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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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March / April 2023



CNN

Seeking Hope in Memphis

By Peter Gathje

Tyre Nichols was beaten to death by five Memphis police officers. They have all been dismissed from the police force and now face second degree murder charges, among other charges. On Friday night, just as the videos of Tyre's murder were being released, I joined with about 400 people in a protest.

We met at Martyrs Park, which commemorates those who died in the Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1878. It overlooks the Mississippi River.

In the distance sits the old Holiday Inn where Dr. King once stayed in 1968 during the Sanitation Workers Strike. On his last visit to Memphis, when he was assassinated, he stayed at the Lorraine Motel, about 2 miles from the park.

One block from the Lorraine, now the National Civil Rights Museum, is a historical marker for the "Memphis Massacre" — a police riot in 1866 in which 46 African Americans were killed, with homes, schools and churches burned to the ground.

I felt the weight of this history
as I walked into the night.

As we left Martyrs Park we walked within that history. We marched toward the old site of Fort Pickering where African American Union soldiers were billeted after the Civil War, and who were the first killed in the riot.

I felt the weight of this history as I walked into the night. Tyre, an African American man, aged 29, had been stopped by Memphis police for a supposed traffic violation. All of the officers directly involved with the beat down were also African American. The police chief is African American.

But the plantation mentality which hangs in the air in Memphis is strong — strong enough that some African Americans share the white attitudes of disdain for the ones still in certain

neighborhoods. All five officers belonged to the Scorpion Unit, formed just a few years ago. Its formation was urged by the white Mayor of Memphis, Jim Strickland, who had campaigned on a promise to crack down on crime. Scorpion was intended to create a powerful police presence in areas deemed high crime, to intimidate and dominate, much like an occupying military force.

We made our way onto Interstate 55 and shut it down. We eventually stopped on the Memphis and Arkansas Bridge, the "old bridge," built in 1949, with the new "Hernando Desoto" bridge, finished in 1973, a few miles to the north where Interstate 40 crosses the river — a bridge shut down by protestors in 2016 after white police officers gunned down Alton Sterling, a Black man in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and Philando Castile, a Black man in suburban St. Paul, Minnesota.

With traffic backing up for miles both east and west, and the next steps of the protest uncertain, I decided to make my way back toward the place where we had initially stopped traffic. There, a man had just tried to drive through the barricades and found himself stuck with protestors yelling at him to back up and turn around. He eventually did. I ended up in a conversation with Edie Love, a Memphis Theological Seminary graduate. She is a Unitarian Minister. With her clerical shirt on she serves as a movement chaplain. She had been part of the group urging the man to turn around.

I stood for a while, there in the dark on the highway, with vehicle lights in the distance visible for at least a mile. I thought about Tyre, who was killed about 80 yards from his mother's home, and who called out in his last words for his Momma. I thought about his mother and his family. I wondered about the family backgrounds of the police officers.

I tried to discern something of God in all of this. Tyre still lived with his Mom. He was a skateboarder, a way for him to find a path (I had read earlier in the week) between gang life and athletics.

Seeking Hope in Memphis continued on page 7

Restoring to Full Humanity

By John Cole Vodicka

In the summer of 2021, the Oconee Street United Methodist Church in Athens, Georgia created a "bailout" fund to assist its Court-watch team when it found prisoners who were unable to afford to post small bonds and thereby remained in jail despite their presumed innocence. Since that time, the all-volunteer Athens Area Courtwatch Project has posted bond for 22 women and men, cash bonds totaling over \$2,700. Collectively, these 22 indigent individuals spent 826 days and nights in pretrial confinement before being released on bond. This is the story of one of those people.

It was a Saturday morning in August 2021, and I sat in the lobby of the Clarke County jail. I was waiting to post bond for Kayser Daniel. Mr. Daniel is a 35-year-old African American. He'd been locked up in the jail for several months, and his public defender told me Mr. Daniel's \$3,500 bond had finally been reduced to \$100. Once bond was posted, he would be transported directly to a respite bed waiting for him at the Treatment Accountability Court's (TAC) housing unit. The problem though, the lawyer explained, was that no one was able or willing to come up with the hundred bucks to get the indigent Mr. Daniel out of jail and into the treatment program.

So there I was at the jail, cash in hand.

I'd been waiting about 90 minutes when a jailer finally stepped out from behind a solid steel door and motioned for me to follow him down a cinderblock hallway to a plexiglass window, where a second jailer was seated. Kayser Daniel's bond paperwork lay on the desk in front of him.

"You've done this before?" he asked me.

"Yes sir. I know that Mr. Daniel's bond is \$100, and that I'll have to give you some extra cash for add-ons, right?"

"Correct."

"What will the total be?" I asked.

"The Court's ordered bond is \$100. State mandated fees are \$30. And the sheriff's fee will be another \$20. You owe \$150."

I unfolded the exact amount of cash and slid it through the window. The paperwork I received instructed the sheriff to transport Mr. Daniel to a TAC apartment "as soon as a respite bed becomes available." According to Mr. Daniel's lawyer, a bed was available now. Alleluia.

At the time I posted his bail, I didn't know Kayser Daniel. I'd never met him, never even seen him in the courtroom. But after bonding him out of jail to enable him to enter a treatment program, I felt I'd now entered Mr. Daniel's orbit. I felt more proximate to him. I wanted to know more about him. So, I went to the Clerk of Court's website and browsed through his "criminal case history." Here's what I discovered.

Starting in 2004, a then 18-year-old Kayser Daniel was arrested and charged with three misdemeanor offenses. He received 12 months' probation. By 2010 he'd been picked up for loitering and prowling, giving a cop a false name, possession of cocaine and marijuana, trespassing. During those six years, he was in and out of jail — a week here, a month or more there.

Restoring Full Humanity continued on page 7

Light Comes In the Morning

By Catherine Meeks

More than seventy years ago my brother Garland died because systemic racism deemed him expendable. He was a little poor Black boy living in rural Arkansas with an unlettered father, whose life did not matter. He died at age 12 from appendicitis because the Warner Brown Hospital — where my father carried him when he was sick — refused to treat him. Their instructions were that my brother had to be taken to the hospital for poor folks and Black folks in Shreveport, Louisiana, which was eighty miles from where we lived.

My family did not own an automobile, so my father had to find someone who had a car and could make the trip, which took a fair amount of time. By the time he had worked that out and got my brother to the hospital, it was too late. He had a ruptured appendix, and he died. My father died with him in many ways that day, and when my father's actual death occurred many years after Garland's, it was merely a belated announcement of that earlier death.

My father developed post-traumatic stress in many ways after my brother's death, which affected us because he was so worried about losing another child. We had many layers of conflict in our family because he wanted us to stay close by him all of the time. My other siblings and I wanted to spread our wings and be free. He wanted us to understand that we could not be free in this land that was not interested in our wellbeing. He did not know any way to tell us that, and he simply resorted to trying to control and to manage our lives. One should truly understand the type of conflict this process would create with youngsters who are growing up and trying to discover their place in the world.

Though Garland was dead, we talked about him all of the time. In many ways, none of us ever got over his death. It helped make me the person that I have become and to develop the notion that I would do whatever it took to make sure that neither my children nor I would have to experience such injustice. But little children of color and poor children across this land continue to suffer from too many injustices, including death from a lack of medical facilities or poor care. That reality continues to fuel my undying determination to do all that I can to eradicate the racism that forms the foundation that supports all of these atrocities against them.

There is much to lament regarding my brother and the way that racism impacts the lives of people of color. The inhumane attitudes that are held across this land toward those who are poor

are appalling, but light breaks through at times. A few months ago, I told my brother's story as a part of a presentation that I was giving at a conference. When I finished, a white woman came up to me to share how that story had impacted her.

It turned out that she is a medical school professor and a physician. She wanted to talk to me about the possibility of naming their proposed curriculum addressing health disparities for my brother. I was speechless! I was so moved that someone would even think of such a thing. She was working on the curriculum and hoped to roll it out in the beginning of 2023.

A few weeks ago, I heard from her that the first sessions of the curriculum had occurred, and that it went well. I will be going to visit that campus at some point and will have a chance to speak to some of the young folks who are taking the course. What an honor for my little brother whose life was deemed worthless, now to have his name on a curriculum in a medical school. She is attaching information to the curriculum about what happened to my brother. Hopefully, the students who hear it will work a bit harder to become doctors who try to save lives without being concerned about things such as economic status or skin color.

Light does come in the morning. Sometimes it takes so long that it can be missed, but I am thankful that this time we did not miss it. It encourages my family and me to keep the faith and to stand as tall as we can against the evil known as racism and all other evil that does not

honor life no matter where it is found. We are grateful to this beautiful, quiet woman professor/physician with a heart that was open enough to hear, and who had courage enough to act.

May we all work to be a half shade braver. ✦

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 seven 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. Her latest book is The Night Is Long, But Light Comes in the Morning: Meditations for Racial Healing (2022). 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)



Mia Nussbaum

Open Door Community Press

Surely Goodness and Mercy

A Journey into Illness and Solidarity



Murphy Davis

Forewords by Jürgen Moltmann
and Bryan Stevenson



Alison Reeder

Surely Goodness and Mercy

A Journey into Illness and Solidarity

by Murphy Davis

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HOSPITALITY

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A Welcome Table honoring Martin Luther King Jr.



David Payne

Micheala Murphy Buc, Ed Loring, Erica Prettyman, Tyrone Cole and David Payne served our friends on Saturday, January 21. Erica's delicious soup warmed stomachs and brought smiles to faces. It was great to see so many old friends.

Newspaper

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Open Door Community

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



Murphy Davis ¡Presente!



Metro & State

SECTION 8

THE ATLANTA CONSTITUTION

**** THURSDAY, JULY 19, 1990

Minister ATTACKS Husband

(KTP) A local Presbyterian minister was arrested Wednesday night after allegedly attacking her husband and trying to choke him. The incident occurred during the Wednesday night meeting of the Open Door Community Church adult Sunday school class.

Witnesses said Rev. Murphy Davis and her husband, Ed Loring, who is also a minister, became engaged in a heated argument during the class on the question of whether God is a man or a woman. Ms. Davis went into a rage according to class members after Loring observed that God could not be a woman because earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and other natural disasters occur at random. Loring stated that if God were a woman, such disasters would occur at regular intervals consistent with Her menstrual cycle.



Neither Loring nor Davis were available for comment Wednesday night. However, Davis' legal advisor, Patsy Morris, said Ms. Davis would raise a defense of temporary insanity based on the arrogant spouse syndrome (A.S.S.), which holds that living with a spouse who claims to know everything is enough to drive a person crazy. "I've known Ed for a long time," said Morris. "He got what was coming to him."

Ms. Davis was freed on bond early Thursday. No court date has been set. A number of people reportedly have volunteered to testify on Ms. Davis' behalf that they also have felt like choking Rev. Loring. Gubernatorial candidate Andrew Young, Atlanta Mayor Maynard Jackson, attorney general Michael Bowers and several members of the Georgia Board of Pardons and Paroles are said to be among the potential witnesses."

Minister Attacks Husband

This spoof was inspired by a photograph of Murphy Davis and Ed Loring published in The Atlanta Constitution on July 19, 1990. It was prepared by Georgia attorney Wade Crumbley with the encouragement of his assistant Catherine Firebaugh, who loved a good practical joke. Wade wrote the text of the fake article. Catherine put substantial creative effort in the layout, which she accomplished by clipping a portion of the newspaper, making a copy of it on the "legal" size paper that was in common use at that time, and typing the text on the remaining blank section of the copy with the sheet inserted sideways in the typewriter. She created the headline by clipping individual letters of the alphabet from articles in the newspaper and pasting them together. She then anonymously mailed the spoof article to Murphy and Ed.

"KTP" referred to a nonexistent news organization, the Kelletown Press. It was intended to be a clue to the identity of the author, which apparently was far too subtle.

Wade Crumbley met Murphy and Ed in 1979 while representing Georgia death row inmate Jerry Banks. They became friends and worked together on several legal projects during the Open Door Community's years in Atlanta, including the case of death row inmate Charlie Young and the establishment of New Hope House. He is a retired Superior Court Judge in Georgia.

The Door Shall Be Opened

The above photograph was made by Walter Stricklin, a photographer for The Atlanta Constitution. The original caption said: "Clowning in court, the Rev. Murphy Davis pretends to strangle her husband, the Rev. Ed Loring, just before the judge entered the courtroom to fine them and four others in the takeover of the Imperial Hotel." It accompanied a fine article on the Open Door and the Imperial Hotel occupation entitled "The Door Shall Be Opened," that was written by John Blake. It began on page D-1 of the Sunday, October 7, 1990 edition of the paper. He is now a columnist for CNN online. Here is an excerpt from that article.

At 4 a.m. June 18, the Rev. Ed Loring [and the Rev. Murphy Davis] and seven other homeless activists broke into the abandoned Imperial Hotel downtown to protest Atlanta's failure to provide enough low-income housing. They stayed inside 15 days — joined by hundreds of homeless people — before they were arrested for trespassing. The protestors put the plight of the homeless high on the city's agenda. Atlanta Mayor Maynard H. Jackson promised to help create 3,500 single-room-occupancy apartments by 1994.

The Imperial takeover was the result of the Rev. Loring's work at the Open Door Community, a 56-room house on Ponce de Leon Avenue where he and his wife, the Rev. Murphy Davis, live and work. ... Their obligations do not make the Rev. Loring, 50, or the Rev. Davis, 42, dour. The Rev. Davis plays the guitar. The Rev. Loring plays basketball and listens to Bob Dylan.

The pair, along with friends, established the Open Door Community in 1981 after working at Clifton Presbyterian Church in

Atlanta, where Rev. Davis had established a prison ministry.

The ministers — who met at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur — sometimes banter like newlyweds, not a couple married 15 years. A souvenir both saved from the Imperial Hotel days is a photo that shows the Rev. Davis pretending to strangle her gagging husband.

"His wildness is kind of balanced by her almost professional calm," said Anita Beaty, a friend and director of the Task Force for the Homeless. "She's fairly sedate, and he's really electric." Through the years of dealing with suffering people, the Rev. Loring has developed a reputation for a fiery, in-your-face approach to defending the homeless.

On Atlanta's successful bid to land the 1996 Olympics: "We have leadership who will get up at 5 in the morning and stay up to 1 in the morning to try to get the Olympics, but they won't do one damn thing to house the homeless." ♦

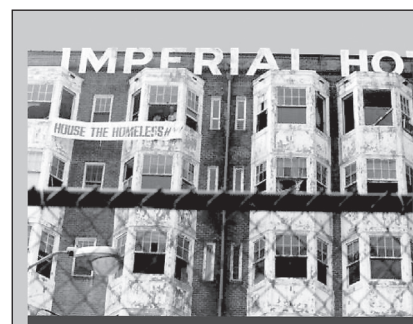


Murphy Davis and Ed Loring during the occupation of the Imperial Hotel.
ODC Archives

Raising Our Voices, Breaking the Chain

The Imperial Hotel Occupation as Prophetic Politics

By Terry Easton



Raising Our Voices, Breaking the Chain

The Imperial Hotel Occupation
as Prophetic Politics

Terry Easton

For more on the takeover of the Imperial Hotel, led by Murphy Davis and Ed Loring and others from ODC, see Terry Easton's excellent book, *Raising Our Voices, Breaking the Chain: The Imperial Hotel Occupation as Prophetic Politics*, published in 2016 by the Open Door Community Press. Available from the ODC for a donation or for free — your choice!

Let the Healing Begin

A Review of *The Night Is Long, But Light Comes in the Morning*

By Reverend Jennifer Lee

Reconnecting to the justice seekers of the world comes at a cost. In 1998, I stopped having regular contact with my good friend and mentor, Eduard Loring, as well as many others in the struggle of battling inner and outer racism. Fortunately, in 2019, we reunited. Joe Dan and I were able to celebrate Christmas with Ed, Murphy and members of the Open Door Atlanta diaspora at the Absalom Jones Episcopal Center for Racial Healing. I had the pleasure of meeting the center's Executive Director, Dr. Catherine Meeks, for the first time. Dr. Meeks generously showered her friends and guests with delicious food and hospitality. I felt genuine joy reconnecting with old friends and meeting new ones. For a change, Joe Dan and I had the rare experience of being around other people who weren't praising Donald Trump for his latest tirade. Yes, relaxed breathing felt pretty good.

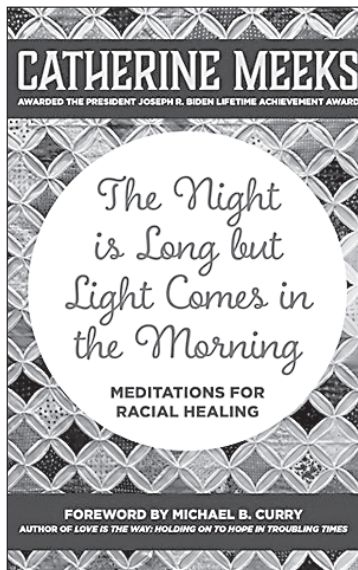
A few years later, I began to spend Thursday evenings with Rev. Dick Rustay in his assisted living home in Atlanta. From Baltimore, Ed would Face Time with Dick and me on these occasions. Often, we would embark on those theological and/or political conversations I used to enjoy having with Ed years ago as a Resident Volunteer at the ODC Atlanta. Then, more recently, Ed and Nibs Stroupe convinced me to write a review of Dr. Catherine Meeks' book, *The Night Is Long, But Light Comes in the Morning: Meditations on Racial Healing*. I was honored, extremely humbled and quite anxious about writing a review.

Why in the world would this once upon a time justice seeker, now a frazzled and worn out Northwest Georgia hospice chaplain and pulpit supply, mother of two young men, wife of 25 years, and member of the consumerist rat race who hasn't seriously read any books for at least 20 years (outside of *Harry Potter*), now be asked to write a review of a book about such an important and consequential subject? After all, over the last several decades, I've found myself more often than not tossing my cross into the deep and weed-filled ditches in hopes that I'd never have to find it again. However, the answer was simple. Why me? I needed to read Catherine Meeks' book.

No matter where you are on your justice seeking and racial healing journey, I would dare say that you need to read it as well. As you read Dr. Meeks' thought-provoking words, you will get the joy and at times the discomfort of figuring out your reasons. Speaking for myself, within the first few pages I became very aware of the reasons I needed to have this book. In 1996, I chose to turn down a call to a parish in Nebraska and to follow Jesus to the Open Door Community in Atlanta. Jesus does say, "And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:27, NIV).

In her book, Dr. Catherine Meeks provides us with a series of 48 meditations on racial healing. With each meditation, I became more compelled to put on my gloves and long sleeves to go back and dig the cross out from that poison oak-infested ditch. Dr. Meeks delves into the psychological and spiritual aspects of racism. By sharing her own deeply personal experiences and the experiences of those she loves, she names the ways racism is traumatic for all human beings. Dr. Meeks challenges and guides the reader to work courageously toward racial healing, first and foremost within the reader's heart, mind and soul, and then and only then, within the outer community. The work must first start from within each individual. Racial healing begins with confessions from those deepest corners where we hide all of our most frightening secrets.

Dr. Meeks' thoughtful meditations brought back many painful memories that I had pushed into the corners of my mind. I remembered the all too often occurrences growing up in rural Georgia, when my black and brown peers were racially traumatized while I stood by in silent dismay. In particular, my mind goes back to the time as a pre-teen when I would spend Thursday evenings at the bowling alley game room. One particular night, a black schoolmate of mine came to the game room. Immediately, a white brother and sister duo began yelling racial slurs, telling him he in no way belonged there. The look on his face will forever be etched in my memory. I was completely frozen in place, unable to speak because of my crippling fear. I also remembered less shameful moments throughout my life when I hope I was able to make a difference. Dr. Meeks' meditations caused me to look deep within myself to



name what is keeping me from courageously standing with those who continue to experience racial trauma. Her questions moved me to consider ways I could indeed continue to reconnect with justice seekers and to follow the path of racial healing and ultimately the path of the healing of creation, knowing there would always be two obstacles I must name and overcome: hopelessness and fear.

I strongly encourage everyone to read *The Night Is Long, But Light Comes in the Morning*. Be prepared to consider the questions that her meditations pose to us, both as individuals and as a community. Dr. Meeks is asking us if we truly want to begin the healing process. Are we willing and able to name and to begin the work of overcoming those obstacles that immobilize us or cause us to flee from the work of racial healing?

I was getting in my car late one evening after work and caught part of a pre-recorded episode of "Closer Look with Rose Scott" on WABE 90.1. As providence would have it, Rose was interviewing Dr. Meeks. They were discussing racial healing and

The Night Is Long, But Light Comes in the Morning

by Catherine Meeks

Church Publishing
224 pages
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Dr. Meeks' book. Dr. Meeks was reminding the audience that "everyone has been wounded by racism." Therefore, for true healing to occur, it must begin in every human being. Dr. Meeks warned that the work toward racial healing will not be easy, and our political and religious institutions do not provide us with examples of what racial healing looks like. Finally, she asked two questions that I will attempt to carry with me every day: "What kind of human being do you want to be?" and, echoing Jesus' own question, "Do you want to be healed?"

At the outset of this piece, I wrote that reconnecting myself with the justice seeking community would come with a cost. I may get asked to read a powerful book on racial healing. I may get asked to write a book review. I may have to delve into the difficult and daunting work of truth-telling about myself, my wounds and the wounded world. I may have to relinquish my self-interests and leave my softly padded comfort zones. On the other hand, what is the cost if I continue to stand still? What if I continue to turn and walk away? What if I leave the cross in the ditch? Well, then, I would only be perpetuating the racial trauma that I witnessed so long ago in that bowling alley game room. Therefore, the cost would be too traumatic to imagine. I thank Dr. Catherine Meeks for the much needed reminder. ✦

Jennifer Lee is a former Resident Volunteer of the Open Door Community Atlanta who currently serves as hospice chaplain and supply pastor within Cherokee Presbytery. Jennifer and her husband of 25 years, Joe Dan Walker, met and fell in love at the ODC. Together, they are the proud parents of two amazing sons, Stephen and Michael. (jenleewalk4@gmail.com)



Left: **Anne Wheeler, Jean Ellis and Traci Salami** pack the gift boxes.

Below: **Akiva Freidlin and John Morledge** load the boxes for transportation to the prison.



Photographs by Mary Catherine Johnson

Christmas Comes to Death Row

December in Jackson, Georgia
from Mary Catherine Johnson

The 2022 Murphy Davis Christmas Packages for Georgia's Death Row were a huge success! Thanks to our generous donors, we were able to provide a big box full of candy, cookies, nuts, microwave popcorn, condiments, socks, towels, notepads and toiletries for each of the men on death row a few days before Christmas. Several of the recipients talked about how great it was to get microwave popcorn this time, and how the cell block smelled like a movie theater for a few days.

When the volunteers gathered to assemble the boxes, we spoke of how we felt the presence of Murphy Davis as we worked, and how we knew that she would have been so happy about what was being done in her name for her beloved friends on death row. Visit www.newhopehousega.org for more photos and info on how to get involved with this project in 2023. ✦

Dick Rustay, An Appreciation Part 2: The Rustay Rock

By Ed Loring

The most important gift and charisma that Dick and Gladys practiced at the ODC was focused, steady, trustworthy leadership in the house. They were the foundation rock of our Life Together and the Works of Mercy.

One of the scriptures that feeds my gospel hungers is in Matthew at the end of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus uses a metaphor of the house builder to picture discipleship and following his teachings.

Jesus paints this picture with his tongue: “These words I speak to you are not incidental additions to your life, homeowner improvements to your standard of living. They are foundational words, words to build a life on. If you work these words into your life, you are like a smart carpenter who built his house on solid rock. Rain poured down, the river flooded, a tornado hit — but nothing moved that house.” Dick and Gladys were the hard rock foundation of the ODC.



2006 | Betty Jane Crandall

Let me share three examples. Murphy Davis was ill or dealing with the side effects of cancer treatment for over 25 years. I accompanied HER to every oncology/hematology appointment. During Murphy’s many hospitalizations, I slept in the room beside HER. Not once did the community miss a single Work of Mercy. Dick and Gladys provided the stability and leadership to steer the ship through the storms. Murphy took great comfort that the Life Together and Works of Mercy went on without us. Of course, the entire community put their shoulders to the rock and pushed up the rough side of the mountain. But Dick and Gladys were the Elders, leaders and voice that gave assurance and encouragement. The Rock.

From the middle of June 17 to July 3, 1990, five years before cancer struck and knocked Murphy down, we occupied the Imperial Hotel. Nelson Mandela came to town, and the Olympics were on the way. Mayor Maynard Jackson’s city administration wanted all homeless people invisible, out of the way, in the jail house. We made our brothers and sisters as visible as they have ever been in Atlanta — on Peachtree Street no less — and we were not to be gone with the wind. Dick and Gladys, again and always, kept the Works of Mercy going and gave stability to the household.

We served the Butler Street Breakfast on Peachtree Street. Elizabeth Dede, Murphy Davis, CM Sherman, Larry Travick, John Flournoy, Sister Jo Ann, Carol Schlicksup and I along with volunteers and up to 300 homeless folks occupied the old, abandoned hotel; that is, ‘til we were arrested.

(For a full and acclaimed narrative of the important resistance to the powers read Terry Easton, *Raising Our Voices, Breaking the Chain: The Imperial Hotel Occupation as Prophetic Politics*, 2016 — please see order information on page 3.)

Another example, this one of extraordinary faithfulness. Troy Davis was executed on September 21, 2011. His case was a cause celebre. Troy’s execution was a setback and horror to those who visited, marched and pleaded with the Pardons and Paroles Board. Amy Goodman and Democracy Now staff came to the prison and gave six hours of live coverage on the night of Troy’s killing by the state. Troy’s funeral was held in his hometown of Savannah, GA, on October 1. Most of the residents of the ODC got up early and traveled to Savannah. The Rustays, already past retirement age when they joined the ODC, landed at the Atlanta airport after a 5 hour trip from California, and came straight to Savannah, an additional three hour trip. Dick with phlebitis. That, my friends, is an example of love and commitment, hard rock and inspiring. Dick and Gladys both visited friends on Georgia death row for years.

Dick and Gladys were the
hard rock foundation
of the Open Door Community.

Dick was a soft-boiled egg. Loving, conflict avoiding and affirming of everyone. Once he got my goat and I was pissed. A member of the community sat on the sidewalk steps and told our guests that Murphy Davis didn’t care about them. I was amazed. Very few people were at odds with Murphy over our 36 years at 910. I made the recommendation to the Leadership Team that we ask this divisive man to leave the house. On the day of our weekly



2007 | Calvin Kimbrough



2014 | Calvin Kimbrough

Leadership Team meeting, Dick Rustay had a transcending experience. He told us that the said individual had smiled at him that morning as they passed in the hall. Under no amount of argument would Dick give consensus to my proposal. Dick was certain the man had changed, and the smile was a sign of new life. Not long afterward, the resident departed on his own.

An Attitude of Gratitude

Many stories of thanksgiving remain in my mind and heart. On retreats to Dayspring Farm, Dick would cook blueberry pancakes. We all joyed in the sumptuous meal. During Advent at Dayspring Farm, Gladys made donuts while Murphy prepared hot cider and cookies. Joy to the World, the Lord has come!

During our last four years at 910, Dick developed COPD, and Gladys moved into dementia. Our apartments were across the hall from each other. We developed a routine where I would come over after they were bedded down for the night. I would sit at the foot of their bed and we would share stories from our day and our hopes that some young people would join us and take over the ODC. We were all aging more rapidly than the previous year.

Obviously, I loved Dick and Gladys with a love and loyalty beyond their end. Both are now gone. Murphy has crossed over. Many, many of our guests from the streets are dead. Horrible and mangled executions have occurred during our watch on the streets and in prisons. Our home at 910 has been bulldozed for upper class living as Ponce de Leon is now for the wealthy to luxuriate in their surplus income, which belongs to the poor, reparations to African Americans and Native Americans. What happened to the soul of white folks? I wish Dr. W.E.B. Dubois had written *The Souls of White Folk*.

Atlanta is built on sand. Surplus income for the self contains maggots. As poet Jane Kenyon writes, “Someday it will be otherwise.” ♣

Eduard Nuessner Loring is an Activist/Advocate/Ally at the Open Door Community in Baltimore. Pronouns: he, him.
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Exzavious Gibson

Memories of Anne Braden

By David Billings

I knew Anne Braden from the mid-1970s until her death in March 2006. Of course, I knew *of* her before then. She was an icon of the Civil Rights Movement. I was aware she was mentioned by the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. in his “Letter from Birmingham Jail” written in April 1963. I had heard how she and her husband, Carl Braden, were from Louisville, and both had been charged with sedition by the State of Kentucky for buying a house in a segregated white neighborhood of Louisville and then selling it to a Black couple. The Bradens were convicted under state sedition statutes, and Carl Braden actually served time. One of the things I have never forgotten about Anne is how throughout her life she stood by Carl. She would say, “Carl and I were a team. I just happened to have lived a much longer life. But we were a team. I became better known. Had Carl lived as long as I have, we would have both been well known.”

I first met Anne at S.O.C. meetings. “SOC” was how everyone referred to the Southern Organizing Committee for Economic and Social Justice which Anne helped found in the 1970s along with Rev. C.T. Vivian and other organizers who had been leaders in the Civil Rights Movement. SOC’s purpose was to keep stressing organizing as a fundamental principle of effective social change. Its members felt that organizing’s importance to social change work must always be kept front and center, especially in the minds of activists. The founders of SOC urged activists not to succumb to quick programmatic temptations as the obvious “next steps” to the incredible victories that organizing had brought about in the aftermath of *Brown v. Board* in 1954. They knew it was mass-based organizing that had made the Civil Rights Movement happen, and that it was such organizing that would continue to be the necessary foundation for any future victories. They wanted to train organizers who could move about the South and keep the movement going. Anne always had a strong cadre of local organizers who worked with her in different towns and cities across the South. She did not want to be seen as a “public intellectual.” Whether it was with Mattie Jones in Louisville, Judy Hand and Scott Douglas in Birmingham, or Gloria Furmin and Ron Chisom in New Orleans, she knew how important networking was in her organizing. Jim Dunn would say, “We must build a net that works.”

I was not a seasoned organizer in the mid-1970s. I was just beginning my work at St. Mark’s Community Center. When I was hired, St. Mark’s was a recreation program serving neighborhood youth from Treme, one of the oldest African American communities in the United States. It was in Treme that I first heard of a group of neighborhood residents who were forming an organization to address issues of housing, jobs and constant police harassment. I knew I wanted to be a part of that effort.

Ron Chisom, Joyce Lawes, Jim Hayes and the Herbert family were the lead organizers behind the development of the Treme Community Improvement Association. They were about developing leadership and enhancing Treme residents and their institutionally based supporters like me with a sense of the community’s power if organized strategically. Part of their long-term strategy was to expose their members to other organizing efforts not only in New Orleans but around the South. I began to travel to Birmingham to SOC meetings. For me, these trips were like going to school. They were definitely an education. SOC was a classroom and the teachers were legendary. People would come from all over to SOC meetings. Dr. Jim Dunn from Yellow Springs, Ohio, came to SOC meetings. So did C.T. Vivian from Atlanta’s SCLC; Anne Romaine, an organizer working among coal miners in Appalachia; Lynn Wells with the National Anti-Klan Network; and such luminaries as Hosea Williams, Modjeska Simpkins and Rev. Fred Taylor, all from Atlanta. But the prime mover behind SOC’s influence was the example and charisma of Anne Braden. Because it was Anne who founded SOC, others wanted to be a part of it. Because Anne believed, you believed. Or you believed in Anne.

I asked Ron Chisom once what was it about Anne Braden that stood out in his mind. He said, “Because she never threw anybody away. Anne worked with everybody.” He said, “I try to follow that principle in my own work.”

Anne struggled with the emphasis on affinity groups. It was a new notion to her. She resisted being slotted into the white group. She’d complain, “You mean after spending my whole life

organizing white and Black people to learn how to come together, I now have to meet with just white people?” We assured her that is not what was meant, but people of color, especially Black people, were saying that they needed their own spaces where whites were not present to discuss dynamics not meant for white people to hear. And they went on to say, “whites need to do the same.” Thus was born European Dissent in 1986. The idea was, when we did come back together we would be stronger. Maybe Anne was right. Today, affinity groups are in danger of becoming an end in themselves. Maybe even at the expense of movement-building and community-based organizing.



Anne Braden seen in a surveillance photograph made in 1962 at a Southern Conference Education Fund meeting in Birmingham. From the Jack Rabin Collection at the Pennsylvania State University Libraries.

I remember an evening in the early 2000s after an Undoing Racism workshop at Margery Freeman’s and my home in New Orleans where Anne and Rev. C.T. Vivian were present. Others

were also there from The People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond’s local organizing community in New Orleans. We began to tell stories, one of which was how The Institute was founded at C.T.’s home in Atlanta with Anne in attendance. As the night wore on, Anne and C.T. began to reminisce about their history together, working with Dr. King and other heroes of the Civil Rights Movement. Alcohol flowed freely amongst us and inhibitions loosened. At some point, I chose to just squeeze down into a corner and listen. What a rare and, in retrospect, cherished moment! I was thinking of my own upbringing in the segregated towns of McComb, Mississippi and Helena, Arkansas in the 1950s and ‘60s. I thought to myself, “What a blessing it is to have such a twosome in our house.” Even as the weather that night worsened to the point that the New Orleans airport was shut down, I would not have wanted to be anywhere else. C.T. and Anne had to sleep at our place overnight — one on the couch and the other on a pallet on the floor.

Another memory comes to mind with Anne. She called one evening at what felt to me like the middle of the night. It was probably only close to midnight. She was excited. “Let’s make a movie!” she proclaimed. “Let’s do a remake of *Mississippi Burning*, but this time tell the truth” about what really happened. “The one out now makes the FBI seem like heroes.” She went on for a while before we admitted it was probably not going to happen.

Anne had certain principles of organizing that are as important to understand and live by today as ever. She called them her Five Essentials. (1) You must understand racism. Racism destroys democracy and we live in a race constructed nation. (2) Change comes as oppressed peoples organize for change and make demands. You can’t expect to legislate racism away. You can’t educate it away. You must organize from the bottom up until the nation changes. (3) When African American communities organize, the nation trembles. (4) No one group can do it alone, but masses of people working together can build a movement that is anti-racist. (5) We must regain the audacity of the ‘60s and continue to dream the dream of justice.

If there is an Organizers Hall of Fame, Anne Braden belongs in it. If there are those whose names we must not forget, hers is one of them. ♣

David Billings is a United Methodist minister born in McComb, Mississippi, and raised in Helena, Arkansas. He has been a trainer and organizer with The People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond since its inception in 1980. Today he facilitates “Undoing Racism/Community Organizing” sessions as part of that team. He is the author of Deep Denial and has written for many publications and journals. He is also a partner in the United Nations Committee on Human Rights and the Center for the Study of White American Culture. (revdavidbillings@gmail.com)

The Box

Compiled by Ed Loring

Witness Against Torture: Washington D.C.

On Tuesday, January 10, David Payne and I joined the Witness Against Torture action. Only for an afternoon did we attend, but oh, what an afternoon of the cry of the prisoner and the hope against hope Joe Biden will close the torture chamber named Guantanamo prison.

We performed an action at Union Station dressed in orange jumpsuits (which reminded me of my times in Fulton County Jail) with black hoods; that is, we were dressed as those on the way to torture and/or execution. We marched around the station, sang songs, proclaimed peace and justice chants. Many of us carried enlarged photographs of a Guantanamo prisoner. I did a street performance identifying as a prisoner, kneeling and crying out in anguish to stop the torture, break the chains, give us our lives back.

To be with movement friends is empowering and renewing. Frida Berrigan was there. We were together in early December remembering her Dad, Phil Berrigan, 20 years gone; Murphy and I attended Phil’s funeral in Baltimore. Paul Mango and Brian Terrell, my longtime friend and mentor, were there. Brian will have an article in *Hospitality* soon of the entire week of witness, fasting and learning. David and I came back to Baltimore in the dark, tired but full of the Holy Spirit whose fires roar in the Prophets.



Maria Oswalt

Seeking Hope in Memphis continued from page 1



Protestors moving to shut down the I-55 bridge over the Mississippi River in Memphis on Friday, January 27. Peter Gathje is in the foreground on the right side of the picture. Photograph by ScottOlson/Getty Images.

As he skateboarded, he would also stop and take photographs, beautiful shots from around the city of Memphis. He seemed like a Christ figure, an innocent in a world of sin. Struck down, crucified, the Christ of the lynching tree (in James Cone’s words). He was “buked and scorned” and made his final journey alone.

I needed to pray. I walked alone along the side of the highway, retracing my steps, passing the cars stopped by the shutting down of the bridge. I went down the embankment we had climbed

to get onto the highway, and then up Riverside Drive, before turning left to go back to the street where I had parked.

I drove to the Lorraine Motel. I was alone there. The night was quiet. I looked up to the second-floor balcony, room 306, marked by a large white wreath of flowers. Tyre. Dr. King. And the long, long list of men and women killed by the police. “My God, my God why have you forsaken us?”

As I left, I did not feel much hope. I turned away from the

I am praying for justice.

In studying and reflecting upon biblical justice, I affirm that justice is not revenge. Rather justice creates the conditions that will restore community, heal what is broken, and bring peace — wholeness. Without justice there can be no peace.

Justice requires accountability for wrongdoing. Those who have done wrong have violated and harmed a member and/or members of the community; they have to pay/make restitution in some way for their wrongdoing.

But justice does not imitate the wrong that was done and simply return evil for evil. Justice does not dehumanize. Justice avoids self-righteousness. Justice may punish, but with the purpose of restoration of community, not vengeance.

I am praying for justice.

— Peter Gathje | facebook | 1/27/23

museum and onto Front Street. There, off to the right on the sidewalk, I saw a young African American man. He held a skateboard as he walked. ✦

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

Restoring Full Humanity continued from page 1

The Court’s hammer landed hard on Kayser Daniel in 2019 when he was sentenced to 10 years felony probation.

Two years after that, in June of 2021, he was arrested and jailed for robbery, obstruction and terroristic threats. But this time, thanks to his public defender’s advocacy, the judge was convinced to give Mr. Daniel another chance. He lowered his bond to \$100, and if he successfully completed the 18-month TAC program, the robbery charge would be dismissed.

Since posting his \$100 bond in August 2021, members of our all-volunteer Courtwatch team have regularly visited Mr. Daniel in his TAC apartment, provided transportation to and from court appearances, met with his treatment providers, and occasionally purchased groceries for him. We’ve been present with him in the courtroom during his frequent status hearings in Superior and State courts.

Recently, I was in State Court with Mr. Daniel. A misdemeanor case — a 2020 simple battery charge — was pending, and we, along with his public defender, were hopeful that the prosecutor would dismiss the charge.

I hadn’t seen Mr. Daniel in several months. He looked well, which put me at ease because he’d recently sent me a desperate-sounding text saying he wanted to leave Athens. “I hate this city!” he said. “I don’t get any respect.” He’d also quit his job at a local restaurant, convinced that his co-workers were racist and disrespectful. More worrisome, Mr. Daniel intimated to me that he’d been having suicidal thoughts.

But now, chatting with him in the courtroom, I felt Mr. Daniel had bounced back. He’d found a new job and was feeling more positive about his possibilities once he completed the treatment program. During our conversation he cracked a smile now and again. I teased him about the t-shirt he was wearing, which read, *Hydrate the Hustle*.

“How are you doing in TAC?” I asked him while we sat waiting for his case to be called.

“Good. I’m starting Phase Four. No more curfew, and I only have to see a counselor once a week now.”

“That’s great! How much longer do you have in the program?”

“Maybe four more months.”

“And you’ve moved to a new apartment since I last saw you, right?”

“Got a new roommate, too. I like him.”

“You still want to get the heck out of Athens?” I asked him.

“Yeah.”

“Does that mean you want to go somewhere else in Georgia?”

“No.”

“Do you have any family nearby?”

“I got nobody.”

“So where are you thinking you’d like to live?”

“Havana.”

I leaned in closer. I wasn’t sure I heard him correctly. “Say again?”

“Havana.”

“Havana, as in *Cuba*?”

“Yah,” he smiled. “They got some pretty cars there.”

We spent the next few minutes talking about the logistics of a U.S. citizen wanting to move to Cuba, and agreed that it would be difficult. We also concurred that the island country was enticing, even beyond its refurbished and brightly painted antique American automobiles.

“I love the music of Cuba,” I told him. “I’ve actually got something of a collection of Cuban music, and several of my favorite jazz musicians are Cuban. I’d love to visit the country just to absorb the music.”

“I think they have pretty good medical care there,” Mr. Daniel added. “And educational opportunities. And the cars.”

Later, the public defender told us that the prosecutor seemed willing to dismiss the misdemeanor charge, but it might take a few days. Downstairs, Mr. Daniel and I high-fived one another as we left the courthouse.

That night I got a text from Mr. Daniel. “I’m low on food at my apartment. Would you or your church be able to bring me some groceries? Anything will help.” “I’ll stop by your place tomorrow,” I responded.

The public defender called the next day. “I talked with the solicitor and Mr. Daniel’s case will be dismissed in State Court on Friday,” she said.

A few minutes later I received a text from Kayser Daniel.

“Hey. I got to go to court on Friday. We got this, John!”

I hope he’s right. To be sure, Mr. Daniel is lucky to have two compassionate public defenders, who, despite being overworked and underpaid, have doggedly sought to make the criminal legal system recognize that their client needs treatment, not punishment.

But the felony robbery charge is still pending. And Kayser Daniel knows that for the last two decades he’s been fodder for the Athens criminal punishment machine. Apparently, for some people, restoring Mr. Daniel to full humanity seems too great a risk. After all, his criminal history shows he’s failed time and time again. He’s been labeled “incorrigible” and “recidivist.”

Not long ago, I visited Mr. Daniel at his TAC apartment. He was struggling again, worried about the pending felony case, having second thoughts about TAC, wanting to throw in the proverbial towel. Our time together left both of us frustrated. I was exhausted; I can only imagine how bone-weary my friend felt.

Leaving the apartment, I hugged Mr. Daniel in an attempt to bolster his sagging spirits. “Hey man, remember what Duke Ellington once said: ‘Life has two rules: Number one, never quit! Number two, always remember rule number one.’” ✦

John and Dee Cole Vodicka and sons were Resident Volunteers at the Open Door Community in 1985-86 and 1992-93. John founded and, for 15 years, directed the Prison & Jail Project in Americus, Georgia. Today he is an activist, writer and community organizer who lives in Athens, Georgia. (johnvodicka@comcast.net)

A Bag of Snakes

The Open Door Community Press is pleased to announce a forthcoming book: *A Bag of Snakes*, by **Murphy Davis** with **Barry Lee Burnside**, Introduction by **Ed Loring**. Suggested donation is \$15, and if you’d like us to send one to a prisoner, please send \$25, which will pay for your book and theirs. Free to Prisoners or anyone who wants a free copy.

Grace and Peaces of Mail

My Dear Big Brother Ed,

Next month (December 29) I will be 74. I'm getting up there, huh? But I don't know if I will ever catch you! You got me by about 8 years, which is why I call you my Big Brother.

Thanks for sending me the Maya Angelou Poem, "Caged Bird." It has been a while since I read it, so now I am reminded of why, despite my sad state, I sing.

I actually met Maya back in the 1980s. I was trying to develop my writing skills in poetry. (30 years ago!) Anyway, I was in Georgia State Prison in Reidsville (now closed down) just beginning this long journey of incarceration. I wrote Ms. Angelou for advice. I sent her a sample of my poems and asked her what she thought and how could I improve. I never expected Maya to write me back, but she did! She wrote me a three-page handwritten letter and gave me her opinion about my poetry. She also sent me several of her books that were signed by her. After this encounter, I began to write like a madman for the next 20+ years. Poetry was my first love before art and painting.

Mary Catherine keeps me up to speed on all your goings, Ed. I'm glad Hannah is doing well now.

Thank you for your prayers and concerns for my release and parole. I will be reconsidered in March of 2023. Maybe this time my song for my freedom will be fulfilled.

Hope you folks have a wonderful Thanksgiving and Christmas and Happy New Year. 2022 was quite a year for me. A few times I did not think I would make it! BUT GOD!

Love,
Harold McAllister
Georgia Prisoner

Dear Ed,

I'm rummaging through stacks of stuff that I should discard. Instead I use it as stationery! And a jumping off point!

The two enclosures are pieces I have held onto for many years. The Sam Shoemaker prose spoke to me when I was a Young Life leader in 1980. Since the beginning point of my seminary studies and sense of call I have felt the space "near the door" is my designated space. God assigned me to that place years back. I've appreciated the view.

The other piece is an article you wrote on eliminating the death penalty in 1988. This piece also spoke to me about caring for any marginalized people who crossed my path. That has become so much harder, because I am older, and there is so much traffic on the path! It makes me tired, and yet I do my best.

I'm so happy about the hopeful changes at New Hope House. Mary Catherine is a faithful disciple and kingdom builder, and I am glad for the investment she has made.

I hope all is well with you, your family, and the Open Door Community. Know of my continuing prayers!

Martha Clinkscales
Atlanta, Georgia

Dear Ed,

Thanks for all that you continue to do for the "bottom" 98%! And thanks for *Hospitality*, a great source for inspiration and real perspective on current events.

Love,
Ed & Barb Kusek
Hartford, Wisconsin

Dear Ed,

Sending big hugs and big blessings to you and all of your loved ones during this winter Holiday season. Thank you very dearly for sending Murphy's book. I read it in tears and my heart goes out to all with great love and compassion.

May you go from strength to strength and keep up the good fight! Joyous Solstice, Merry X-Mas & Merry Chanukah!

Sue Silverman and Richard Roati
Tucson, Arizona

Merry Christmas!

Please renew my *Hospitality* to:
Andi Gelsthorpe
Boone, North Carolina

Hello Hannah and Eduard,

For the last two visits with kids at Chesterfield Detention Center I shared with the kids Murphy's Psalm 23. We read it together, each taking a paragraph (how very presbyterian of me). But it moved me to tears each time we read it and the kids LOVED LOVED LOVED reading it together. I asked them about which words spoke to them and they often said, *solidarity* — God's got my back. The kids I shared it with the first week all told me they have it hung up in their rooms. It has brought me so much joy because I tell them about Murphy and how much she meant to me and what she taught me and then we talk about psalms being prayers people write as a way to talk to God. Then I invite them to write their own and several of them were really excited about that idea. It's been a very sacred journey to share Murphy and her translation with them and have them just light up with it. It's been so, so beautiful!!

I am so thankful for you both and brought all of you with me into the prison today. Love you both so much. Thank you for welcoming me into the light of your lives!!

love you,
Lauren
Rev. Lauren Ramseur
Co-Pastor, Voices of Jubilee
Richmond, Virginia

Dear Ed,

I was pleased to see that someone has written the story of Kelly Gissendaner, *You Shall Not Condemn*, by Jennifer M. McBride. The night of her execution, I was at the vigil on the Capitol steps in Atlanta with you and Murphy. The frustrating thing was that the man who committed the murder testified against Kelly and he received a jail sentence.

While appeals were being filed, Rev. Kathy Zappa, an Episcopal priest who knew Kelly, had led a prayer service at the cathedral. After it was all over that night, I sat on the steps with a woman distraught over the injustice. "Where was God? How could He allow them to take Kelly's life? What about all the prayers?" I don't remember what I said to her, but eventually we walked to the MARTA station together and went our separate ways. I continue the fight against the death penalty. My belief is simple: If it is wrong to kill, then we should not kill.

Thank you for sending me *Hospitality*.
Peace, love, and prayers,
Lorraine Mills
Florence, Alabama



Rita Corbin

Thank you Ed for your efforts to gain justice for the oppressed and "least of these." I count it a privilege & honor to have met you (introduced by Al Lawler, 2022) & call you my brother-in-Christ. Your example & tireless devotion has set the bar high & is an inspiration to me & many! May you have good health & blessings BIG! I appreciate so much the issues of *Hospitality* I have received over these past 20 years. You, Murphy Davis & so many others have challenged me to live a life of integrity, compassion, grace, reciprocity & hope in Jesus as we find those who can give us a helping hand.

"Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the Autumn and Spring rains." (James 5:7)

Our "land" is the justice & Mercy we see and will see, I believe, as God's living Saints fight the good fight of faith & against oppressive rulers & Policies.

Doug
Indiana Prisoner

Thank you for your ongoing prophetic witness, faithful discipleship and powerful advocacy for those most marginalized by unjust systems. Each edition of *Hospitality* speaks truth to power and is a gift to and of the spirit.

Many blessings,
Alexandra Lusak
Asheville, North Carolina


Dear Ed,

Thanks to you and The Open Door for decades of service and speaking the truth to power. It's important now more than ever. I so appreciate *Hospitality*, always salient and moving and truth telling.

Thank you, Ed, for sending me a copy of Murphy's book. I look forward to reading it in the New Year. You and Murphy have touched and changed countless lives. We miss you here and know you continue to do the Lord's work.

Warm wishes and much love,
Nan
The Honorable Nancy G. Orrock
Georgia State Senator
Atlanta, Georgia

poetry corner



Julie Lonneman

"This Ain't My World"

Man tell his wife and kids
"Good-bye love ones, I'll
see y'all one day soon"
The kids are crying because
they don't understand why
they have to leave their
Country, School, and
friends
But most of all why do
their father have to
stay behind and fight
something called war
They watch their mother
kiss their father ...
not knowing that this
will be the last time
that they do

Putin says that we are
all Russians ...
He lies ... we are
Ukraine! ... even
this is taken from me
because Mommy says
we are going to a place
called America
This isn't my home but
for now I don't have
to listen to any bombs
Or worry about losing
my legs or arms like
one of my friends who
now sits by a trashcan
begging for food ...

Why do people look down
on us for not giving
up, for wanting freedom
for wanting to breathe
fresh clean air?

Is this not Planet Earth?
I can only hope so
I only know
that this ain't my world

(By Sam thru the eyes of a child)

Sam
Georgia Prisoner