and unexpected happens. The speaker ends in trust that things will improve and be dealt with bountifully by God. The speaker is in a different place and a new reality. Hope is there again.

“We have here a spirituality of protest,” Brueggemann suggests. Things are not all right and there is no sense saying that all is well when it is not. Something must be done. The Psalmist speaks against docility. The Psalms reject conventional answers, saying that God is omnipotent, or omnipresent, or all-powerful. Such answers are insufficient. Israel had a will, a voice and starch. The Psalms call God to deal with the people’s situation. They insist! The utterance comes from below, not from above. There is the cry of the people and the God who hears. There is thus truth-telling by the people, along with protest.

What end does the Psalmist seek? Through the prayer a process begins to make for a new reality. There is a change in both God and human dealing with the world, because the decks are clear for a new way.

Lament in our time

This has been a time of lament for many of us. Our nation projects itself deceptively onto another nation. There is torture in Iraqi prisons, intimidation of workers in Colombia, Tibet faces China, elections in Zimbabwe are distorted, widespread hunger and oppression affects children and families around the world. Most of all is the persistence of violence as the dominant way to deal with conflict.

The Rev. James Lawson has been at Vanderbilt for the past two years. He was Martin Luther King’s trainer in nonviolence around the world. He said recently in a conversation, “Nonviolent witness and resistance seems to be from another planet. The legacy of King has been lost.”

While I was in prison, there was grief among the inmates. Gary’s mother died and he could spend only an hour at the funeral with the one whom he loved and who loved him. James had three children and felt the loss of contact with the children and tried to keep in touch via the phone, but it was difficult. Most all the inmates had lost jobs. They also lost a community of support. Few received letters. They grieved alone. Grief, sadness, loss and powerlessness were forms of lament.

I found “languish” an appropriate word for what was going on in my brothers and in me. This means to become weak,

dispirited and depressed, with a loss of energy.

I recently completed reading Taylor Branch’s “At Canaan’s Edge,” the story of the later days in King’s life and ministry, focused largely on the campaign with the garbage workers in Memphis. This campaign was in process after King had given his “Beyond Vietnam” speech (April 4, 1967, Riverside Church, New York), which evoked great conflict in the movement. Further, the Black Power movement was expressing criticism of King. There was a lack of money, threats on his life, and conflict among the leaders of the movement over the decision to go to Chicago and engage Mayor Daley and the North. Conflicts among people and factions within King’s organization, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and other groups were in full bloom. There was the call by many to begin a violent movement.

The gift of hope trusts that God is waiting for us ... and that we can begin again.

The book made me realize anew what a time of lament this was for King. Taylor Branch describes the tense and conflicted situation. The move toward violence was a deep disappointment and loss. But King pressed on.

In reading the book, I became deeply aware of an event in my own life. It occurred at the time of the Selma-to-Montgomery march. My lament occurred as I recalled Viola Liuzzo, the Detroit woman who was murdered as she drove down to Selma from Montgomery in 1965 to share in the second march to Montgomery. She had left her family with only a cursory goodbye. “I have to go,” she said.

In Montgomery she stayed with the Abraham Bibb family, who offered housing for her before going to Selma. She shared in the march, often helping with odd jobs, food and transportation. After the march was over, she stayed again with the Bibb family.

She offered to ferry people back to Selma and was taking a young African-American man to Selma on March 21, 1965. As she drove, she was followed. She tried to outrun them, going 90 miles per hour at times, but they kept coming. Finally they came alongside the car, and a barrage of bullets killed her instantly. The car rolled over. The young man was injured, but not seriously. He feigned death while the perpetrators came to look at the fruit of their labor of killing.

Her death shocked her family and the nation. The next day, President Johnson spoke about her witness and service and called for action, both immediate, to catch the perpetrators, and long-term, to secure voting rights legislation. They caught the three men who did the killing. They were acquitted by an all-white jury, though later they were charged again and given 10 years in prison.

My lament began the day after Viola was killed. I arrived in Montgomery with several others who came from Chicago for a week of voter registration. We decided that this would be more essential than for us to share in the march, as exciting as that would be. Taking persons to the polls was also vital.

King had just completed the march and spoke to those gathered before we arrived. Hazel Gregory, a leader in the Montgomery Improvement Association, met us and gave us our instructions. I was given a place to sleep, and it was with Mr. and Mrs. Abraham Bibb. I did not know about Viola Liuzzo at the time. They took me to my room, and Mrs. Bibb then told me that this was the same bed Viola Liuzzo had used the night before her fatal trip to Selma.

It was unnerving, and I grieved. I settled in, but was forever bound to Viola through that moment. I give thanks for her life and witness. And I lament her violent death.

Times of lament can move to despair. Despair begins to shape our minds and how we see what is going on. We may become suspicious or hopeless about the future. Joan Chittister says that despair is a subtle emotion that masquerades as reality, but really is just reality exaggerated and distorted.

No one can talk another out of despair, but persons can stand there helping distortion to be discerned. We can stand with another, for God also stands there.

What of hope? What can we say about hope?

Hope and despair are cut from the same cloth, shaped from the very same circumstances in our life. But we become suspicious of the future. Charles West says “We turn to God when our foundations are shaking only to find out that it is God who is shaking them.”

Hope challenges us to claim what we have done, many things up to this point in our life, facing many a crisis.

Hope comes as a gift that leads us to see differently. Rather than suspicion, we begin to take life on its own terms. We can begin to talk of life as it is, as it meets us. When this happens, we begin, dimly at first, to claim that whatever happens, God lives in it too. We can trust that whatever twists and turns we face, we have a quality of soul that shapes our trust that God lives in us, around us, and will lead toward good.

Despair says there is no place to go. The gift of hope trusts that God is waiting for us someplace and that we can begin again.

Paul speaks of this in Romans 8. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now, he wrote, “and not only the creation but we ourselves, who, while having the first fruits of faith, groan inwardly.” In hope we are healed, we are saved from bondage and the lament that grasps us. Paul also reminds us that hope which is seen is not hope, for who hopes for what they can see? We wait for what we do not see, and so wait with patience. A promise.

The central wisdom of Paul for me is this: the Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we ought,

but the Spirit intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words. We rejoice because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Spirit which has been given to us.

I testify that what Paul says is true to my experience. The Spirit comes to make each day new, in ways we do not even grasp. Do I have a witness? Each morning as I stop to be quiet seeking holy presence, a gift often comes. It comes through readings and Scripture. It comes out of the silence. Lament and hope intertwine in our lives.

Listen to this poem by Ann Weems:

Jesus wept,
and in his weeping,
he joined himself forever
to those who mourn.

He stands now throughout all time,
this Jesus weeping,
with his arms
about the weeping ones:
“blessed are those who mourn,
for they shall be comforted.”

He stands with the mourners,
for his name is God-with-us.
Jesus wept.

Jesus teaches us to hope. God enabled Jesus to move beyond lament. So too for us. Thanks be to God.

Come, Holy Spirit. Change our mourning into dancing. Take off our sackcloth and clothe us in joy.

Psalm 71 summarizes it well:

It is you alone who are my hope,
my trust from my youth.
On you I have relied from birth;
from the womb
you have been my help.
Constant has been my hope in you.

There is one thing more. While trust in God is central to life, the gift of Jesus, the anointed one, becomes the occasion for us to see the reign of God in the flesh, full of grace and truth. “Follow me,” Jesus says. “I give you my life as an embodiment of the reign of God.” I came, he seems to say, under conditions of history in which you live. I will guide you in understanding of the way, the truth, the life, and my spirit comes helping to know the way.

So now we keep a feast in remembrance of this Jesus, the anointed one. We remember, not so much moving back in time, but remembering his immediate presence with us. Jesus joins with us here in this place, in this time and in this world in which we live. And so we say, God with us. Present! Presente!

I invite several persons to be with us tonight: Rufina Amaya of el Mozote, Jeremiah, Mary Magdalene, Martin Luther King, Dorothy Kazel, Fannie Lou Hamer. I ask you to invite others whom you want to bring among us. After each name, let us say “Present.”

[After the sharing was completed, these words were said.] With these and all the company of heaven, we come; let us keep the feast. ✠

Back to the Killing, *continued from page 1*

Moore was not alive when put into the trunk, then, legally speaking, she was not kidnapped. Therefore the aggravating circumstance was null and void.

This is to say that Mr. Lynd, who did in fact, by his own admission (he turned himself in), kill Ms. Ginger Moore, was not guilty of kidnapping and that the prosecution presented false testimony to the jury. They lied. And the fact is that lying is often part of the process. Sometimes you might call it “withholding evidence.” And sometimes it might be...

But what we generally find is that 20 years after the crime, a fact that would have made a crucial difference in the trial is dismissed as “insignificant.” No court wanted to hear about it or bother with a truthful examination of the facts. So Mr. Earl Lynd went to his death. The press paid more attention to what he ate for his last meal than to the important pattern of deceit that brought about the death sentence in the first place.

Murder is always horrible, and we can never excuse or ignore it. The violence of men against women partners is a deeply entrenched pattern that we must address at every level of our life together. But the death penalty is a deceitful and expensive diversion. And it is the deceit that is *inherently* a part of the process that we have not yet fully acknowledged nor addressed.

Many well-informed people know that the history of the death penalty in Georgia is one of brutal and deadly discrimination on the basis of race, class and place.

In 1972, in the *Furman v. Georgia* case, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the old Georgia death penalty law because of the blatantly racist history of its application. In 1976, in *Gregg v. Georgia*, a changing Supreme Court upheld Georgia’s new law, passed under then-Governor Jimmy Carter. In 1987, in the *McCleskey v. Kemp* case, the court in the most bizarre decision acknowledged that racism was clearly at play in the Georgia death penalty. The justices said OK, your facts are presented and they are right. Then they turned around to affirm the law by one vote, the vote of Justice Lewis Powell, who in retirement acknowledged that the *McCleskey* decision was his greatest mistake and his greatest regret through all his years on the Supreme Court.

The law was affirmed because the court’s majority said that to grant Warren McCleskey’s petition, based on the evidence of racism, would undermine the entire criminal justice system in the United States of America. The United States Supreme Court said in the *McCleskey* decision that Georgia’s death penalty law is an essential foundation stone, if not a cornerstone, of the state’s and nation’s thoroughly racist system for criminal control. If the court had come up with the courage and the backbone to act on the truth that it acknowledged, if it had granted McCleskey’s petition, the criminal justice system, our entire system of police, courts, jails and prisons, would have started to unravel. The whole house of cards might have come down.

Of course, then we would have to look at the streets and access to housing and food and health care; and that is probably why Justice William Brennan, in his dissent, said that the *McCleskey* decision was based on the court’s “fear of too much justice.” About this our system is clear: we will maintain what we must for the “appearance” of justice, but we will refuse to move toward what might be real justice.

The death penalty, my friends, is a lie and it is based on the lie that our system is based on truth and fairness. We have a need to believe that the system of power and control that governs us is true. Even in these days while we can see democracy and equality undermined before our very eyes, we need to believe in the system. But our system is a lie, and this lie helps to keep us passive and quiet while sisters and brothers are executed in the prisons and die in polite silence on the streets and under bridges. Sisters and brothers, we have to remember that the power of this lie — this lie at the very foundation of our national life — says that some people are less than you and me. Some people are subhuman or perhaps

not human at all. The lie says that our system is truthful and fair and we can and should let a select elite determine who should live and who should die.

Do you hear the echoes of totalitarianism? “Trust us,” they say. “You have to trust our system.”

Are you kidding me? Look at our dysfunctional government. The majority of the American people don’t want to be at war, but we cannot stop George Bush and Dick Cheney and their cronies from destroying and plundering the best of our resources and plunging us into a crisis from which our nation will probably never recover. And look at the Georgia Republi-bubbas! The majority cannot even be civil with each other, and they want you to trust *them* to make decisions about the life and death of our sisters and brothers?

We have a government that we do not even trust to fix potholes in the streets, or balance the budget, or maintain the safety of a bridge across the Mississippi River. Why do we trust this same government to decide who should live and who should die?

Friends, in this struggle, *do* remember that we are on the side of truth. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. often quoted James Russell Lowell and this verse of his great hymn:

*Truth forever on the scaffold,
Wrong forever on the throne —
Yet that scaffold sways the future,
And, behind the dim unknown,
Standeth God within the shadow,
Keeping watch above her own.*

It is incumbent upon us to demand that the next cases that come up in Georgia — the cases of Samuel David Crowe, Jack Alderman, Curtis Osborne and Troy Davis — be dealt with fairly.

Troy’s case was an occasion for some hope until a recent decision from our state’s highest court. Troy Davis was wrongly convicted and sentenced to death 16 years ago. The Georgia Supreme Court in April denied him a new trial.

The case is not an aberration. The Georgia Supreme Court had to deny Troy’s claim for the same reason that the U.S. Supreme Court had to deny McCleskey’s, and the reason is this: they are not about to allow this lying, racist, deadly system to be unmasked. If Troy’s case had gone back to trial in Savannah, the police and Spencer Lawton, the district attorney, would have had what? What evidence would they produce to prosecute Troy Davis? Not a thing, nothing. The witnesses have recanted and told of police coercion. There is no *evidence* against this man, and so the Georgia Supreme Court could not allow the case to go back to trial.

The truth here is about protecting power and privilege. And this has to be denied at any cost. And the cost is going up. The debate is becoming more bizarre. When the courts begin to seriously consider and spend their time debating *methods* of killing, you know we have come to a sorry state.

It is long past time for people of good will and truth to stand up. The death penalty stands as one of the clearest institutions and symbols of our spiritual poverty and moral depravity in this country. The death penalty is institutionalized hopelessness. It says in practice and theory that we are ready and willing and able to give up on each other and on ourselves as a people.

Only a creative and dedicated minority can pull us through a time like this. A radical remnant with a commitment to truth and democracy, with a commitment to justice and human dignity. We cannot wait until we are a mass movement, because we will probably never be a mass movement. But real change comes when a small number of people stay at it, in season and out, refusing to give up. ✠

Murphy Davis is a Partner at the Open Door Community and Director of Southern Prison Ministry in Georgia.



Join us as a Resident Volunteer



Calvin Kimbrough

Murphy Davis with Zae and her mom Amy Harwell during a recent visit to 910. Amy is a Federal Public Defender in the Nashville Capital Appellate office. Amy twice served as a Resident Volunteer at the Open Door Community, and we can hardly wait until Zae comes for her RV term!

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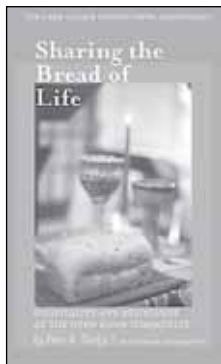
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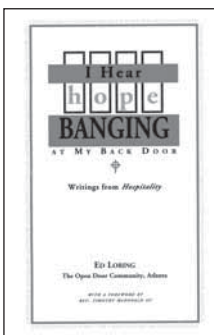
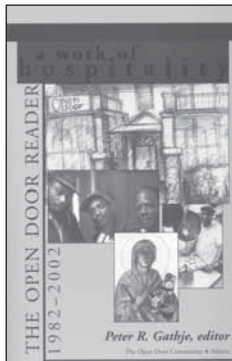
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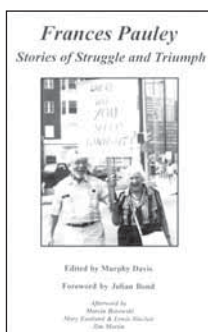
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Living Into the Beloved Community

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

By Peter R. Gathje

Reviewed by **Ashley DeVore**

I am a regular volunteer on Thursdays and a recent graduate of Columbia Theological Seminary. When I started to do some administrative work for Eduard Loring, he strongly encouraged me to read "Sharing the Bread of Life." He even prayed for it. It was already on my reading list, but through the power of prayer it was moved up the list a little quicker, and I am thankful for that.

"Sharing the Bread" opened up the Open Door Community to me in a new way. Although I have experienced their hospitality firsthand, it was a blessing to see how they got to where they are now in their ministry. The book gave me a greater appreciation for where they have been and what they have been fighting for since 1981.

I always trusted the leadership team, since they are there day in and day out and I'm there only a few hours a week. But reading about the struggles they have lived through helps me to have even more trust in them, because they consistently rely on Scripture, prayer and each other for all the decisions they make.

This book also greatly humbled me. The community members' willingness to give up the lives they knew to live together and struggle together is inspiring. Their willingness to fight against racism, sexism, homophobia, capitalism and so much more, both within and outside their walls, is a testimony to the grace of God.

I have lived in a number of intentional Christian communities throughout the country, and the Open Door is the one that has focused the most on listening to and following God and relying on the Holy Spirit to carry it through the difficult times. The Beloved Community of God that they are living into is inspiring, and one can glimpse the Kingdom of God through the difficult yet beautiful work they are doing as described in "Sharing the Bread" and lived out every day at 910. ✦

The Open Door Community's July 4th Picnic Needs You!

We will provide a festive holiday picnic for 500 hungry friends, serving hamburgers (with ketchup, mustard, mayonnaise, onions and pickles), slaw, baked beans, potato chips, watermelons, and sweet tea.

We need:

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to prepare and serve
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From the Tax Table, continued from page 5

Part G

17 Jesus heard them and answered, "People who are well do not need a doctor, but only those who are sick. I have not come to call respectable people, but outcasts."

Jesus responds. He often does so when folk address a question to his disciples, male and female, that should have come to him. "People who are well do not need a doctor, but only those who are sick. I have not come to call respectable people, but outcasts." He came for "the people." As Martin Luther King Jr. did after 1966 when he moved onto the road of the Poor People's Campaign. The people. The poor, lame, blind, white miners, Amerindians, Black tenant farmers, Montgomery bus drivers, Memphis garbage collectors, crushed and uncrushed. The people.

Respectability and the gospel of Jesus Christ cannot mix. The gospel is for outcasts.

The Pharisees were welcome to the table, but they could not see or hear the power of the table. This freedom and healing from religion. The soldiers in Iraq today are welcomed to the peace movement, but they cannot see the redemptive character of nonviolent resistance and the peace of God. So they believe they are doing the right thing in their dogmas, definitions of who is out and who is in, and their wars for oil and democracy run by the security state. These folk disastrously do not believe they need a doctor. In their long robes and military dress, they believe they are respectable. They act out of their talents. They are headed for glory. They are dead folk walking. Jesus did not come for those who do not need a doctor, who are respectable.

To know that you are broken, wounded and sick, something has to be slipping and sliding in your life, family, church or nation. Jesus came for those who are headed for truth, not glory. Headed down, not up. In need of a doctor, but ain't got no health insurance. Those crippled but who live by gifts given freely, not achievements, high IQ, or resumes filled with winning the competitions instead of sharing the struggle. Most of them aren't real good-looking.

In this story of call and table, we meet the double-edged sword of the gospel. On the one hand there is the wide, wide mercy of God's love. Levi was called prior to repentance and faith. On the other hand there is a sharp knife that cuts deep to the marrow of the bone. If you need no doctor and you are respectable, Jesus did not come for you.

The call is only for the sick, for those who have to go to Grady Hospital, notwithstanding the takeover of the hospital by Presbyterian businessmen. What have the Christians in Atlanta done? Letting the rich and private privilege and Coke money take the hospital from the poor? What is going to happen on judgment day? St. Peter gonna look you in the eye and say, "Why did you not advocate for my sick ones?" How could the politicians take health insurance from our children? "You let the rich take Grady."

"I have not come to respectable people," said Jesus very unrespectably eating at a tax collector's home with outcasts.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German pacifist Christian martyr whom the Nazis hung for his role in trying to kill Hitler, saw through the prison bars that the great threat to the Christian church is middle-class life and its quiet respectability. Respectability and the gospel of Jesus Christ cannot mix. The gospel is for outcasts.

Can I have a witness? ✦

Eduard-the-Agitor Loring is a Partner at the Open Door Community.

Grace and Peaces of Mail

Dear Murphy,

Thank you for “House Lust and Lent” (*Hospitality*, February 2008). You ask, “Is not our greed for more homes and bigger homes, in and of itself, a major cause of homelessness?” Yes it is. Then you ask, “Might God be calling us to take the \$170 billion that we wanted to spend on renovating our already adequate houses and use it to house women, men and children who have no homes?” My answer is that if one reads the Bible and believes what God says to us there, then one must say, “Yes, God is calling the people of the United States to redistribute our wealth in that way.”

Why then is it not happening? Because our minds are numbed so that we cannot hear what God says. Or if we do hear it, we ignore it, because it radically conflicts with our value system.

Do the people of the United States value justice, mercy and walking humbly with our God? Clearly there are precious few who really value these things, even if we say we do. You can tell that by our fruits.

Why is that? How are our values being shaped? Our values are shaped by what we allow into our minds. What we value determines how we behave.

To a great extent, advertising and the entertainment industry are shaping the values of Americans. We spend our resources on what these media teach us to want: the latest iPods, iPhones, iMacs, TVs, cosmetics, designer clothing, fast food, expensive cars and, yes, big homes, and the list goes on and on. How many of the TV commercials that advertisers spend billions of dollars on are aimed at getting us to value housing for the poor? How many Americans are watching hours of ads and TV shows every week, instead of listening to God? When we watch these ads, how can we expect to withstand their seductive power?

Our culture is sick unto death.

It is not that iPhones or cosmetics or any of those things are evil in and of themselves. It is the compulsion to spend all our resources on things we do not need and then borrow more money than we have so that we can buy even more of the things we do not need, at the same time that our poor neighbors are homeless. This is what is evil.

When I lived for a week at the Open Door Community several years ago, I observed that there was no television for me to watch, except the one that appeared for one night connected to a VCR, so that we could watch a movie (no commercials). After that one movie, the TV disappeared again. That week, instead of spending hours watching and listening to demonically inspired messages on the tube, aimed at getting me to spend my resources on myself, I spent hours talking with community members about their lives and how to follow Jesus in practicing justice, mercy and humility and hours actually doing justice, mercy and humility. I experienced life in a countercultural Christian community.

When I left the Open Door Community and went home, I tried to cut out my TV watching and do more of what I had done at the Open Door. I had some success, but I found myself weak, and in my weaker moments ended up wasting time in front of the tube. In disgust with myself, I finally threw my TV away. After a while of no TV, I realized my buying habits were changing. It was clear to me that the reason was that I was no longer seeing any advertising on the tube.

I don't think everyone should throw their TVs away. I did so because of my inability to withstand the temptation to watch worthless stuff. But I think everyone who really wants to pursue justice, practice mercy and walk humbly with God should be very careful about what they feed their minds and hearts, because it will determine how they act.

At the Open Door the week I was there, we started the day off right by gathering together to reflect on the Scripture, seeking to hear what God was saying to us. That molded the way we lived.

You end your fine article by writing, “If there is to be an end to this crucifixion of the poor, it will come only because the people of faith, hope and love join hand and heart, mind and muscle to rebuild from the ground up. It is never too late.” Amen, sister.

Rebuilding from the ground up means creating countercultural communities that enable people to withstand the god of this world and his servants, and become servants of the Triune God, who has made his ways plain to us. Jesus built a countercultural community and he told us to go and do the same. \$170 billion will not be spent to battle homelessness unless many, many more of us rebuild from the ground up the way Jesus taught us to do.

At the present time, I am not part of a community and it is very difficult to live counterculturally. Please keep inspiring us to pursue community in which we can hear and obey God. And pray for us as we pray for you.

With love in Christ,

Roger Lier

Andover, Massachusetts

Editor's note: Roger Lier is a pastor in the United Church of Christ. He spent a week at the Open Door in the fall of 2004.



Julie Lonneman

Dear Friends,

Happy Earth Day! I hope this will help a little bit during this time of deepening need.

Thank you for all you *are* and *do*.

Peace,

Loretta McCarthy

Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament

Bensalem, Pennsylvania

Dear Murphy and Ed,

I want to thank you for the comprehensive and pointed articles you wrote for the February 2008 *Hospitality*, concerning homelessness. As you so eloquently state, homelessness in this country is a deeply disturbing result of systemic, institutional attitudes and policies that have been worsening over the past 28 years. I am concerned that this continuing, divisive situation will result in massive riots and even worse chaos than now exists.

These articles, as well as all your articles over the years, have formed a fine foundation for my work for and with homeless persons in two counties in Florida since 2000. As a member (in a leadership position) of a countywide coalition for addressing issues of homeless people, I find it daunting to make a dent in this systemic racism and classism. I know all too well that I just need to keep on keeping on in my advocacy role (with a group of like-minded people) for and with the homeless in our community.

I am enclosing a gift to contribute to your work with homeless and imprisoned persons. Please send me a copy of Peter Gathje's book “Sharing the Bread of Life.”

Shalom,

Tom Washburn, M.D.

Fernandina Beach, Florida

Dear Calvin,

Oh, how we loved George Britt (“Good Bye Dear George,” *Hospitality*, May 2008)! We told our community about him last night and shared prayers for all of you. Thank you for memorializing him there at 910. We had a good time telling George stories last night and then crying tears of grief. I do wonder what nickname he has given to God. You know he's already got a good one.

How is everyone doing? We pray for you all and speak about you often. We enjoyed the last newspaper so much — thanks for all of your hard work. We understand it so much better now that we are publishing, too. What fun!

We just lost our Scooter a couple of weeks back. We were sad to lose the last one [of the cats we had]. It has been so important to have these pets here — people really do love them and they so often break the ice with their unconditional love. We have just adopted two more cats from the Humane Society. We named them Brown Sugar and Cinnamon. They bring a lot of life here in the midst of the struggles.

Amy Cantrell and Chrystal Cook

Zacchaeus House

Asheville, North Carolina

Editor's note: Amy and Chrystal are former Resident Volunteers at the Open Door and work with homeless folks in downtown Asheville through Zacchaeus House.

Dear Calvin,

[We are grieved to learn about] George Britt's death (“Good Bye Dear George,” *Hospitality*, May 2008). This sadness comes with lots of good memories and laughter. George was a fool for Christ in his own unique way. We will remember George with you and celebrate his resurrection.

Blessings to you and Nelia and all.

Eric & Jodi Garbison

Cherith Brook Community

Kansas City, Kansas

Editor's note: Eric and Jodi lived at the Open Door as Resident Volunteers, along with their children Henri and Ana, from 2004 to 2006.

Hello,

I was at the Des Moines Catholic Worker's Monday night Bible study when I was prompted to want to quote from “House Lust and Lent” by Murphy Davis (*Hospitality*, February 2008). I looked on all the shelves and could not find it. Frank asked about the article and I told him that “this guy” was one of the best writers, capturing something so ample and capacious. Ha! Your gender was revealed, and I was somehow less amazed and fathomed in a sheepish “coulda had a V8” kind of way. Thanks for the great work!

Renee Espeland

Iowa Peace Network

Des Moines, Iowa

To all at the beloved Open Door,

I have been blessed by the hospitality and love each of you have shared with me this week. Thank you for welcoming me and making me feel at home in your home.

I hope to see you again soon.

You are all in my prayers!

Love,

Katie Royals

Madison, Mississippi

I'm enclosing \$35 for my *Hospitality* and that of four prisoners. Also included is [an additional] donation. I will endeavor to send this donation for the next four months. Please note that my address has changed.

Janie L. Ward

Smyrna, Georgia

Open Door Community Ministries

Breakfast & Sorting Room: Monday and Tuesday, 7 – 8 a.m.
Women’s Showers & Sorting Room: Wednesday, 8 a.m.
Soup Kitchen: Wednesday, 10:45 a.m. – 12 noon.
Harriet Tubman Medical and Foot Care Clinic:
Wednesday, 7 - 9 p.m.
Men’s Showers & Bag Lunch: Thursday, 8 – 11:30 a.m.
Use of Phone: Monday and Tuesday, 6:45 a.m. – 8:15 a.m.
Wednesday and Thursday, 9 a.m. – 12 noon.
Retreats: Four 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.

We are open...
Sunday: We invite you to worship with us at 5 p.m., and join
us following worship for a delicious supper.
We are open from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. for donations.
Monday through Thursday: We answer telephones from 9 a.m.
until 12 noon and from 2 until 6 p.m. We gratefully accept
donations from 9 until 11 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 and weekly Eucharist.

Join Us for Worship!

We gather for worship and Eucharist at 5 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 or call us for the most up-to-date worship schedule.

June 1	No Worship at 910 Retreat at Dayspring Farm	July 6	Worship at 910 Eucharist Service
June 8	Worship at 910 Dick Rustay leading	July 13	Worship at 910 Eucharist Service music with E. lise Witt
June 15	Worship at 910 Murphy Davis preaching	July 20	Worship at 910 Eucharist Service
June 22	Worship at 910 Nelia Kimbrough leading	July 27	Worship at 910 Eucharist Service
June 29	Worship at 910 Edward Loring preaching		



Susan van der Hijden

Needs of the Community



we need **sandwiches**
meat & cheese on
whole wheat

Living Needs

- ☐ jeans
- ☐ work shirts
- ☐ belts (34" & up)
- ☐ men’s underwear
- ☐ socks
- ☐ reading glasses
- ☐ walking shoes
(especially 9 ½ and up)
- ☐ T-shirts
(L, XL, XXL, XXXL)
- ☐ baseball caps
- ☐ MARTA cards
- ☐ postage stamps
- ☐ trash bags
(30 gallon, .85 mil)

Personal Needs

- ☐ shampoo (full size)
- ☐ shampoo (travel size)
- ☐ lotion (travel size)
- ☐ toothpaste (travel size)
- ☐ combs & picks
- ☐ hair brushes
- ☐ lip balm
- ☐ soap
- ☐ multi-vitamins
- ☐ disposable razors
- ☐ deodorant
- ☐ vaseline
- ☐ shower powder
- ☐ Q-tips

Food Needs

- ☐ turkeys
- ☐ hams
- ☐ sandwiches:
meat & cheese
on whole wheat
bread
- ☐ quick grits

Special Needs

- ☐ backpacks
- ☐ single bed
mattresses
- ☐ blankets
- ☐ sheets (any size)

Clarification Meetings at the Open Door

We meet for clarification
on selected Tuesday evenings
from 7:30 - 9 p.m.

Plan to join us for
discussion and reflection!



Daniel Nichols

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

Medicine Needs List

Harriet Tubman Medical Clinic

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

Foot Care Clinic

- epsom salt
- 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 are also looking for
volunteers to help staff
our Foot Care Clinic
on Wednesday evenings
from 6:45 - 9 p.m.!

From 11 a.m. until 2 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday, our attention is focused on serving the soup kitchen and household lunch. As much as we appreciate your coming, this is a difficult time for us to receive donations. When you can come before 11 a.m. or after 2 p.m., it would be helpful. THANK YOU!