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

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Prisoner of Hope

A Tribute
to Archbishop Desmond Tutu
(October 7, 1931 –
December 26, 2021)

By Joyce Hollyday

He came to the door in his bedroom slippers, wearing a sweatshirt that read “Just Call Me Arch.” I glanced over at the seminary student who had driven us to the doorstep of the palatial residence in one of Cape Town’s fanciest neighborhoods. The astonished look on the young man’s face revealed that he had not expected his archbishop to answer his own door in his bedroom slippers.

I too was surprised. Wasn’t there a butler, or deacon, or altar boy to greet guests at imposing Bishops court? I suspect there had been — until Desmond Tutu moved in two years before. Humble, open and accessible, South Africa’s first Black Anglican archbishop often broke protocol. He also broke the law by taking up residence there, violating the South African government’s Group Areas Act, which designated this neighborhood a “white area.” Tutu boldly turned its grand grounds into a place for “the people,” installing a children’s playground and opening its swimming pool to his parishioners.

I stood on his doorstep in March of 1988. Jim Wallis and I had responded to an invitation that came to us at *Sojourners* magazine from South African church leaders: to visit, to listen and to carry out the story of courageous resistance continuing to unfold in that troubled country.

Three weeks before our arrival, the South African government had outlawed the activities of seventeen anti-apartheid political organizations. Five days later, Tutu and other church leaders led hundreds of people in a march on Parliament to protest the crackdown and demand an end to officially sanctioned racial segregation and violence. While marchers endured the force of water cannons that day, police detained the church leaders and then released them with a warning to cease their protest activity.

They didn’t listen. On our first day in South Africa, a sea of riot police surrounded Cape Town’s St. George’s Cathedral. More than 3,000 people packed into the sanctuary of the massive church. Just before the service began, scores of young people surged down the aisles, singing and dancing the freedom dance known as the *toyi-toyi*, electrifying the air with their energy.

Archbishop Tutu stepped to the pulpit and thundered his hope. Addressing the brutal enforcers of apartheid, he

Prisoner of Hope continued on page 6



Mary Catherine Johnson

The Crew, left to right: Anne Wheeler, Anna Arceneaux and her daughter Eva, Bella Morledge, Laura-Hill Patton, Neva Corbin, John Morledge.

Following the Star of Christmas to Death Row

By Mary Catherine Johnson

In December of 2019, Murphy Davis came to New Hope House to finalize all of the details for the Open Door Community’s annual delivery of Christmas packages filled with holiday treats and living essentials to the men on death row. At the time, none of us knew that Murphy would die the following year, but looking back I think we all sensed that her 30+ years of overseeing the Christmas packages was coming to an end. She had already begun to delegate many of the logistical responsibilities of the packages to me because they had become too difficult for her to manage from Baltimore. But Murphy’s visit to Georgia that year was about more than teaching me how to order the right cookies and coordinate specifics with volunteers and the prison staff. It was her time to say goodbye to each and every man on death row in person, and to pass the mantle of her beloved annual project to people she trusted to continue in the way she had conceived it.

Now, two years later, those people have successfully delivered the **Murphy Davis Christmas Packages** for

Georgia’s Death Row twice, in 2020 and 2021, and plans are already underway for the 2022 packages. I’m sure Murphy never doubted for a moment that there would continue to be so many incredibly generous people who would come forward each year to make the packages possible, from shopping for the individual items, to spending an entire day carefully packing the boxes and loading the van, to writing checks to cover the costs. Whenever Murphy would speak about the packages and how much they meant to the men on death row, her face would glow with a special combination of love and joy that I now see in the faces and messages of all of our volunteers and donors.

Before I came to the Open Door Community in 2010, there were some aspects of the Christmas season that I enjoyed, but for the most part the holidays were a time of stress and extreme busyness. Now, the stores in December are just as crowded and chaotic as ever, but the stress gives way to joy as I am standing in line with 40 packages of

Following the Star continued on page 7

More Thoughts on Dehumanization in Prison

By Catherine Meeks

I recall how I used to hold my breath each time I left my friend who was on death row, because I worried about what would happen to him if he were caught trying to smuggle food back to the cell block after our visits. But he had developed a fairly good system, and he knew which guards would not be likely to confiscate his small stash of vending machine goodies at the end of our visits.

It was somewhat easy for me to understand why he wanted to smuggle food such as sandwiches and candy bars back to the cell block, but I was confused about why he would work so hard to carry salt and pepper with him. When I asked about it, he told me that they did not get salt and pepper on the cell block. I thought that he meant that he did not get as much salt and pepper as he wished to have and wanted to get himself a little stockpile. But after talking about it further, I realized that he did not get any salt and pepper. I was dumbfounded. I am still not sure why this was the case, and I am not sure whether it continues to be true or not because, thankfully, my friend is no longer on death row.

But I have been troubled about this for a good while. I think that it is dehumanizing to deny someone an item as basic as salt or pepper, and that the only reason for that has to do with finding one more way to control those who have lost all of their rights to personhood already. It is horrifying to think about. I am troubled about the way in which those who are held in our prisons are treated anyway. They live with extremes such as inadequate heating in the winter and poor to no cooling systems in the summer. Poor health care or no health care, food that reflects no attempt to support their health and wellbeing, and many other daily aggressions against their personhood.

The truth happens to be that holding someone in prison should not become a reason or an excuse for dehumanizing them. As Attorney Bryan Stevenson has said many times, “A person is more than the worst thing that he or she might have done in their life.” When one’s freedom is taken away, that should be adequate punishment. Those who are incarcerated should not have to suffer dehumanization simply because they have lost their freedom. All of us should take a moment and think about how we want to be represented as members



Brian Kavanagh

of this society by the prison industrial complex.

The mere fact that we have constructed this system, which has been turned over to those who are merely interested in the economic engine that it provides, is a serious problem. We are a nation that likes to imagine itself as being far different from the way it actually is. We are much more oriented toward punishment and dehumanization than we are toward trying to rehabilitate or help folks who end up in prison find a new path for their lives. Too many folks are content with the prison industrial machine being whatever it wishes as long as they do not have to think about it or care about it. I care about it along with others who have devoted their lives to caring about prisoners. I think about it, and I do not ever intend to remain quiet about it or to become satisfied with this horrible and indefensible system that we have created.

As we determine that there are those who need to be separated from the rest of us because of their behavior, let’s try to remember that they continue to remain a part of us, and that how we treat them has a great deal to say about who and what we are. When we see prisoners having to smuggle food, we need to interrogate the system that has been put into place that makes that necessary. We need to interrogate the reasons that would make it necessary to practice such dehumanization of folks that are being held in the state’s care. Can we afford to continue to act as if we do not know what is happening in our prisons? I think not! ✦

Catherine Meeks is the Founding Executive Director of the Absalom Jones Episcopal Center for Racial Healing, and the retired Clara Carter Acree Distinguished Professor of Socio-cultural Studies and Sociology from Wesleyan College. She has published six books and is editor of Living Into God’s Dream: Dismantling Racism in America (2016), which focuses on racial healing and reconciliation. She and Nibs Stroupe are authors of Passionate for Justice (2019), a book about the life and witness of Ida B. Wells for our time. She writes for the Huffington Post and is a regular contributor to Hospitality. She is involved with prison work, visits on death row and works for the abolition of the death penalty. (kayma53@att.net)

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Homegoing

A Celebration of Murphy Davis' Life

is available online:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kp0i7-INvv0&feature=youtu.be>

Newspaper

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Please join us on Facebook for the continuing journey of the Open Door Community in Baltimore.



Murphy Davis ¡Presente!



Psalm 23: Reverend Murphy Davis

By Wakoh Shannon Hickey

Oh, my Beloved Friend,
you are my shepherd.
In your care I have everything I need.

You open the gate to green pastures.
You teach me Sabbath
and give me time to rest.
Beside the flowing stream
and the still lake
you restore me to myself in your image.

You lead and accompany me
into the path of justice and solidarity,
and I find my integrity in your way.

Even though I walk through
the valley of the shadow of death,
I am not afraid,
because you never leave me
and your love casts out fear.

With a shepherd's rod and staff,
you guide me and give me
comfort and strength.

You invite me to a bountiful table,
where enmity and divisions fall away
"Justice is important, but supper is essential."*

You welcome me as an honored guest.
My joy overflows like a cup
poured full and always
spilling over.

Surely goodness and mercy have
run after me my whole life long.
And so I will live under the shelter of your wings
and enjoy you forever.

*Ed Loring's mantra, repeated often

The last time I recited this text, not long ago, I did so at the bedside of an elderly hospice patient who was a stranger to me. I had completed a lengthy screening process to arrive in her room: I had displayed my ID badge, provided evidence of a negative rapid Covid test from that morning and handed over my vaccination card to be photocopied by a staff member at the residential-care facility. I answered the series of screening questions about symptoms and recent exposures, had my temperature taken, filled out the visitor log. Having passed muster, I was shown to a sunny room where the woman lay in her hospital bed. I settled myself calmly in a chair and introduced myself as the new chaplain on her hospice team. Her dementia was so far advanced that I did not expect her to understand my words, especially behind the N-95 mask and plastic face shield I was required to wear inside the facility. She could no longer speak and had recently stopped eating and drinking. But I knew she would sense my tone of voice and the energy I brought to our encounter, so I did my best to convey friendliness and calm.

She watched as I sat down. I remarked on a few cheery decorations and photos of family members arrayed on her

dresser and windowsill, noting that she was obviously well-loved. As I settled into quiet, her face relaxed into a blank expression. I knew from her medical record that she was Christian, so after holding her hand for a while, I told her I would like to pray for her a version of Psalm 23. I explained that it had been written by the Rev. Murphy Davis, a Christian minister I had known.

As I spoke the words of the psalm, which I learned by heart soon after I read them for the first time last year, the woman's eyes locked onto my face. She maintained eye contact all the way through. When I touched her head to offer a blessing, she closed her eyes and visibly relaxed. It was clear to me that she was present and aware, even though she had lost access to the communication medium of language. I knew the words had touched her somehow. A few days later, she let go into the birth that is death.

I had received a copy of Murphy Davis's memoir, *Surely Goodness and Mercy*, not long before Murphy died last October. I had the honor of praying her version of Psalm 23, which opens the book, during a cross-country Zoom blessing and commendation that I had designed on request for Murphy, her spouse Ed and their daughter Hannah, my dear friend. I had met Murphy and Ed in Baltimore through Hannah, with whom I co-taught a college course on contemplative caregiving at the end of life. I now pray Murphy's version of Psalm 23 every chance I get in my work as a hospice chaplain, because it speaks so powerfully to people, even if they are culturally Christian but not devoutly so. I have occasion every week to pray it at bedsides and gravesides, and nearly every time I do, someone present asks me for a copy. When it seems appropriate, I give a copy of Murphy's whole memoir.

I work in the northern part of the San Francisco Bay Area region, where less than half of the adult population identifies as Christian and more than half the Christians are Catholic, according to the Pew Research Center's American Religious Landscape Survey. My home county's population is about 137,000 and 83.6 percent white. Many of my hospice patients and their families identify as "spiritual but not religious," or Christian but unaffiliated with a local congregation. Murphy's version of Psalm 23 seems to speak to them all. It also speaks to me, a person who is ordained in and has practiced Zen Buddhism for nearly 40 years.

Instead of the medieval-sounding "Lord," Murphy describes God as "Beloved Friend." God does not "make me lie down in green pastures," but "teach[es] me Sabbath and give[s] me time to rest." According to the creation story in Genesis 1, sabbath is built into the very order of creation. Instead of simply "restoring my soul," God "restore[s] me to myself in Your image," affirming the dignity and worth of every human as a reflection of divine creativity. To be led in the "path of righteousness" is to seek "justice and solidarity" and to walk in integrity.

To those who "walk through the valley of the shadow of death," divine Love is not a "rod and staff" — sheep-herding images that do not resonate with a mostly urban populace — but an ever-present power that casts out fear. The implied pastoral imagery is made explicit: shepherds guide their flocks, providing protection from predators and other threats and offering "comfort and strength." Divine love also never abandons those in its care: all living beings.

Instead of being celebrated "in the presence of my enemies" as a sort of in-your-face to adversaries, the speaker is invited "as an honored guest" to "a bountiful table where enmity and divisions fall away." Joy overflows, and the

psalmist realizes that "goodness and mercy" have been present all along, if only the writer could have stopped to see and appreciate them fully. The psalm closes with an assurance of shelter and enjoyment in divine protection. The modern rendering conveys faith in a God who is present, loving, affirming and generous, not one that judges and condemns. This is the solace that hospice patients and their families need, and to which they respond like flowering plants turning their faces toward sunlight.

I share the story of Murphy's life and ministry, and the story of the Open Door Community, every chance I get. I have handed out dozens of copies of *Surely Goodness and Mercy*. Although I only got to know Murphy briefly, and mostly through her daughter and granddaughter, I felt directly the warmth and love of Jesus that she expressed through her person and in her ministry to the poor and incarcerated, and that she articulated in her version of Psalm 23. Thousands of miles from Atlanta and Baltimore, in family homes and nursing homes, for hospice patients and their families, Murphy's theology and ministry continue to bring solace and inspiration to people walking in the shadow of death.

Thinking about her and her ministry, I am reminded of these lines by the Beat/Buddhist poet Lew Welch:

I saw myself
a ring of bone
in the clear stream
of all of it

and vowed,
always to be open to it
that all of it
might flow through

and then heard
"ring of bone" where
ring is what a

bell does.

Long may Murphy's Christian ministry of love and solidarity ring!
In the words of the Christian Saint John Chrysostom:

She whom we love
and lose
is no longer where
she was before.
She is now
wherever
we
are. ☸

Rev. Wakoh Shannon Hickey, PhD, is a hospice chaplain, a scholar of religious history, an educator, and a priest of Sōtō Zen Buddhism. She has worked to promote civil rights, social justice, and interfaith engagement for many years. She is the author of *Mind Cure: How Meditation Became Medicine*. (wakohshannon@icloud.com)



Rita Corbin

Bates Is Not a Four-Letter Word

By Nibs Stroupe

In the summer of 1957, the Milwaukee Braves (still that awful name!) were on their way to the National League pennant. I did not cheer for them (my teams were the Chicago White Sox and the St. Louis Cardinals), but I was delighted that they defeated the hated New York Yankees in the World Series. I was ten years old that summer, and it was also a time when I learned a new “cuss” word. I’d like to be able to say that it was the first cuss word that I had ever learned, but as a ten-year-old boy growing up in rural Arkansas, I already knew them all.

The cuss word that I learned that summer was not a four-letter word. This new one was two words with five letters each — Daisy Bates. These words became cuss words for me and for many other “white” people like me in the South because she was a Black woman at the center of the Little Rock school crisis in the fall of 1957. She was the primary organizer and fixer who worked daily with the Black students who integrated Central High School in 1957 and became known as “The Little Rock Nine.” I had been oblivious to the SCOTUS *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, to the lynching of Emmett Till and to the Montgomery bus boycott — all of which were foundational events in the civil rights movement. The Little Rock school crisis, however, brought the movement close to my home in Helena, Arkansas, and it was my first conscious awareness of the movement.

Bates was a strong leader and mentor, and her prowess posed a great threat to the “white” order of things. She was seen as the devil incarnate to those of us who were captured by white supremacy. It would be 20 years before I would come back and revisit Daisy Bates and learn that, rather than her being an object of scorn, she should have been a subject of praise and gratitude for her courage, her tenacity and her political skills. So, in this crossover time of Black History and Women’s History Month, in this Lenten season, I want to acknowledge her witness and tell a bit of her story.

She was born in the little town of Huttig, Arkansas, on the border with Louisiana. She never quite knew the year she was born because when she was an infant, her family was attacked by white men who raped and murdered her mother and assaulted her father. Her father then gave Daisy to neighbors Orlee and Susie Smith and fled the state. Daisy was still a child when she learned this awful family history. From that moment on, she burned with a hatred of people classified as “white.” She married Lucius “LC” Bates in 1941, and they moved to Little Rock to found a Black newspaper, the *Arkansas State Press*. LC was an insurance agent, and she became editor of the paper, swimming upstream in a male world, much as her journalist predecessor Ida Wells had done. Bates was determined to use the paper as a tool to fight to gain rights for Black people. In 1952 she was elected president of the state NAACP, setting the stage for her leadership in the conflict of 1957.

In the meantime, her adoptive father died, and on his deathbed he advised her to channel her anger toward more constructive ends. “Don’t hate white people because they are white,” he said, “hate the humiliations we are living under



Encyclopedia Britannica

Above: *The Little Rock Nine and Daisy Bates (second from right).*

Right: *Daisy Bates*



Wisconsin Historical Society

in the South. . . .and then try to do something about it, or your hate won’t spell a thing.” His advice helped to soften her heart as well as to harden her resolve, and it was this advice that sustained her through the rest of her life.

She would need such inspiration and courage as 1957 approached. After the *Brown v. Board* decision in 1954, the Little Rock Board of Education was one of the first in the nation to issue a statement indicating that it would comply with the decision. They announced a plan to gradually desegregate the schools, starting in high school and working down. It would start at Little Rock’s Central High School, bringing 75 Black students into the 2,000-student white high school.

Orval Faubus, a white moderate whose father, Sam Faubus, had been a founder of the Socialist Party in Arkansas, had been elected governor of Arkansas in 1954. But as in the governor’s race here in Georgia in 2022, Orval moved to the right in order to get re-elected. In his 1956 campaign he announced that he would oppose integration of Arkansas schools.

Daisy Bates led the state NAACP into federal court to force compliance with *Brown v. Board*, and the Little Rock school system was ordered to begin the process. White opposition to this decision and to the school board’s compliance was ferocious. Because of this, the number of Black students entering Central High was reduced from 75 to 9. The nine students were chosen by Bates and the NAACP because they were good students and had demonstrated that they could handle pressure well. These are their names: Minnijean Brown, Elizabeth Eckford, Ernest Green, Thelma Mothershed, Melba Patillo, Gloria Ray, Terrance Roberts, Jefferson Thomas and Carotta Walls.

These students met every day at the home of Daisy and LC Bates in order to receive training in nonviolence and to build solidarity so that they could survive the storm that was coming. Governor Faubus sought state injunctions forbidding

integration, and the Little Rock school superintendent told the parents of the nine Black students that they could not accompany their children to go through this maelstrom of hate and violence — Daisy and LC Bates would be the only Black adults allowed to accompany the students.

Faubus delayed the school opening to avoid integrating, but a federal court intervened and ordered the schools to open. On September 4, the students met at the Bates’ home and tried to enter Central High, but Faubus had called out the National Guard to prevent them from doing so. After many machinations by Faubus, including a meeting with President Eisenhower, the date of September 23 was agreed to be the entry day for the Black students. Faubus decided to remove the National Guard, who had now been ordered to protect the Black students. The Little Rock Nine were greeted by an angry white mob, with little police protection. They were shouted at, spit upon, and hit by rocks and other missiles hurled by the white crowd. Things got so dangerous that the students were removed for their own safety.

Eisenhower did not agree with the *Brown v. Board* decision, and he dragged his feet in the 1957 crisis, but as a former commander in the U.S. Army, he believed in order and in discipline. With

urging from Daisy Bates and others, he went on national television to announce that he was sending one thousand U.S. Army soldiers to enforce the federal court decision and to protect the Black students. The legendary Screaming Eagles of the 101st Airborne Division arrived in Little Rock on September 24, and the next day the process began. Armored vehicles arrived at the Bates home to pick up the students and accompany them to school. On May 29, 1958, Ernest Green became the first Black student to graduate from a previously all white school in the South. Sitting beside his parents were Daisy Bates and a young preacher from Alabama named Martin Luther King, Jr.

At the center of all of this was Daisy Bates, her courage fired by the brutal murder of her mother and the loving care of her adoptive parents. This heritage enabled her to learn to weave love and justice together so that they could move into the public sphere and begin to change the South. In the civil rights movement, dominated publicly by males, Daisy Bates was among a powerful group of women who fought for justice and got to see a bit of it in their lifetimes. Bates would be the only woman to speak at the 1963 March on Washington.

No longer a cuss word for me, but now among the pantheon of powerful witnesses and sheroes, may we all learn from her courage and her determination and dedication. The white South (in all sections of the country) is rising again, and we will need the courage and dedication of Daisy Bates. ♠

Nibs Stroupe is a longtime friend of the Open Door; retired pastor and author of Deeper Waters: Sermons for a New Vision. He and Catherine Meeks are authors of Passionate for Justice, a book about the life and witness of Ida B. Wells for our time. He writes a weekly blog at www.nibsnotes.blogspot.com. (nibs.stroupe@gmail.com)

A Calendar of Resistance

A review of *Radical Discipleship: A Liturgical Politics of the Gospel*

By Nathan Dorris

It's almost a truism to say that maps are political artifacts: they lend authority to artificial and arbitrary political boundaries, name or make invisible nations and communities, center certain lands and skew perspectives of size. What is less often noted is that calendars, too, are political. Functioning as maps of time, they have the power to solidify our rhythms, guide the cycles of our year, and tell us which days are holy, which days are officially sanctioned by our cultures and governments. Calendars, like maps, carry within them stories about the world(s) in which we live and the possibilities of our movement within it.

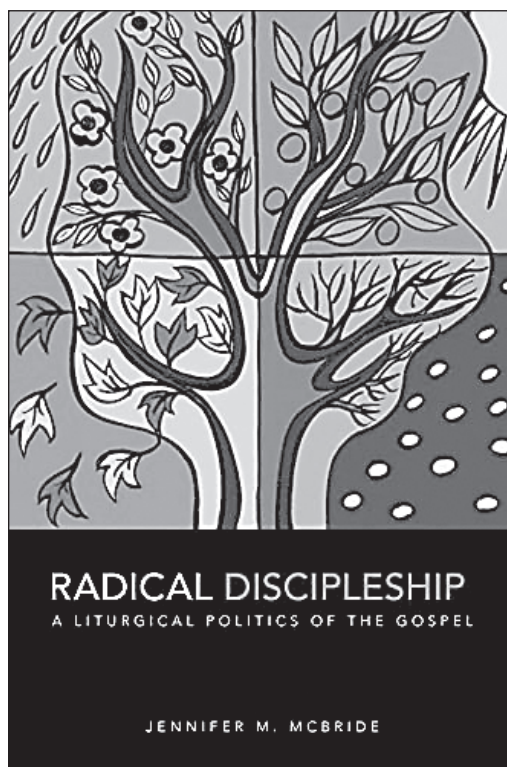
The marriage of this insight to a powerful and liberatory perspective on the Christian story is the foundation upon which Jenny McBride's excellent work *Radical Hospitality* is built.

Subtitled "A Liturgical Politics of the Gospel," McBride takes the Christian calendar and illuminates its potential for subverting our ordinary, Imperial American habits and cultivating an embodied discipleship that proclaims liberty to captives and justice to the oppressed. She does this by drawing on her experiences teaching theology courses inside the walls of a women's prison in Georgia and participating in the life and work of the Open Door Community over the course of several years, an environment that she immersed herself in "in order to be formed by it and write out of this process of formation."

Radical Discipleship A Liturgical Politics of the Gospel

by Jennifer M. McBride

Fortress Press
January 1, 2017
290 pages



McBride takes the Christian calendar and illuminates its potential for subverting our ordinary, Imperial American habits and cultivating an embodied discipleship that proclaims liberty to captives and justice to the oppressed.

My own time as a Resident Volunteer with the Open Door overlapped some with Jenny's time with the community, and I had the distinct pleasure of hearing her speak about some of the themes of this book as it was in the process of being written and revised. Little did I know at the time that the liturgical imagination of the Open Door and the liturgical politics of which Jenny writes would so significantly affect my own rhythms and concerns for the next 8 years (and counting). Reading *Radical Hospitality* reminded me, after all these years, what it was like to be part of a community that lived intentional rhythms of liberation, justice and dangerous memory — an experience I have been driven to try and recreate each and every place I have moved since leaving Atlanta.

The book is structured around the cycle of liturgical seasons, beginning with Advent and moving all the way through Pentecost. Each season is examined theologically as part of the larger drama of the Christian narrative, placed within that story and then interpreted through the lens of particular social and political concerns, particularly the US American prison system and homelessness. The relationships which McBride established with women in the prison theology program are important to her, and the insights and experiences shared with the reader are a gift in a culture where the voices of the

incarcerated are all too often slighted, slandered, or silenced altogether. McBride's balance between the head and the heart is excellent as she moves deftly between touching or disturbing interactions within the walls of a prison or soup kitchen to concrete analyses of incarceration and the realities of homelessness, keeping it all within a framework of the costly grace of Christian discipleship. Never losing sight of systemic or interpersonal realities, McBride insists that disciples take responsibility for our actions, held accountable to the least of these, while insisting equally that individual choices are not enough to change systemic problems and encouraging collective organization alongside personal solidarity.

Particularities readers are encouraged to move their own personal and spiritual lives into greater attunement with the story of a God who came into this world humble and lowly and left it at the hands of an angry coalition of state and religious authority. Even our despair at the world's injustice finds a place in this framework, as McBride counsels that "lament is protest to God in prayer — crying out for God to make God's healing justice concrete — and protest through our embodied lives, through creative acts of justice that increase solidarity with others and participate in God's kingdom come."

There are too many small "aha!" moments like this in the book to give even a poor overview here, but for anyone with an interest in embodied discipleship, in ritual and liturgy, or with an itch to reimagine and reframe a Christianity that is too often a watchdog for the status quo into an authentic force for liberation and prophetic truth-telling, *Radical Discipleship: A Liturgical Politics of the Gospel* is a must-read. And with its affectionately rendered portrait of the Open Door Community's attempts to inculcate these in its members and culture, I feel certain that no one who subscribes to *Hospitality* will be disappointed. ☙

Nathan Dorris was a Resident Volunteer with the Open Door Community in Atlanta from 2012-2014. He currently lives in Searcy, Arkansas, and is a doctoral student in Memphis Theological Seminary's Land, Food, and Faith Formation track, where he is working on integrating ecological literacy, local justice concerns and efforts, Christian ethics, and liturgical practice into a "liberatory theology of place." (nathanandrew2112@gmail.com)

The Box

Compiled by Ed Loring

Male Abortion

To be clear: The irony of all of the abortion bills is the complete lack of male inclusion. Women do not magically become pregnant. There is a man attached to every single abortion. Why are men not being included in jail time for abortion? Because this isn't about abortion, it's about men controlling women. It's an easy topic for white men to flex their power over to remind the womenfolk that they will always have to kneel to them. If it were actually about abortion, we would be discussing early and continuing sex education, free birth control, healthcare for all, making childcare financially feasible, mandatory parental leave, increasing WIC, hard sentencing for rape, fixing the foster care system and making adoption more accessible. This is not about abortion. Don't fool yourself.

— Lance Wilburn

(Sent to Hospitality by a Catholic Worker House)

Love is not, by its own desire, heroic. It exists by its willingness to be anonymous, humble, and unrewarded. It longs for incarnation.

— Wendell Berry

"Word and Flesh"

(From Willa & Brenden, Viva House Catholic Worker, Baltimore)

Radical Discipleship is a work of incarnational theology, actively working out what it means that God became human flesh, sanctifying the body and confirming its original goodness. As such, there is a good deal of emphasis on bodies and the treatment of bodies throughout, on sharing food and space with other bodies, and on placing our bodies in new places in order to learn through them things we could otherwise never know. The body in the prison cell, the body sleeping on the street, the body of an academic theologian washing soiled underwear. Says McBride, "when we place our bodies in a position to be formed, we are habituated into certain acts that usher in the reign of God, the beloved community, and how beautiful it is that some of those acts are as simple as opening a door to a stranger or providing a cup of cold water to one in need. . . . We have to place our bodies in situations of struggle. We have to be formed continually through the practice of nonviolent love."

Each chapter teases out powerful and important connections for deeper engagement with the seasons of the Christian calendar, and *Radical Hospitality*'s groundedness in particular situations of struggle and a community of practice like the Open Door anchors those connections and keeps them from being an act of mere heady theologizing. Through these par-

Prisoner of Hope: A Tribute to Archbishop Desmond Tutu *continued from page 1*

shouted, “You may be powerful, indeed very powerful. But you are not God. You are ordinary mortals! ... You have already lost! Let us say to you nicely, ‘You have already lost.’ ... Come! Come and join the winning side. ... You are defending what is fundamentally indefensible, because it is evil. ... Therefore, you will bite the dust! And you will bite the dust comprehensively!”



Desmond Tutu 2006 | Mike Hutchings/Reuters

I remembered his words as I traveled throughout South Africa in the weeks that followed. I thought of them as I watched a 4-year-old in the destitute camp known as Cross-roads pull a discarded plastic bag out of a puddle of sewage and tie it into a bow around her head, while her younger brother played with a crude push toy fashioned out of a rusty tin can and a piece of wire. Masses of children were dying from starvation in the squatter camps and Black townships, where razor wire, rifles and armored personnel carriers were part of their landscape. A third of the 30,000 people held in police detention under the country’s state of emergency were children.

I remembered Tutu’s words when soldiers surrounded us and an officer of the security police interrogated us in the township of Duncan Village. The officer threatened the young man who was our guide with detention. After we

were released, the young activist told us that he had already spent ten months in police custody, where he had been kept in a cold cell, tortured and fed only commmeal infested with worms. Torture and assassination were routine state policy.

The winning side, indeed.
I asked almost everyone I met on that trip if they thought apartheid would end in their lifetime. Most people felt that the horrific policy, instituted in 1948, would stay entrenched for at least a few generations more. Only one person had a different response. I asked a 10-year-old in Mamelodi, a black township outside Pretoria, if he thought that when he had children they would get to grow up without apartheid. A determined look overtook his face as he thrust his fist into the air and declared, “I will see to it.”

And see to it he did, along with hundreds of thousands of others. As a result of massive popular resistance, as well as international pressure, just three years later apartheid was officially repealed. Despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, Tutu had been right.

Nelson Mandela, who spent his first night of freedom at Bishops court after 27 years in prison, was inaugurated as South Africa’s first Black president in May 1994. Committed to truth-telling about the brutal past, and holding hope for the healing of his tragically divided country, Mandela established a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Declaring, “I can think of no better person” to chair it, he named Tutu to that position.

I returned to South Africa in the spring of 1997 to spend six weeks observing the stunning work of that commission. Four water cannons, two vicious dogs, six armored personnel carriers and a score of police were arrayed in front of the town hall in Ladybrand, a small village a ten-hour drive

from Cape Town. This time, they weren’t there to control and intimidate the crowd, but in response to bomb threats from right-wing elements determined to shut down the hearings going on inside about apartheid-era human rights violations. Painfully, emotionally, the truth was spilling out. As people shared their anguished stories of tortures endured and massacres witnessed, of children detained and activists murdered, I understood why Tutu was often overcome with tears during the hearings. It was almost more than one could bear.

Yet, despite all that was revealed in two years of testimony about apartheid atrocities, Tutu continued to uphold the truth that all of us are children of God, worthy of forgiveness and restoration to the human community. He embraced the African belief of *ubuntu*, which he described as compassion, hospitality and openness to others: knowing that “you are bound up with them in the bundle of life.” This belief is what distinguished South Africa’s truth commission from others, whose practices of retribution often fueled relentless cycles of violence, and many observers believe it kept South Africa from descending into a bloodbath.

Archbishop Tutu was right about the winning side, even when the evidence wasn’t obvious. He described himself as a “prisoner of hope,” and that gave him rare vision and determination. He was also right in his support of women priests and LGBTQ rights, in his condemnation of Israel’s treatment of Palestine as apartheid and his blistering critique of the ravages of capitalism, in his opposition to war and his unwavering embrace of nonviolence.

I still remember the bold and prophetic words he thundered from the pulpit more than thirty years ago. But I recall just as clearly what he quietly admitted in his living room while serving me a cup of tea in his bedroom slippers. Referring to the march on Parliament, he said, “I was scared. I was sitting in the cathedral before the march, and we were praying. You could have heard the butterflies in my tummy.”

Has there ever been in one human being such a beautiful blend of humility, vulnerability, courage and faith? ♦

Joyce Hollyday has been a friend of the Open Door Community for almost four decades. She is the author of several books — most recently Pillar of Fire, a historical novel about the inspiring witness of the medieval mystics known as Beguines — and the editor of Murphy Davis’ memoir, Surely Goodness and Mercy. (joyce.hollyday@gmail.com)

Zero Tolerance

Zero Tolerance is a policy enacted during Mayor Martin O’Malley’s administration. The result: one hundred thousand arrests and growing tension between the police and the people.

Life springs from death,
and from the graves of the
unemployed and the spit upon
women and men
spring revolutionary people.

The defenders of the aristocracy
have worked in secret and in the open.
They think they can control people
with high-tech surveillance cameras
and zero tolerance laws.

They think they can lock up
half the poor and
intimidate the other half.
They think they know everything and
have foreseen everything.
But the fools, the fools, the fools!

They have left us half-starved, woefully
under-educated children.
They have left us evicted neighbors,
and sisters and brothers who
sleep in open weather ...
some even frozen to death.

poetry corner



Julie Lonneman

And, while Baltimore ignores these people,
her neighborhoods will
never
be at peace.

— Brendan Walsh
*Inspired by Padraig Pearse, a leader of Ireland’s
Easter Uprising of 1916.*

Brendan Walsh is a poet/activist/welcomer and co-founder with his spouse, Willa Bickham, of Viva Catholic Worker House in Baltimore, having started it in 1968. They were featured in an article by Rosalie Riegle in the January/February Hospitality. They are authors of The Long Loneliness in Baltimore: Stories Along the Way. (vivacatholicworker@gmail.com)

Following the Star of Christmas to Death Row *continued from page 1*

Family-Size Double-Stuf Oreos in my cart, and the cashier says, “Someone sure loves Oreos!” Yes, indeed, someone does, and I can picture that “someone” on death row — many someones, actually — enjoying those Oreos that were retrieved from a package blessed by so many loving hands and intentions.

What Murphy Davis left behind when she moved on from this life could never be quantified adequately, but every year during Advent her legacy springs to life in the form of 40 Christmas packages delivered to death row with more love than could ever be contained. Those of us who have been blessed with the task of carrying on her legacy do so with tremendous delight and anticipation as we seek and find that Christmas star in the sky that leads us to death row every time. ✦

Mary Catherine Johnson is the director of New Hope House in Georgia and a member of the Open Door's Board of Directors. For more information about the Murphy Davis Christmas Packages for Georgia's Death Row visit www.newhopehousega.org. (mcjohnson78@yahoo.com)



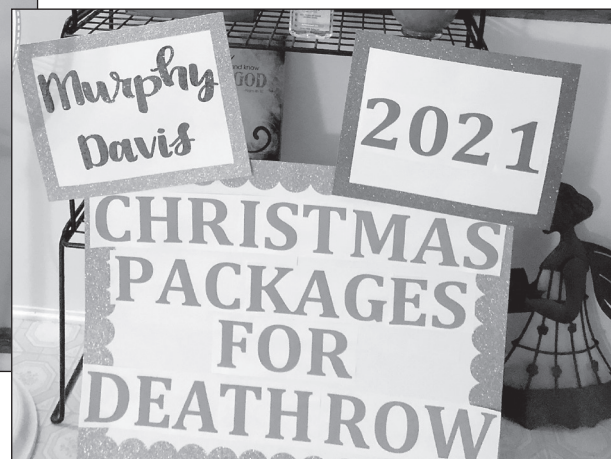
Photographs by Mary Catherine Johnson



Volunteers assembling the Christmas Packages at New Hope House.

Far left: Bella Morledge retrieves sacks of Oreos for the individual packages.

Bottom: John Morledge and Laura-Hill Patton load the completed packages into the New Hope van.



Introducing the Murphy Davis Gratitude Award

By Ed Loring

Very recently, Murphy Davis died from a long-haul journey with cancer. On the other hand, was it a long, long time ago? When Harriet Tubman swung low and took my beloved sweetheart over to Michael who rowed HER across the Jordan River into the Beloved Community?

Murphy's book *Surely Goodness and Mercy* has been a success, with over 2,000 copies distributed. We still have copies if you want one. Two unifying themes of Murphy's life were gratitude and solidarity. At the Open Door Community, the outstanding human being and activist from public housing, Horace Tribble, taught us to live with “an attitude of gratitude.” Murphy was exemplary, even suffering with gratitude for the presence of God and community, family and daughter, Hannah.

She also sought to infuse others with this attitude of gratitude, and it was a powerful medication in her long battle with cancer. It was pervasive whether she was visiting on death row, marching for justice on the streets, sleeping on the

streets in solidarity with those who were homeless, or leading us in the music of lament, protest and celebration in worship at 910.

Many are the legacies of the ODC and most significantly, Murphy.

The Board of the ODC recently decided to make an annual award to someone or some organization that incarnates the radical gospel's way as lived, written and/ or spoken. Visible saints in the movement for love and justice, that is. We will name it the Murphy Davis Gratitude Award.

Murphy's life was a resounding “Thank You.” SHE lived an attitude of gratitude. We are thankful to add to HER legacy by naming folks to whom Murphy would say “Thank You.” All of us stand in a humble pose singing and living out our Gratitude. ✦

Ed Loring is a partner of the Open Door Community. (EduardLoring@opendoorcommunity.org)

Open Door Community Press

Surely Goodness and Mercy

A Journey into Illness and Solidarity



Murphy Davis

Forewords by Jürgen Moltmann
and Bryan Stevenson

Surely Goodness and Mercy

A Journey into Illness and Solidarity

by Murphy Davis



to request your copy contact

opendoorcomm@bellsouth.net

404.290.2047

PO Box 10980 Baltimore, MD 21234-0980

Grace and Peaces of Mail

David,

Today I mailed a donation to ODC and forgot to include a note I intended to send to you. My donation is in memory of Gladys Rustay. I was very sad to read of her death. She shared a most welcoming smile and kindly manner every week I volunteered to serve lunches or wash dishes at the house on Ponce.

I have many memories of talks with her and Dick over the soup kettles and dishes. They were a super couple who manifested God's love to all.

May our Lord continue to bless and lead you all. Tell Ed the work goes on in Black Mountain to minister to those in need with open doors and hearts.

Peace and love,
Bob Castellani
Black Mountain, North Carolina

Dear Open Door Folks,

I so enjoy reading your newsletter and look for its coming thru all these many years. Thanks for sharing your lifestyle you all freely choose: to live and care for people of the streets, in prison, on death row and one another all bonded together as one people.

Your community has and continues to strengthen my walk along with people in need in suburbia and the trailer parks, and my longtime road with a young woman in our Georgia prison system finally paroled and 4 years free. What a struggle she has to make a way after this, yet her faith has been made strong, and she and I lean on God still.

Ellen McCoy
Marietta, Georgia

Thank you for the review copies of Murphy Davis' book. We will include in our list of What We're Reading.

Every good wish on the important work of your organization.

Healthy holidays,
Mary E. Hunt, Ph.D.
Co-director,
Women's Alliance for Theology,
Ethics and Ritual (WATER)
Silver Spring, Maryland

Hello!

I would like to make a small contribution to the Open Door Community. Ten dollars is enclosed for that purpose.

Have a Blessed New Year!
Former Death Row Prisoner
Now Free
Georgia

Dear Ed & Hannah,

I know it's been a while since my last letter but please charge it to my mind and not my heart.

When I got the news of Murphy's passing I was at a loss for words, and still am.

My heart goes out to you along with my prayers. You all are great soldiers in the army of Christ. Anointed and highly favored.

Us prayer warriors are doing our jobs too!

I wish you the very best and also the strength needed for you to carry on with God's will.

Peace be unto you, Big brother Ed.

With love & respect
Sincerely,
Prisoner in Oklahoma

Dear Ed, David and Simon:

Thanks for all the work that you do to make this world a better place. I never knew Murphy personally but continue to be moved and inspired by her life, her example, her book and her letter from last fall.

Peggy Weiss
Atlanta, Georgia



Jane Hildebrand

Hello Ed,

Yes, I'm a 53-year-old Puerto Rican and Native American Transgender, someone whose gender identity is different than the sex that they were assigned at birth. Ed, I'm not ashamed. I would love to have a pen pal. Woman pen pals are more understanding; men pen pals fall in love with me. I'm not looking for love, only a pen pal.

Ed you can send me money it must be a money order no cash are allowed in mail only money orders I will spend it wisely thank you Ed.

My pen pal Kimberly Lopez passed on June 6, 2021 from Covid-19. She was only 81, we was pen pals for 12 years. I take off the mask I wear and step into the light no longer ashamed, gender blind.

In Solidarity,
Prisoner, Former ODC
Florida

Welcome Pantry Needs:

- ☐ Pop Tarts
- ☐ Single Serve Oatmeal Packets
- ☐ Assorted Small Cereal Boxes
- ☐ Pretzels
- ☐ Crackers
- ☐ Granola Bars
- ☐ Baby Wipes
- ☐ Travel Tissue Packs
- ☐ In the warmer months we can add: Canned Goods, Small OJ Bottles, Shelf Stable Milk

We have an Amazon Wish List:

https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/1Q9TWJ0HZPJAX?ref_=wl_share



HOSPITALITY Prays

Prayer is the heart of a genuine Christian radicalism.
— Ron Ferguson

A Prayer for Oneness

By Lee Carroll | 1.28.2022

We are a divided people, O God ...
perhaps no more or no less divided
than in bygone days,
but nevertheless painfully divided.

Some of us have amassed great wealth
but sense no obligation to share.
Some of us have little or no money
and struggle to survive.
Still others have enough money to get by —
even comfortably —
but fear losing what we have.

White-supremacy has divided us for generations.
Some of us are victims of this violent evil ...
and are understandably angry.
Some of us still believe that one race
is superior to all others.
Some of us are struggling to understand
how racism has formed us,
and are immobilized by guilt.
And still others simply assume
that the problem has been "fixed."

Indeed, WE are a divided people, O God ...
while YOU model oneness.
WE are fearful and protect our own self-interests ...
while YOU are generous.
WE argue over who gets to sit at table with You ...
while YOU are all-loving.
WE quarrel about racial entitlements ...
while YOU are a God of justice
and peace.
THANK YOU FOR REVEALING TO US
THE KIND OF GOD THAT YOU ARE!

Teach us, O great God, regardless of where we stand
amidst our divisions,
to embody your unity, your generosity,
your justice and your love in our lives.

Teach us ...
to trust and honor You,
to live in your beloved community.
May we — all of us — be one in You!

Lee Carroll is an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church (USA) and Associate Professor Emeritus of Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, Georgia. He is the current chair of the Board of Directors of the Open Door Community. (lcarroll@ix.netcom.com)

We highly Recommend



A Primary Source of Truth