

HOSPITALITY

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Providing hospitality to the homeless and to those in prison, through Christ's love.

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February 2002

The Proof of the Divinity of Jesus of Nazareth, the Jew

By Ed Loring

Though Yahweh-Elohim is steadfast in practicing Sabbath Rest, even God gets tired from time to time. This is the story of the lesson that God learned about the importance of rest – and especially in relationship to the practice of God's own word!

For many years, Yahweh used words in a pursuit to form the inner-life and outward-righteousness of Israel. Loving and worshipful words spoken and preached before the Tent and inside the Temple, and were fleshed out by *Love-in-action words* in the name of God. Jubilee ethics (see Leviticus 25 and Deuteronomy 15) and the establishment of social justice and communal righteousness were, from the beginning, the hope of God's compassionate heart. So Yahweh-Elohim used words to announce it: Jubilee, Love Thy Neighbor, charge no interest, and give to all in need for the oppressed will always be with you. Words. Words. Words.

After 2000 years of working with words written, words proclaimed, liturgical words, and fire-filled prophetic words of shepherds, naked poets, and wise women, God was exhausted: "The word is not enough."

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Archangel Gabriel,

heaven's librarian, "let's give words one more try".

So Yahweh-Elohim called the Holy Spirit, Melchizedek, Enoch, Elijah, Michael and Gabriel

together for a discernment and strategy meeting. God was convinced to try, once more, with words. But if this attempt failed, something so revolutionary would happen that the Temple would fall and the Empire collapse.

"Okay. Okay," cried the delighted librarian, stretching his wings for all the Hosts to see. "It will work this time! I know, because I have prayed for it."

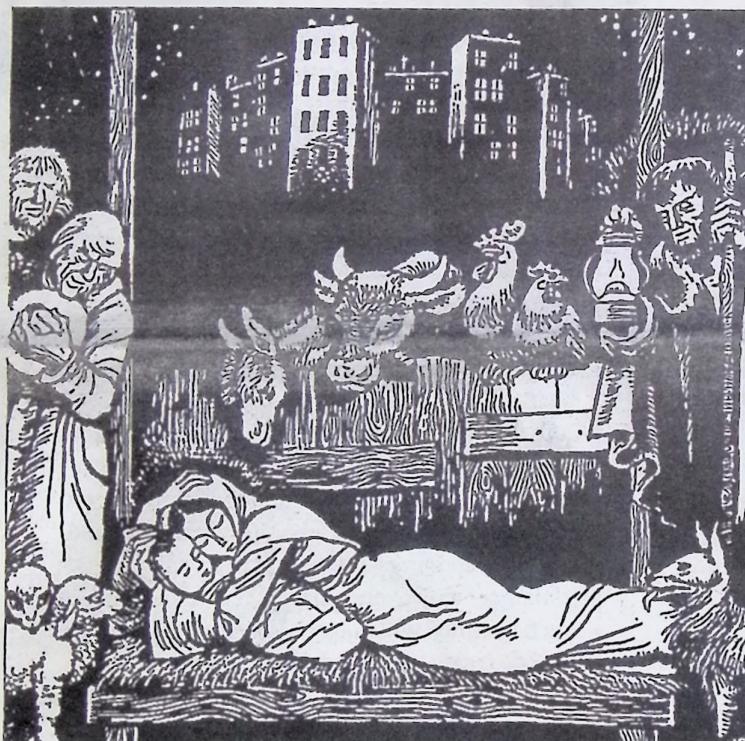
This was the plan: God would call yet another prophet. As in the days of old, the prophet would be a person from society's margins – living in the wilderness and refusing the empire's food and drink. Only broiled locust legs, wild bee's honey, and water from rocks and rivers shall pass his lips. He will tell the truth. He will describe the consequences of abiding in the truth or scorning the truth. Life or death, blessing or curse, freedom or slavery: This is the struggle of truth over idolatry.

"If this don't work," said Yahweh, choosing Southern American English for such a Royal Decree, "then I'm fixin' to try something real new."

"Oh, it will work, it will work!" said Michael and Gabriel, who ended with all thirty-three verses of "Amazing Grace."

So along came John the Baptist. He preached, baptized, taught, and practiced – for which he was executed by King Herod Antipas. But John the Baptist was no dolt. He got more out of the words than most. He was the first to offer an alternative to temple and empire. Truth was found on the margins, he taught, not in the palaces and temples. By the power of the Holy Spirit, John named The Beloved Community (Kingdom of God), as a place of practice and common life.

John also preached repentance. To John and eight or nine others in Palestine, repentance meant change of allegiance from temple to small communities. Repentance was not sacrifices of animals, but living sacrificially with the oppressed and disposable ones. John the Baptist joined many revolutionaries of the time, violent and nonviolent, in calling for the end of empire. "Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto Yahweh-Elohim what belongs to Yahweh-Elohim" is John's teaching. In his wild mind, formed by a feral God of the wilderness and



FRITZ EICHENBERG

Radical Acts, Radical Resistance:

Dorothy Jenkins and the Practice of Beloved Community

By Nate Mathews

A few months ago at the Open Door Community's lunchtime reflection, we were asked to think about women in our lives who have had a significant impact on our faith. The woman who immediately came to my mind was Mrs. Dorothy Jenkins of Farrell, Mississippi. The following story is as much hers as it is mine.

In *I've Got The Light of Freedom*, a seminal study of the grassroots civil rights movement in Mississippi, Charles Payne writes, "The young activists of the 1960s trying to work within the organizing tradition were bringing back to the rural South a refined, codified version of something that had begun there, an expression of the historical vision of ex-slaves, men and women who understood that, for them, maintaining a deep sense of community was itself an act of resistance."

Dorothy Jenkins follows in the footsteps of

Ella Baker, Septima Clark, and Fannie Lou Hamer in an activist tradition that emphasizes community, and the patient work of gaining trust and empowering people to demand their civil rights. Through this tradition, Dorothy stresses that ordinary folks *can* change things for *themselves*.

During the two years immediately following my graduation from high school, I served as an Americorps worker with the Farrell-Sherard Habitat for Humanity affiliate. Farrell and Sherard are two small towns in the heart of the Mississippi Delta – with a combined population of around 500. Most of the people there are employed seasonally as agricultural laborers on the cotton and soybean plantations that dot the area. Housing conditions are wretched; social services are notable by their absence, and racism is ever-present and virulent.

Dorothy Jenkins was born into poverty. She

Jenkins, continued on page 9

Divinity, continued on page 10

I Hear
h o p e
BANGING

AT MY BACK DOOR

Writings from *Hospitality*

ED LORING

The Open Door Community, Atlanta

WITH A FOREWORD BY
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Gladys Rustay: Treasurer, Jackson Prison Trip, and Food Coordinator

Ed Loring: Correspondence; Resident Volunteer Coordinator

Murphy Davis: Southern Prison Ministry, Worship and Music Coordinator

Dick Rustay: Dayspring Farm Coordinator

Lawsuit Halts Inhumane Treatment at Alabama Prison

By Marion Chartoff and Sara Totonchi

(Editor's note: Marion Chartoff and Sara Totonchi are on staff with the Southern Center for Human Rights, a not-for-profit law office in Atlanta which provides legal representation to prisoners incarcerated under inhumane conditions and to prisoners on death row in Georgia and Alabama. Further information on the following legal action is available by calling 404-688-1202.)

Alabama prison officials have agreed to sweeping changes at the Elmore Correctional Facility as part of a settlement reached Tuesday in a federal class-action lawsuit, Kendrick Brinkley et al. vs. Ernest L. Harrelson, filed last month by the Atlanta-based Southern Center for Human Rights (SCHR). The suit was filed on behalf of present and future prisoners at Elmore, who were forced to labor under severely unsanitary and dangerous conditions in the prison recycling center. Prisoners were forced to sort, with their hands, through hazardous waste materials, in search of recyclables that the prison then sells to private companies.

Prisoners were required to pick through, on a regular basis, garbage consisting of dirty diapers, used tampons and sanitary napkins, urine specimen cups, used hypodermic needles, used intravenous bags and needles, razors, blood-soaked gauze and bandages, dead animals, rotten food infested with maggots, broken glass, laboratory test tubes and bottles containing bacteria and other specimens, containers with chemicals, jagged-edged open cans, and bags filled with materials labeled "biohazard." The trash also contained discarded knives,

prescription medicines, and alcoholic beverages

The Elmore facility had also been operating for years without a permit from the Alabama Department of Public Health, a clear violation of Alabama law. Prisoners received no training on safety standards or proper protocol for handling the waste materials. The only protective gear they were provided with were thin latex gloves that are neither tear-resistant, nor impermeable to liquids and chemicals. Numerous prisoners have been cut and lacerated, and some were forced to go back to work on the recycling lines without any medical attention.

Exposure to human feces, blood and bodily fluids also posed serious risk of contracting bloodborne pathogens such as human immunodeficiency virus and Hepatitis A, B and C. Prisoners regularly complained of dizziness, headaches, nausea, skin rashes and scabies from their handling of the garbage at Elmore.

Under the terms of the settlement, prisoners who work at the facility sorting though garbage for recyclables will be provided with puncture-resistant gloves, face masks, and eye goggles, as well as tools so that they are not forced to sort through the garbage with their hands.

Prison officials, who admitted as part of the settlement that hazardous materials have made their way into the Elmore facility, have agreed to screen all garbage for such material so that it does not reach the inmates. "Far less hazardous material will be coming through the facility as a result of this settlement," said Marion Chartoff, who represents the prisoners. "And the inmates will finally have appropriate gear to protect them if some dangerous material does inadvertently come down the line."

Elmore officials agreed to a host of changes in the 20-page settlement agreement, including improved health care for injured workers, increased safety training for prisoners and correctional officers, and monitoring of the facility to ensure compliance with the settlement.



ARTIST UNKNOWN

HOSPITALITY



JO NICHOLS

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(A \$7 donation to the Open Door would help to cover the costs of printing and mailing *Hospitality* for one year.)

A Note from Murphy Davis

As mentioned in the January issue of *Hospitality*, I am once again battling Burkitt's lymphoma, a virulent non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. After surgery to remove a tumor in November, I began a rigorous chemotherapy regimen that will last until next summer. I have now completed two of the six treatments and have spent the majority of my time since October in Grady Hospital. Ed and Hannah and the rest of the Open Door are caring for me with love and tenderness.

I am thankful for the excellent care of the Hematology-Oncology Department of Grady Hospital and the rest of the Grady staff. And once again, our beloved sister Marilyn Washburn (both an Emory-Grady physician and Presbyterian minister) is walking with Ed and Hannah and me every step of the way, making sure every base is covered.

And we are deeply grateful to the many of you who have written and called and come by to assure us of your prayers, and to all who help us keep the work going here to feed the hungry, welcome the stranger and visit the sick and the prisoner. We are hopeful for my healing from cancer and for the healing of our world so we can all live in health and peace.



GLADYS RUSTAY

Murphy was delighted to be released from the hospital to spend four days around Christmas at home with the community. Here she holds up the beautiful chalice made for the Open Door by former volunteer Bruce Bishop (who also spent Christmas with us).

Reading and Reflection for the Journey

By Don Beisswenger

(Editor's note: Don Beisswenger is Professor of Church and Community Emeritus at Vanderbilt Divinity School in Nashville, TN, and a friend of the Open Door Community.)

One who attempts to act and do things for others or for the world without deepening one's own self-understanding, freedom, integrity and capacity to love, will not have anything to give others. One will communicate to them nothing but the contagion of one's own obsessions, aggressiveness, ego-centered ambitions, delusions about ends and means, doctrinaire prejudices and ideas. There is nothing more tragic in the modern world than the misuse of power and action to which persons are driven by their own Faustian misunderstandings and misapprehensions. (Thomas Merton, *Contemplation in a World of Action*, pg. 179-180, slightly altered)

The events of September 11th certainly validated Merton's reflection. We need to think deeply as a people, but the problem faces all of us each day as we engage the world. Where do we go to develop the capacity of love he suggests? Where do we come face to face with our obsessions, prejudices? Certainly we need one another. The Open Door Community has ways of calling us to account. But the call to touch the deeper streams, where the holy God engages us, remains. The purpose of our meditation is to explore new dimensions of justice and love as well as the Jesus story.

I imagine we all find ourselves experiencing what Merton suggests. We do get torn and worn and need interior strengthening. Yet we do not attend to the deeper meaning and realities often, and just carry on. Sabbath rest does not take form.

A spiritual companion and I use two writings

which have been refreshing year after year: Frederick Beuchner's little book of daily readings is titled *Listening to Your Life*. He has an imaginative way of noticing how God comes to us: in a relationship, the rustle of the wind, a wedding, an embrace, an event. Henri Nouwen's daily readings, *Bread for the Journey* keeps the Jesus story in focus more sharply. Similar readings include Parker Palmer's *Let Your Life Speak* which focuses on vocation. *Contemplative Prayer* is given attention by Thomas Keating inviting us to rid ourselves of our over-active minds as we pray. *In Ordinary Time* by Roberta Bondi and *The Cloister Walk* by Kathleen Norris have been well received. Most of these books are more helpful with the personal and interpersonal dimensions of our life before God than the dimension of life focused on public and systemic issues.

Some writings which may help us discern God in the midst of public life are Dorothee Soelle's *The Silent Cry* which focuses on mysticism and resistance. *Practicing Our Faith*, edited by Dorothy Bass, gives attention to forgiveness and discernment, as well as the practice of Sabbath, which most of us do badly. Joyce Hollyday relates spiritual formation and social witness in *Then Shall Your Light Rise*. Alton Pollard focuses on the witness of Howard Thurman in *Mysticism and Social Change*. Our friend Robert McAfee Brown, whom we remember with appreciation, still helps us with his book *Spirituality and Liberation*. Shelia Cassidy has written a fine book on caring entitled *Sharing the Darkness*. *The Journal of John Woolman* and *The Long Loneliness* by Dorothy Day continue as classics connecting life in the spirit and historical realities.

Presbyterian Marjorie Thompson offers an invitation to the Christian spiritual life in *Soul Feast*. The Presbyterian Church has an Office of Spiritual Formation in Louisville with various kinds of resources, including listings of retreat centers around the nation. Peniel Ridge Contemplative Retreat Center near Nashville and Kirkridge in eastern Pennsylvania are two places I recommend, as well as several monasteries in Georgia, Minnesota, Kentucky and New

York.

What is our hope in all of this? As we pay attention to our lives as persons imbedded in relationships and communities, indeed the world, we connect and unite with God's energies which keep streaming through nature, human nature and public life. We are stretched and strengthened as we find our personality, our relationships, our world, gradually drawn more and more into the "orbit of God's creative power and finding the re-alignment of all our faculties and energies to the purposes of God" (From an article, "Riding the Wild Ox," by Robert Morris, in *Weavings*, a Journal of the Christian Spiritual Life, July/Aug 2001).

Blessings on the journey.

VOLUNTEER NEEDS

- Groups to make sandwiches for Soup Kitchen
- People to cook or bring supper for the Community on occasional Tuesdays, Wednesdays, or Thursdays
- People to answer the phone and door various mornings or afternoons during the week (9 a.m.-noon, 2-6 p.m., training provided)

For more information, call Phil Leonard at 404-874-4906 or e-mail him at pleon2000@mindspring.com

“Sabbatical” at the Open Door: A change is as good as a rest

By Norman Shanks

(Editor's note: Norman Shanks is leader of the Iona Community, an intentional Christian community, in Iona, Scotland. He spent part of the fall of 2000 with the Open Door as a Resident Volunteer, and subsequently wrote this reflection.)

I was both apprehensive and excited about the month I was to spend at the Open Door Community. I had read fairly carefully all the material I had been sent in advance, but I knew the reality was likely to be different from what I was expecting. I had little experience of issues relating to homelessness or direct involvement in this kind of project.

Many people asked me why I chose to spend the central part of my sabbatical in this way – and why the Open Door? The answers were quite simple. I was looking at different church responses to the challenges of urban mission. I did not want to spend my time studying or reading in the conventional academic way. I wanted to do something really different from my usual working pattern as Community Leader at the Iona Community in Scotland. I wanted something without the responsibilities, the paperwork, the representation, and meetings. What I had learned about the spirituality of the Open Door and its solidarity with the marginalized through ministry to the homeless, and political campaigning, made a month there as a Resident Volunteer seem a promising possibility.

It turned out to be a month full of surprises and challenges. I am as thankful now for those four weeks as I was at the time.

The surprises began as soon as I arrived. I had the Rosa Parks room all to myself, and because some of the other rooms nearby were unoccupied, virtually my own bathroom. I had expected shared, pretty rudimentary accommodation similar to Iona's community center at Camas, but I soon realized I should not have been surprised. The standard of accommodation, like the quality of the food served and the clothes provided, is an issue of human worth and respect: do not give to others what you would not use, eat, or wear yourself.

Gradually I got to know both the people and the set-up. The building, previously some kind of mission, had been well adapted for the Community's purposes, with a spacious, well-equipped kitchen and an amazing basement that accommodates storage and laundry facilities, the public toilets, and a couple of bedrooms. The 'public rooms' serve a number of functions: the sitting room doubled as a kind of reception area, and the dining room is where meetings and worship takes place.

Based on a simple, fairly ascetic life-style, the daily regime is rigorously monastic. The house closes down at 8:30 p.m. and the day begins for many as early as 4:30. The food is simple and nutritious; there is no 'junk.' There is no television, no smoking (except outside in the yard or on the veranda), and of course no alcohol or drugs. The rules include instant dismissal for anyone transgressing, and each week a group of residents make an expedition to Narcotics and Alcoholics Anonymous.

The people living in the Open Door are

committing their lives to being there; their work is to share in the life and activities of the Community. There was a noticeable amount of coming and going while I was there, as some people came in with the intention of staying, or for a trial period, but found they were not willing to make the commitment. There are weekly meetings to discuss shared 'common life,' group dynamics, and how to get the work done. There is no 'opting out,' with weekly rotations to cover all the jobs that have to be done to sustain the

women. There was Ralph, who had been there almost from the start, always reading; Ed Potts, from Ohio, a truck driver, poet, and philosopher extraordinaire; Philip, steady and reliable, who looked after the clothes closet, the AA visits, and the weekly medical clinic during which doctors and students gave their time; Leo, the artist, smiling and friendly; Ira, making coffee, sorting clothes; Adolphus, a wonderful cook, whose military background tended to surface under pressure; Valerie, vivacious and helpful; Willie London, solid and quiet; Tonnie, often silent, tall, and dependable; Ronald, with a gruff exterior but a heart of gold; James, recently arrived, eager and volatile; Dick and Gladys, who eleven years before had committed the rest of their lives to the Open Door on 'retiring' from ministry and teaching in North Carolina; their caring presence was so important, as was their warmth towards me. And finally Ed and Murphy, 'founding partners,' still full of passion and vision, with a strength of purpose and single-minded commitment to the oppressed, their faith honed through the rough and tumble of all that they have been through. I appreciated so much my friendship with Ed and Murphy, and their warmth and kindness towards me.

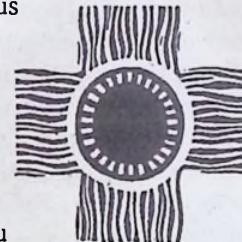
Everyone seemed genuinely pleased that I was there. I suppose that, as well as being 'an extra pair of hands,' my presence was perceived as an affirmation of support for the Open Door, a recognition of its significance in the face of the ambivalence, suspicion and even opposition from the church structures because of their biblical theology and their radical position on a range of social and political issues. Marginalized from the mainstream church, many community members were finding it hard to cope with the inevitable continuing pressures, the deep-down weariness, the uncertainties about the future, and the associated feelings of guilt and even failure.

Because of the shortage of residents with leadership responsibilities, the range of services provided had been reduced just before I arrived. Breakfast, lunch, clothes changes, shower facilities were no longer available every weekday as before; but with breakfast Sunday to Wednesday, and lunch Wednesday to Saturday, it seemed busy and demanding enough. The needs of the homeless are unrelenting and pressing; cutting services caused many in the community to feel guilty and inadequate. I experienced just a little of this in having to turn people away on occasion, and in not having enough blankets to hand out in the evenings to those who slept in the yard (some of whom regard the Open Door as home just as much as the residents do). The whole issue of boundaries is critical. The operation is unsustainable if the giving and compassion have no limits – desirable as limitless self-giving may seem.

What a kaleidoscope of memories I have! There were the visits to Dayspring Farm where we practiced the sacrament of footwashing during a retreat; there was Labor Day, when 480 people were served a picnic lunch in the yard – an amazing cooking project involving chicken barbecued on converted oil-drums; there was the amazing, soul-searing twenty-four hours I spent on the streets with Ed. I learned about the dehumanizing awfulness of the

Prayer Of Adoration

No victory is vital without you, dear God
No achievement is so admirable
No triumph...so tremendous
No success...so satisfying
Without Thanking You
No matter what I do
All I can do is accept you
Thank you for the truth
Thank You, Sophia
Thank you, Abba
Only you our rock and our refuge
Could be so beautiful
Thank you for your compassion
Creator of the Milky Way
And better days with these solar rays
That warm our hearts
Thank you for the truth
From the eagles that incite us
To the doves that invite us
Thank you, Mary
Thank you, Emmanuel
We rejoice over you
We praise you
We celebrate you
You, dear God
Nothing compares to you
From the ocean depths to your
Crown of Eternity
Thank You
As we dance on the empirical graves of
apathy
Undressed in Your nature
Thank You



Miyk Qadar, who offered this prayer for Sunday worship on December 30, 2001, is a Resident of the Open Door Community.
Graphic by Julie Lonneman.

life of the Community and to carry out their ministry to homeless people and prisoners' families.

Another surprise was that, after only a week or so, I was asked to do 'house duty' – the job of 'being there' to ensure that things happen when they should and deal with any unexpected eventualities. This felt like being thrown in at the deep end, but was certainly an effective way of getting to know the systems and the people.

I can still picture all the members of the community so vividly. Many of them had been homeless, some had been there for many years, the majority were black, and only three of them were

Announcing a New Catholic Worker House: The Seamless Garment Catholic Worker

By Debby and Brian Freel

A new Catholic Worker House? In times like these? Isn't everyone stressed enough?

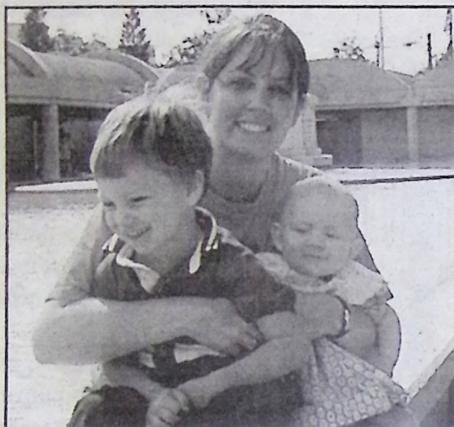
In 1933, in the midst of the Great Depression Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin founded the Catholic Worker Movement. They wanted to put their faith into action. They saw a need and responded to it. In the face of hunger, homelessness, loneliness, and despair, they provided food, shelter, love, and hope. We find ourselves asking, "Are we called to try to do the same?"

In the midst of war, should there not be a voice for peace? When human life is treated as a commodity to be mass-produced, sold, and discarded, should there not be a proclamation of the sanctity of all life? While our society consumes and spends in the name of patriotism, is there not a need to live simply so that others may simply live?

The Seamless Garment (see John 19:23-24) is a way to describe the interrelation of all "life issues." Our opposition to war, abortion, capital punishment, euthanasia, economic injustice, racism, and all violence stems from the belief that all life is a sacred gift from God and must be treated with appropriate reverence.

Present-day Catholic Workers and those who have gone before us have sacrificed much more than we, have struggled longer than we, and give us great inspiration to take this small step. As Dorothy Day said, things will change "by little and by little."

Our small step is to provide a safe place for pregnant women to prepare for the birth of their babies. We are supportive of life in all its forms and opposed to violence in all its forms, so we believe



Debby Freel and her children, Christopher and Katherine, at the King Center for Nonviolent Social Change in Atlanta.

one appropriate alternative to abortion is to provide pregnant women with love and support to help them birth new life. We also hold prayer vigils at the Cobb County Court House in Marietta on nights when the State of Georgia executes prisoners. Through our church we coordinate a correspondence program with death row inmates. As a family, we try to live under the federal taxable level so that our money does not go to support the insatiable military budget. We will support the sick and elderly with our prayers

and visits. Any one of these activities is worthy of our entire devotion. However, we believe it is important to bind them together in one "seamless garment."

We are Brian and Debby Freel with our two children, Katherine and Christopher. We have been resident volunteers at Jubilee Partners in Comer, Georgia and Mary's House Catholic Worker in Birmingham, Alabama. We are active members of Pax Christi in Marietta. We are also our extended family, friends, and church community who surround us with love and support.

For over three years we have been praying for a Catholic Worker House in Marietta. We believe the Spirit is sending us forth at this time. We step out humbly in faith to ask for your prayers and help. We need resident volunteers to live with the pregnant women. We need financial contributions made payable to the Seamless Garment Catholic Worker. We need help renting or buying a small house on our street that would be just right. We will receive no salary for our work, but will provide help to those in need out of personal responsibility.

Please visit us! We are at 636 Tom Read Drive, Marietta, GA, 30062. Or call us at 770-427-5379 or e-mail at bfreel@transfiguration.com. We are thankful to the Open Door for their support and let us all pray and work together for peace and justice.

feast.

I was struck by the integration of worship into the life of the Community, reflecting the spirituality of engagement and solidarity that had so resonated with the Iona Community's approach and attracted me as soon as I had heard about it. Indeed the link between work and worship is even stronger and more natural than it is at Iona. Nothing of significance happens apart from worship. The Community's activities flow seamlessly in and out of worship. Before Community meals, and before and after the serving of breakfast and lunch, people form a circle, hands linked, to read and reflect together on scripture, share and offer prayer concerns, and sometimes sing. With varying effectiveness I offered instruction in some of the more simple Iona songs. Worship is thoroughly relevant, accessible and participative, rooted in engagement with scripture, God, and one another. Never was there deeper, fuller expression of George MacLeod's familiar adage that 'only a demanding common task builds community' or of the truth that worship

grounded in a common purpose enhances life together beyond words, touches hearts with strength and hope and reaches to the core of the mystery of God's grace in Jesus Christ.

Almost ten months later, I am still surprised to realize how deeply my short time at the Open Door affected me. Certainly it served the immediate 'sabbatical' purpose of deepening insights and recharging batteries. But I was affected at a deeper level as well. The sense that my equilibrium was disturbed and challenged is still there. Just as the radical, 'walking the talk,' faith-filled commitment of the Open Door challenges the churches in Atlanta, it challenges, even rebukes – through exposing its inadequacy – the qualified witness to the vision and values of God's kingdom in my own life, calls into question my own life-choices and priorities. It represents incarnational theology in action, engaged spirituality lived out to the fullest – certainly not perfectly, but with the self-awareness and evidence of frailty and vulnerability increases the authenticity of it all, the inevitable result of experience at the cutting-edge of risk. Here are embodied the values of generosity, hospitality, and solidarity with the oppressed which each of us is called by God to embrace.

It is not difficult to see why the Open Door attracts some people and offends others. It is both compelling and disturbing. It is a perpetual tightrope-walking exercise, full of the surprises of grace. So while the questions about sustainability and structure must not be ignored but addressed responsibly and creatively, the future of the Open Door should be faced with faith and hope, with confidence in the mysterious interaction between God's providence and our free will.

I was challenged at so many other levels too – by discovering once more how the fullness of life is experienced through giving our lives away; by being able to 'be myself,' unencumbered by others' expectations in a situation where nobody knew me; by the physical and emotional pressures involved in a ministry of availability to vulnerable, unpredictable people; by experiencing again the excitement and strong sense of common purpose; by finding, to my immense surprise, a welcome, thoroughly unexpected balance through each day – the demands were not unremitting. In between the intensive periods of working there was time I was not used to having for reading and reflection, and for attending more regularly and deliberately than I can manage at home to fulfilling the Iona Community's devotional discipline – which, in the particular circumstances at the Open Door, felt more necessary and significant than ever.

Now back home, life has resumed much of its previous pattern. My good intentions to get more involved with issues of homelessness remain more or less unfulfilled. There are convenient and convincing excuses relating to lack of time, and the very different social and political context in Scotland, not least on account of the absence of any racial dimension. Homelessness is a huge problem for us too, with which many within the churches and wider community are seeking to deal, and the Scottish Churches Housing Agency, formed a few years ago, is doing a very good job.

But now, as I approach my last year as Leader of the Iona Community and begin to think about the next steps that Ruth and I are going to take together, I know that the experience at the Open Door, and the insights I gained there into the nature of the life and priorities of God's kingdom, will shape our decisions as to what and to where we shall move on.

insalubrious and overcrowded shelter at Peachtree and Pine, where a homeless man gave us cardboard to sleep on; we were up and out at 4 am, treated to breakfast at 910, generosity embodied by those who served us, in contrast with the impersonal production line approach of three church 'soup kitchens' where there was little sense of hospitality or sign of the interpersonal engagement that is so fundamental to the Open Door's own approach. There were the trips to the shoe-shop, and the 'street-names' of some of the homeless men: Alabama, Tree, Wolf, Stone. I was named 'Scotland.' There were the hospital visits with Tony Johnson, a resident of 910, dying of AIDS in Grady Hospital.

And there was worship, in so many different forms. There were Sunday evening Eucharists at the Open Door, Sunday morning visits to other Atlanta churches. There was street preaching on Wednesday mornings after breakfast, outside in the yard with Chuck Campbell, and then around downtown Atlanta with Ed and Chuck. It was truly an inclusive kingdom

Ten Ideas for Social Justice Organizing After September 11

By Bill Quigley

(Editor's Note: Bill Quigley teaches at Loyola Law School in New Orleans. You can reach him at quigley@loyola.edu)

"You are all traitors and should be put in jail!"

A well-dressed woman in her forties shouted this at us, as she walked out of church and by our candlelight peace vigil. Wow! Is it that threatening to hold an interfaith candlelight march for peace? Apparently it is. For columnists or writers, this incident might make a good story. For those of us who are trying to work with people to change hearts and minds by organizing for social justice, this woman is an indicator that things have changed. In this article I share ten ideas for social justice organizing after September 11.

Many of us were already working on social justice issues before September 11. For example, in New Orleans I was working with groups organizing around issues of a living wage, low-wage worker union organizing in the hotel industry, voting rights in our state redistricting process, the destruction of public housing, welfare reform, civil liberties, immigration, national and international human rights, prison reform, peace issues, public education, and criminal justice. All of those issues, and many more, are still challenging us.

Since September 11, many of us are working with people organizing a just and peaceful response to the terrorism which has so wounded our country. The context for doing social justice work is different since September 11. This is true for everyone but it is particularly true for the world of people working for peace and justice. We face many new issues, and some old ones, in the days ahead.

Psychologically, the tragic events of September 11 reverberate in all our minds on both a conscious and an unconscious level. People are still having a difficult time concentrating. Teachers say students have lost their focus. Those we work with in peace and justice organizing are as overwhelmed and in shock as everyone else in our country. People have less energy to go to meetings and to volunteer for social justice issues. One person said these events are present like deep bass sounds that you can feel more than hear. However you describe them, the experiences of September 11 are in the forefront of many and in the background of, all of our social justice issues.

Economically, the damage which was already beginning before September 11 has accelerated. Tens of thousands of people have lost their jobs; many others are having their work schedules reduced. As in all economic distress, the working poor are being hurt the most. For peace and justice organizations, fund-raising is much more difficult because people are addressing the hardships caused by the attacks.

Politically, social justice issues have been submerged as elected officials and the media spend

less time on issues other than those directly related to terrorism and war. Conservatives call us traitors and America-haters if we dare to go beyond condemnation of the injustices of the terrorists. Those of us who condemn the terrorists but also suggest we examine the justice and peace issues in our own country and in our own international behavior, and those of us that say we should seriously consider responses other than military responses, are un-American, evil, unpatriotic, or even, as Rush Limbaugh said, communists! (I wonder what exactly does it take to be a communist today, when it seems even the communists are not communists? I will

officials have called for religious, racial and ethnic tolerance. It is a tribute to those who have labored for peace that initial calls for horrific and indiscriminate retaliation against anyone even in the vicinity of terrorists have been declining.

Because our world is both quite different and yet in some ways the same, what are we to do as social justice organizers?

I write to share ten ideas about social justice organizing after September 11. I do not pretend to have the answers. I am sure there is no single blueprint for our challenges ahead. However, I do want to share with you my reflections and the reflections of some organizers I have spoken with about some ideas on how we should proceed.

But first, a note of caution. Each of these principles must be implemented in ways that reflect our commitment to justice and peace. If we do not organize intelligently and in an anti-racist way, as organizer Ron Chisom says, "we will not be organizing, but disorganizing." Simply put, there is no shortcut. We cannot organize for peace and justice if we do not model peace and justice in our organizing.

Here are my thoughts.

#1 Be Humble

We must start by being humble. There is no more important place to start than by recognizing that we do not know exactly what is going on. We can say, "I don't know." In fact, it might be the smartest thing to say. Nobody has been here before. That said, we cannot allow ourselves to be paralyzed into inaction. A woman organizer who lives in New York City told me, a few weeks after September 11, "The idea of humility and listening and forgiveness as qualities to seek in organizing these days particularly resonates with me -- as does the idea that we have to recognize that things have changed even as we figure out how to keep moving."

#2 Be Quiet and Listen

Don't talk; listen. This does not work for television personalities or columnists, but if you believe in real organizing, you should believe that people possess an innate wisdom. We must listen to the people for insight and wisdom. The people help us discover the way for all of us to go forward.

There are times when we must resist the quick response. There are times, as peace activist Daniel Berrigan said, when we should say, "Don't just do something, stand there!" As a long-time Quaker reminded me recently, "When voices are loud and the threats of violence are high, it is more important than ever to create time to be quiet and to reflect."

As an example, when you find yourself in a suddenly darkened room, what do you do? While some might rush blindly to where they think the door is, others stand still, gather themselves, let their eyes get adjusted to the different environment, orient themselves, then cautiously and sensitively move forward. Listening is part of our orientation. We listen to pick up clues from our fellow seekers about

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leave that for another discussion.)

The most vulnerable direct victims of the September 11 terrorist attacks are single parent families, those without insurance and pension plans and union support. The first victims of the economic reverberations after September 11 have also been the working poor: the last hired, the least skilled, the least educated, the least organized. The first political victims in our country have been Arab and Islamic Americans, who have been subjected to racial profiling, threats, assaults and even death.

But there is good news as well. Americans have responded with tremendous generosity to the victims of the terrorists. Firefighters and police and rescue workers, mostly union members, have given all of us inspiration as they courageously and selflessly worked to help people in distress. It is a tribute to the progress of those who have labored so hard for civil rights that our president and most of our public

what is the best path, the best next step.

#3 Be Not Afraid

Courage is critical. There is a concerted effort to try to intimidate and silence people interested in justice and peace. Conservatives challenge the patriotism of all who dare to examine and question the root causes of why all that America does is not universally admired. Conservatives are setting up cardboard liberals who excuse the terrorists, hate America, do not support democracy, and are just as intolerant as Jerry Falwell. Columnists equate pacifism with treason and evil. Those who call for nonviolence or even an international police action are not supporting the Commander in Chief, the troops, and the families of the victims of September 11. Workers who have struck for economic justice since September 11 have been attacked and called selfish and unpatriotic.

If working for peace and justice does not meet some conservative's narrow definition of patriotism, then they have created too weak a form of patriotism. By that definition, Sojourner Truth was not a patriot, Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt were not patriots, and Martin Luther King was not a patriot. I want to be what they are. If they do not meet someone's definition of patriot, then I am not interested. True patriotism should allow an appreciation for both what is great about our country and what we need to work to improve. We cannot allow anyone to silence the voices of peace and justice, even if they try to silence them with flag-waving.

We would do well to remember the patient agonizing efforts of those who fought against slavery, who fought for women's suffrage, who fought for civil rights, who fought for the right to organize, and who fought for the rights of freedom of speech. Those were tough and scary fights, but there were successes even in the face of fear. Peace and justice organizers have to maintain courage despite the ongoing attempts to intimidate and silence.

#4 Rediscover the Community of Social Justice and, by all means, Welcome New Seekers

Prior to September 11, our peace and justice communities were separate efforts. The people organizing around welfare reform worked apart from those organizing against the death penalty. People working on living wages were isolated from those working on voting rights and redistricting.

When times get tough, they are tougher when you are alone. It is time to re-connect our justice and peace organizing. As members of a community we are much stronger and wiser when we are together. One literacy worker I know reports, "I have been overwhelmed not only by the events of September 11, but also by feelings of animosity, even hatred, being directed at me from fellow Americans (some of them friends) because I cannot believe this war is justified nor the way to peace in our world." When the peace community organized a vigil in New Orleans four days after September 11, over 200 people showed up. After the vigil, almost everyone there said, "It was so good to be among people who were interested in peace, because I have been feeling so alone and isolated."

There are also new members in the peace and social justice community: many new people, many young people. We must welcome them and learn from them.

Not all the new arrivals have been welcomed with open arms by the existing peace and justice community. Some new people say the wrong things. Others do things that are hurtful or disruptive. But

even then, the last thing veteran organizers need to tolerate are efforts to marginalize or attack new folks for their newness and lack of sophistication. There are criticisms that the new people are innocents or naive or ill-informed or un-analytical. They are criticized for proceeding in a way that does not take into account -- take your pick -- racism, feminism, homophobia, they are too interested in religion, or not interested enough in nonviolence, etc.

Welcome the new people. Learn from them. Be infected by their enthusiasm. Join with them.



Share with them. Do not preach at them. Work with them. Help them discover the knowledge that others have learned the hard way. Certainly people have much to learn from people already in social justice work. But we must clearly understand that these new people have much to teach us as well. To go forward in these new times, we need to link up with each other in respectful ways that model the just and peaceful community we seek to organize.

#5 Faith-based Social Justice

There has been an upsurge in people seeking consolation, leadership, and direction from their churches. The religious community has a big opportunity as people search for new meaning: linkages between faith, justice, and peace. Some churches have spoken eloquently about peace and justice issues. Connecting with faith-based social justice people and organizations represents an opportunity at this time.

For social justice organizing, there is an important distinction to be made between faith traditions and churches. In my experience, all faiths place justice, peace, sacrifice, and respect and the common good at the very center of their beliefs. The problem is that many churches preach and practice a very weak form of their faith. They de-emphasize the justice and peace demands of their faith traditions. Working for social justice is replaced by tithing. Working for peace is replaced by supporting the church school or church suppers. The faith which is meant to afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted, weakly ends up comforting the comfortable.

We need to work with people whose interests in justice and peace are faith-based. We also need to challenge our church leaders who tend to mute the justice issues in order to accommodate their congregations. We also, of course, need to respect all varieties of faiths and we need to make sure that the faith-based folks respect those whose dedication to peace and justice is not faith-based.

#6 Prepare for and Forgive Mistakes

Any time we try anything new we are going to make mistakes. That is the essence of living a challenging life. Since this is a new environment in which we are organizing, we will make mistakes. We would be smart to be prepared for our mistakes and also be prepared to forgive well-intentioned people who make them.

One young woman peace organizer from the Northwest told me how much it hurt that such harsh

criticism has been leveled at young people trying to organize just responses after September 11. She knows we all need ideas on how to improve but also thinks that kindness and forgiveness of each other are desperately needed in the social justice community.

A professor in Florida reminds me that we are going to have mistakes and conflict within the peace and social justice community on how to proceed: "I think we must assume that we won't have one shared 'peace movement' but a complex and possibly conflicted movement and set of views."

A woman in Washington, D.C. who organizes for international human rights wrote, "I know the left, I know our ideas, our righteousness, our cries for nonviolence and our condemnation of Bush. I am well versed on peace and

justice issues. The challenge for me these days is to build bridges to those who see things differently. Good and bad are not as clear cut as they used to be."

Some of the most venomous and counter-productive criticism of social justice organizing comes from others of us in the same field. We savage each other in ways that Robert Novak and the *Wall Street Journal* could only dream of. We need not overlook mistakes and conflicts. We need to be prepared to learn from them. But we also need to be prepared to support those of us who make them. This is part of the social justice obligation that we owe each other.

#7 Study History

We need to study and understand history, real history, not the myths spun out by talking heads on TV.

Those who say that in time of crisis

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Organize, cont'd from page 7

Americans always gather around our leaders do not know the richness of our history. Those who say we historically suspend all questioning of injustice in our country during time of crisis do not know our history.

A real look at our history will show that while many have exclusively rallied round the flag in times of crisis, many others have maintained their commitments to peace and justice, even in times of crisis. There were demonstrations and draft resistance and even riots among poor and working class men in connection with every war ever fought. In every war some people said "Not in my name." As the Los Angeles Times said recently, "Political dissent in wartime is an American tradition."

As part of our understanding of history, we must see the legacy of the civil rights and peace movements already at work in our midst. While some official crazies like our Louisiana Congressman and Jerry Falwell have been hatefully shameful, numerous officials and leaders have tried to deter hate crimes against Arab or Islamic Americans. Also, the widespread support for saturation bombing, even nuclear responses, has seemed to diminish considerably. We need the historians in our communities to help us re-discover the justice and peace realities of our history, particularly in times of crisis.

#8 Speak to Shared Values

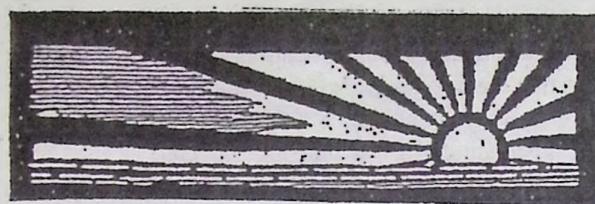
Part of our challenge as organizers is to communicate. In this time, when there is so much official communication about "either you are for our war or you are for terrorism," we need new ways to talk.

One progressive public relations advisor said, "I would love to see us claim some central patriotic symbols and reshape them. Perhaps the American flag with another flag or emblem sewn in at the bottom? We need to redefine patriotism in some profound and simple ways in the coming months."

I strongly suggest every person interested in social justice organizing look at the web site of the group, We Interrupt This Message (at www.interrupt.org). That organization assists progressives in dealing with the media. This discussion of the principle of speaking to shared values is taken largely from materials from their website.

In order to communicate, our organizing and media messages should respond to questions that speak to values central to both the peace and social justice movement and the majority of the general public.

Thus, "How can we hunt down the terrorists?" can be recast as "How can we be safe?"



By Tonnie King

Hailing all the way from Denmark, Charlotta Norby is another dedicated volunteer who sustains our life and work here at the Open Door. As a lawyer who represents people facing the death penalty in Georgia, Charlotta has long been on the side of "the least of these" – people who are most in need of competent legal counsel. Charlotta currently works for the Multi-County Public Defenders Office; before that, she was with the Southern Center for Human Rights. We here in the community have witnessed the compassion she has for those facing the death penalty and have been amazed at her tenacity in fighting for justice for all people.

Charlotta is a regular soup kitchen volunteer on Thursdays, and comes in every week to do the huge job of maintaining the *Hospitality* mailing list. She has also been a dear friend to the community by sometimes just being here with us. I truly wish that every one of our friends could have the opportunity to meet her and experience the love that abounds in her. Let us all applaud her life and work!

Tonnie King is a partner at the Open Door.

"How do we protect America?" can instead be, "How can we be strong?"

Instead of "How can we wipe these fanatics out?" we can discuss "How can we arrive at justice?"

Safety, Strength, Respect for Human Life, and Justice are all values shared by the peace and social justice movement and the majority of the North American public. And our communication and media messages should be framed as answers to these questions. As a woman attorney who works against the School of the Americas told me, "I find myself drawn to the woman who called the peace people 'traitors.' I want to listen to this and find out why she says this. What is her truth? I would like to explain to her what is in my heart, what is my truth. I would like us each to learn and be moved by the other." One example for initiating dialogue is our shared appreciation of the courage and sacrifice and discipline of the rescue workers. They have shown us a wonderful model for discussing the importance of courage and sacrifice in working for justice and peace.

#9 Make the Social Justice Issue Connections

The current crisis allows us an opportunity to show that all justice is one.

Racial profiling of Middle Eastern persons and Muslims has to be fought as part of the ongoing struggle against racism, even in the peace movement itself. Racism is like being in the Mississippi river; if you are not actively struggling against the current, you are drifting along with it. The first anti-war rally in D.C. was called ANSWER, Act Now to Stop War and End Racism. War and racism were linked in their minds for

a reason. Martin Luther King Jr. spoke about the three evils of racism, militarism, and materialism, for a reason.

Attempts to blame the recent tragedies on Islam, Muslims, Arabs, Jews, liberals, and gays and lesbians show us the need to stand up for the civil and human rights of all people.

Generous and fair compensation for victims of terrorism is absolutely the right national response to the tragedies. This can lead to further discussion of the national struggle for just and fair reparations for African-Americans and local calls for assistance to residents of public housing who have been displaced by the demolition of their homes. Congressional assistance of \$15 billion for the airline industry that left out assistance for the tens of thousands of airline workers who lost their jobs shows the need to support the struggle of workers for union organizing, the right to a job and the search for a living wage. Those who call for revenge and eye-for-an-eye blind retaliation remind us of the need to struggle against the death penalty in our own country.

All of a sudden the USA is interested in international coalitions. This is a startlingly new focus. We even paid our UN dues! Now we are all in this world struggle against terrorism together. We are for human rights everywhere. Wonderful. What can we learn from the struggles of our international sisters and brothers? What does the international dimension say to our issues like the death penalty, environmental justice, worker justice,

Welcome to the Spotlight



TONNIE KING

civil rights, and civil liberties? Current developments give us the opportunity to connect the justice issues that are so visible and popular with the ones that are less visible but no less important.

#10 Reconsider Strategies and Go Steadily Forward

I don't know how many of you have had your car stuck in the mud or the snow. Having lived in both the South and the North, I have been stuck in both. Often, the best response is not to just press down harder on the accelerator. But I am afraid that many of us are trying to do just that.

Many on the right and left are saying, "Now more than ever.... (whatever they said before September 11)." Well, why? Really ask the question, why? Why must we do what we were doing before but do it harder? We must challenge ourselves to not just knee-jerk say what we said before, but to thoughtfully respond to the question, why?

If our only response to the events of September 11 is to do what we did before that, but only harder, I think we will waste a lot of energy. We have to thoughtfully and humbly reconsider our strategies and develop some new ones. Otherwise we will just remain stuck.

In conclusion, we have to begin reflecting, thinking, acting, and organizing in new ways to make social justice a reality. We may never persuade the woman who called us traitors, but if we can work effectively on social justice issues, we can do our part to make this world a better place for her and for us.

Jenkins, cont'd from page 1
has lived in and around Farrell for most of her life. She has felt the sting of share-cropping; her callused hands tell the story of years of backbreaking field work, chopping and picking cotton.

She marched for civil rights. Dorothy told me that, when she was working at the Blue Bell Jean Factory in Planterville, MS, in the early 1970s, she helped desegregate both the lunchroom and the bathroom. At that time, if a white woman was in the restroom, black women had to sit at their seat and wait for the restroom to be vacated before they could enter. Dorothy told her supervisor, "Either I am going to go to the bathroom with white women or I am going to pee my pants here in this seat!" and got up and went to the restroom.

Jim Crow was the law in the lunchroom as well; the seats around the lone table were reserved for white women, while black women were expected to sit on chairs around the kitchen or stand. Later in that same year, Dorothy defiantly sat at the white table, and continued to do so in subsequent days, even after her white co-workers. Dorothy's supervisor threatened to fire her. But here the tangle of race and commerce grew especially thick. Dorothy was not only the best seamstress in the entire plant, she was one of the best seamstresses the plant had ever had. The supervisor's realization of Dorothy's profit potential ultimately trumped the politics of race, and Dorothy stayed on, with black folks at the same lunch table with white folks.

In my encounters with Dorothy, it wasn't hard to realize that she loved her community. For her, maintaining the town of Farrell in the face of a crumbling economy, white indifference, and the town's own infighting, was a radical act, although Dorothy herself would probably not have called it such.

She was deeply religious and heavily involved in her Baptist church. She taught Sunday school, ushered, and served on various committees. She was married to a Baptist preacher who was thoroughly convinced (at least in word, if not in deed) that women should be submissive and helpful, and with whom Dorothy frequently butted heads (she frequently joked that *beside* every good man is a good woman).

She raised four boys—cooking, cleaning, and running the household. She worked at a variety of jobs and seamstress work out of her home. In between these, she helped to bring

running water and a rudimentary sewage system to the town of Farrell. She registered folks to vote when such an activity in the South meant loss of one's job, or even life. Even today, at every election, she sets up the voting machine in the town's small post office and faithfully records votes from 8 a.m. until 8 p.m. She organizes town cleanup days, and frequently has to negotiate for garbage pickup when the disposal service "overlooks" the town.

In addition to all this she serves



NATE MATHEWS
Dorothy Jenkins directs a volunteer at the site of a newly constructed Habitat for Humanity home in Farrell, Mississippi.

as president of the Farrell-Sherard Habitat for Humanity Board of Directors -- and not only as president. Because of the small size of the board, Dorothy was executive director, bill payer, volunteer coordinator, negotiator, and just generally the go-to person if something needed doing. For this she was often heaped with abuse. Even though the other town residents rarely if ever volunteered for anything outside of going to a monthly board meeting, they had no problem complaining about the job Dorothy was doing. She was too bossy, or not bossy enough. She was too critical. She didn't do her job. She thought she was better than other folks. These and other complaints came at her daily, until she would tell me, "Nate, folks just don't appreciate what I do! You know what I go through. It gets to a point I just don't think it's worth it." But she never quit.

Dorothy's birthday is April 15th, tax day. I have reflected on the appropriateness of this date often, especially as it relates to the story of Jesus and his encounter with the Pharisees in Matthew 22:15-22. They try to trick Jesus by showing him a Roman coin and asking him if it is lawful to pay taxes to the hated Roman government. He replies, "Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."

Dorothy renders unto Caesar—she pays taxes in a country that sought to crush her and her people, and still remains indifferent to their plight. She

is not a militant or revolutionary, at least in the ordinary sense of the word. Her prayers, which begin with "Oh please master, sir," seemed outdated and servile to many volunteers.

But Dorothy is radical in the original sense of the word. Ms. Ella Baker, a legendary civil rights organizer and co-founder of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee, offers us this insight: "In order for us as poor and oppressed people to become a part of a society that is meaningful, the system under which we now exist has to be radically changed. This means that we are now going to have to learn to think in radical terms. It means facing a system that does not lend itself to your needs and devising means by which you change the system."

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire makes similar observations: "Radicalization involves increased commitment to the position one has chosen, and thus ever greater engagement in the effort to transform concrete, objective reality."

Dorothy knows these ideas intuitively and engages in these kinds of radical acts daily—whether through Habitat For Humanity, distributing donations of clothes and food to those in need, or even planning for an after-school center to go up in Farrell. And Dorothy is willing to use almost anyone, even the white plantation owners, to accomplish this. This reflects another tenant of the organizing tradition: *everyone* has a contribution to make. And Dorothy not only allows for everyone's contribution; she loves them as they make it. Though her frustrations with the local white power structure are numerous, and though she never minces words about it, Dorothy neither excuses nor condemns them as people.

So what does Dorothy's life mean to me, a privileged white kid fresh out of an "elite" high school? Dorothy Jenkins was my Ella Baker, my entrance into the organizing tradition. Just as Ms. Baker inspired a generation of youth to organize communities through Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and other organizations, Dorothy helped me develop a new approach to my Americorps term. While I would be presumptuous to equate myself with the organizers of the 1960s, who faced considerable personal risk in organizing a community, I did come to measure my success not by how many houses were built, but how successful I was in gaining the trust of the communities of Farrell and Sherard. Over the course of two years, I learned to measure the slow rhythms of Delta life, and to

integrate myself, as much as any Northern white boy can, into the life of my black Southern coworkers. In the process, I was forced to confront the painful legacy of my own racism and classism—to come to the realization that I was complicit in the maintenance of a system that had never met (and had never wanted to meet) the needs of the black poor.

In one early example of this, I offered to help Dorothy call companies or construction suppliers about information or a service she needed for Habitat. Dorothy often told me that when she called they told her they were "too busy" and to call back tomorrow. But when I began calling these places seeking the same information, I was promptly and cheerfully helped. This happened many times over the course of two years and it finally dawned on me what was going on. The voices on the line were helping me because I sounded like a well-educated white male. In their minds, Dorothy's voice simply wasn't worth their time and courtesy.

Dorothy had run again into the invisible wall of institutional racism. It was easy for me to hate the racism of the old white Southerner at the recycling center who complained about the n—s. But it was much more of an ideological jump to hate and work against the existence of something I had never witnessed concretely. Through Dorothy I was able to see the first glimpses of its awful power, and the reality of Dorothy's triple marginalization: poor, black, and a woman.

I have said that Dorothy renders unto Caesar, but more importantly, she renders unto God. It is her deep belief in God, she testified to

To call Dorothy heroic is to miss the point that her theology and praxis is within the reach of each one of us. The Beloved Community, Dorothy taught me, is a practice and not a revelation.

me, that enabled her to keep going, to endure racism, gossip, and even her own poverty (Dorothy frequently helped people move into Habitat houses which were nicer than her own home). Dorothy is witness to the fact that God loves everyone, even the racist white plantation owners. But she also knows that God sides with the cause of the poor and downtrodden. Dorothy taught me to begin to see the world through the eyes of those folk, to unlearn my condescension about what it takes to bring about social change, and to work patiently against the system of white supremacy that wears at her community and the communities of black folks all over the United States.

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It is a work I am continuing here in Atlanta at the Open Door Community, an interracial Christian congregation that seeks to serve the homeless and those in prison. We do not regard the homeless people as a "problem" to be solved, but as individuals to be loved and listened to. Jesus himself was homeless in his first night in the world, and we strive to serve those on the street with the expectation of seeing him in their faces and lives. Our resistance, much like Dorothy's, is in maintaining our community. It means facing up to our shortcomings and being flexible enough to let God use folks, even those who may not share many of our convictions as a community.

Often Dorothy would close our times of meeting with out-of-town volunteers by having us all circle up and sing "Amazing Grace," "We Shall Overcome," or "This Little Light of Mine." It was at these times, more than any other, that I felt the existence of the Kingdom of God, or, as Martin Luther King Jr. expressed it, The Beloved Community. At the Open Door, our resistance means seeking the Beloved Community, not as something waiting for us after death, but a present and ever-realized reality.

Dorothy, too, acted out the Beloved Community in heroic ways every day. Or perhaps to call it heroic is to miss the point that Dorothy's theology and praxis is within the reach of each one of us. The Beloved Community, Dorothy taught me, is a practice and not a revelation. Dorothy "let her little light shine," and as I continue my struggle, it is also her light that I take with me.

Nate Mathews, originally from Champaign, IL, is a Resident Volunteer at the Open Door.

Divinity, continued from page 1

mountains, very little belonged to Augustus and Herod.

Righteousness and resistance to temple and empire are tolerable when it comes to religion, politics, and justice. John the Baptist's followers were very small and ineffectual. Some rumblings, of course, but nothing too serious. Religious fires go amok however when SEX is the issue. (Today as the American Empire is crushing everyone, the number one agenda and concern for the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. is, "Does God fully accept homosexuals as homosexuals?" The question is Herodian in origin. The solution is to discover whose heads will roll).

Maybe John the Baptist ate one too many locust legs or not enough honey, but for whatever reason, John began to point very loudly at Herod Antipas for marrying his kinswoman and half brother's wife, Herodias. Many poor folk joined John in naming the relationship as evil. Their suffering fueled their anger and resentment. Herod's gentrification projects had overrun the meager holdings of their cities and villages, displacing thousands of people. Along with John, many poor folk would stand in front of the palace in Tiberias and shout, "Hell no! We won't take it no more." John's preaching aroused Herod's curiosity. But Herodias wanted John's vocal cords sliced and diced. So one night at a drunken royal party where Herodias' daughter Salome was wiggling and jiggling with half her clothes off, Herodias, who had already thrown John the Baptist into prison twelve months earlier, persuaded her over-heated husband Herod to have John's head brought in on a silver platter.

Here ends the first story of God's word in the

Mike's Momma Writes Back

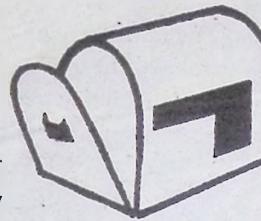
(Editor's note: Betty Beetley Casey, principal of White Oaks Elementary School and mother of Open Door Resident Volunteer Mike Casey, lives in Redwood City, CA. She writes here in response to Mike's letter, "Dear Momma," in *Hospitality*, January 2002.)

Dear Mikey,

Thanks for your letter – and I must reply. You are a goose! I am not worried about you! I know you can totally take care of yourself, and have always been very good at reading the social scene around you and reacting appropriately. I definitely don't worry about you.

But you are right – I do love to hear from you. I love to hear about your week, and your life. I am so very proud of what you are doing – you are living out the gospel in ways that seem right to you, and I can't ask for more than that. You are growing into the man I had hoped I had raised in many ways. But moms DO want to stay connected – we want to know the ins and outs of your daily living – what's new with Murphy and Ed? And whom did you talk with this week? And what did you read? And what new insights do you have? And do you have any thoughts about your sister who is struggling so hard to get her life together? And what music have you been playing?

I think the Gandhi room is perfect for you, and I totally subscribe to simplifying lives. We all, even us, try to do that on our own level, and where



we are. I DO think that you are a man of many talents (you know, I'm your mom after all), and I hope that you find a large enough canvas to express yourself and to have an effect. I know you say, "One person at a time," and while I think that's true (surely that's what I do with my kids and teachers at school too), I think you can do things that others perhaps can't, that can have a greater effect on a greater number of lives. Think of Gandhi – he didn't just work on a small scale – he was a leader of a whole nation. Now I wouldn't wish that on anyone right now, but consider the big picture. (And of course Dad would say, consider the political picture where he feels you can make more of a change). But you have to follow your heart – Alanna your godmother was here, saying similar things about her son Brian who was on a ten day fast in Seattle to protest conditions for children in Iraq, where he visited last year. We are all very proud of you guys, but we hope your actions will be the most effective possible in creating change.

And we do have homeless people in California! And lots of folks who could use your help. Perhaps that's the one thing I wish – that you were closer to home, doing whatever work you wish, but so that we could see you and be a tiny part of your life still. You know that is the hard part about you kids getting big and grown up – I know it's all about giving you roots and wings. I'm pretty good about the roots part, but the wings are hard on moms. We love you. Call home.

Love,
Mom

want to find me, you gotta hit the streets and barns!" God yelled across the heavens, hurting Gabriel's ears.

Finally, this New Covenant of flesh and blood will be one of bread and drink, at the supper table where all are called to come and practice nonviolent love, the body, and a life of solidarity with the poor. Justice is important; supper is essential.

But Yahweh faced a problem. "How shall I become a human being?" She had hoped John the Baptist's word-message would work for 2040 years. That way the women's movement would have enough time to demonstrate that patriarchy was behind violence, war, temples and empires. Then God could come as a woman! That would make The New Covenant new! God asked Miriam, Deborah and Esther what they thought.

"If you go for it now," they advised, "no one will note The New Covenant. Men won't listen to women unless the men are drunk and the women are wiggling and jiggling."

"Well," said God, "I'll be born of a virgin. I don't want any man involved. Anyway, they talk too much."

So, Jesus—who entered history in the flesh so that the way of truth can be practiced on earth as it is in heaven—is a male opposed to patriarchy. He and his mother/father are one!

And this is the proof that Jesus Christ is divine: "And this is what will prove it to you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." (Luke 2:12 TEV) Not all take this as obvious and easy-to-understand proof!

Ed Loring is a partner at the Open Door Community.

Dear Murphy and Ed,

Enclosed is a token of gratitude from a former Atlantan now teaching high school English in Los Angeles. It's been four years since Deborah and I left for California and while we miss the people very much, the city has become a vague and somewhat disappointing dream. I mean, Atlanta could be so much more than it is. It always reaches and falls short.

Very often I use the radio stories I did for "Southwind" and Atlanta photos I took back in the early 1970's of a still-vigorous civil rights movement in my classes to get the kids to think, react, and act. In Atlanta the legacy and ongoing fight of Martin Luther King, Jr. is a copyrighted and wholly owned intellectual property subject to royalty payments and the dead hand of censorship. ("Dr. King a democratic socialist? You can't say that.")

But in Los Angeles (I teach in South Central, ninety percent Latino, ten percent black) I am free to convert my old journalism into new curriculum and the kids love to hear the old war stories. Out there, they've been slammed by the "I have a dream" tape loop for so long that any fresh approach – even that of a white geezer from Atlanta – is fresh air.

In 1997, Deborah accepted a job in California running a foundation that funds disability programs and my 28 years in Atlanta came to an end. I quit CNN where I witnessed the last happy year of Ted Turner's reign, sold our house and moved to join her in Pasadena. I thought that with all that journalism experience, I'd have no problem finding work in the press corps. Wrong-o. It seems every aspiring screenwriter on the planet comes to the L.A. area looking for a job in "da media." They're all hot young things who look like second string celeb-bio researchers from "E." A comfortable old dog from Atlanta had no place. I freelanced writing for two local TV stations, did a few reports for "Marketplace" on public radio and was a copy editor for two dismal years for a newspaper chain in the San Gabriel Valley. Yuck.

A fellow reporter announced she was leaving to teach and I explored the possibility of unloading some of this communications skill I've carried like a soggy backpack for over thirty years on students who, by reckoning of their test scores, can hardly write an error free sentence and find reading an impossible chore. I landed with my emergency credential at Jefferson High School in classes that had only substitute teachers for months.

The classes were overcrowded, the walls were covered with gang graffiti and some very large male students like to walk up to the teacher's face and challenge the plan of the day with "yaknowthizbullshit notgonna makeitsodon'tmakemedosumtimIdon't wannadoknowwhatI'm sayin?" For two months I did more discipline than teaching. I wondered whether my choice was a sane one, never mind a wise career move. The next semester went smoother. I had a system in place to manage the classes, then teach them. And the older

students seemed to respect this. But the ninth graders were brim-full of challenge to authority of any kind and were intent on taking over the classroom.

Teachers call ninth graders "squeakers" because of their audio ability to mimic a box full of angry and hungry mice. They were cute but tough. From one squeeker class I got a death threat after an expulsion of an apparent gang member (all of fourteen years old). That was followed by a series of threatening incidents and I was transferred out for my safety and the safety of the students.

I wound up at the Jefferson campus for high-risk students and have been teaching English there since last August. These kids failed a grade or don't have enough credits to graduate. Nearly all of the girls have babies. The students are older and more motivated and the faculty engages in a limited amount of team-teaching, so I don't feel like the mid-career changing emergency credentialed misfit. This has been much better. I'm now a District Intern, which means I'm on the fast track to getting a full credential to teaching in California schools. The D.I. classes are strenuous but are helping me every day in the classroom.

Deb and I have bought a house in Altadena, which is in the northern foothills of Los Angeles County. We can see the lights twinkle down in the L.A. basin. There are coyotes prowling the streets at night and wild parrots overhead. There are palm trees, oaks and cedars everywhere. Altadena is majority black and, with the trees, it reminds us of Atlanta. Out here, Atlanta is still the spiritual heartland of noble struggle and the legacy of a King. I get a lot of questions about the civil rights movement from a black community whose southern roots are remote but vividly remembered and predate World War II.

I don't have the heart to tell these people or the students the story of the real Atlanta. It's a city of cruelty, not compassion. Deception, not decency. Opportunism, not opportunity. I miss its people but not the city. The heart of the Atlanta I knew stopped beating long ago.

The only bright isolated spots are places like the Open Door Community, where the message of Jesus the revolutionary upsetter of things is proclaimed and lived day in and day out. I am reminded of Open Door when Deb and I attend All Saints Episcopal Church in Pasadena (Ed Bacon, a Georgia boy, is preacher). It's a kick-butt and take names progressive church where Dr. King once preached. Since we moved here, All Saints has had Bishop Tutu, Jesse Jackson, and other liberation theologians come and deliver messages. The church has major programs in areas of homelessness and hunger, peace and justice, and civil liberties.

Someday I may come back to Atlanta and hope there will be an open door for me to come and say hi. This new Californian has only the best memories of the two of you. Peace and out.

Boyd Lewis
Altadena, CA

Dear Ed,

Prayers for Murphy, you and the community. How is Murphy? Your letter sounded hopeful and positive. A helluva tough time for all The Open Doors. But you keep your faith intact. I'm outta this dust bin on December 14, supposedly. I say supposedly because we're all living in a tent – 9/11 indicated that. Read that Secretary of State Powell admitted that they had not even circumstantial evidence against Bin Laden and Al Qaeda. Nothing that would stand up in court. They don't know who's responsible for 9/11, and may never know. In the good old USA, it's not hard to build a war on lies and swindles. Once I get my feet grounded, I'll try concentrating on Bertell's shattering figures of killed, maimed and diseased from fifty-six years of nuclearism; plus the trashing of the environment by the U.S. military; plus the scam behind this cussed war.

Have a blessed Christmas. Love and thanks and Christ's peace.

Phil Berrigan
Baltimore, MD

Dear Ed,

Thanks for a copy of the letter from Frank Dew regarding "the temple guards."

First Presbyterian Church has had security guards for approximately twelve years. We used to call them "night watchmen." Our security guards are not armed and there are no firearms around. Many of those who come on a regular basis know the names of those who serve in this capacity.

We do find occasions to eat with them; they participate in most staff functions, i.e. monthly staffing, staff luncheons, parties, and celebrations. We also share their sorrows and sufferings during times of illness, death and other hardships.

Let me share just one brief story. Lt. Johnnie Booker has been with us for more than six years. At one point in his life, he was on the streets. He is a great staff person and a person of tremendous faith. He has remembered his own experience of being homeless on more than one occasion, in helping those who come to our congregation daily. He is a

Christian and belongs to a church. These men and women are valued by all of the staff with appreciation and affection.

We pray with them and they also pray for us. Two of our security guards have participated in building a Habitat Home.

Yes, they have been baptized and are members of the Body of Christ. We know their names as well as part of their faith story. When I say we, I am speaking mainly of the staff at First, but they are also known by some of our members.

Their function mostly consists of seeing that the facility is secure and to provide excellent service in welcoming those who come that need directions and schedules. Being located next to the Art Center MARTA Station, many drop in to use the telephone, get a token, use the restroom, or get information. I realize that those who come to the church might have various reactions on seeing a security guard, but the majority of the comments have been very affirming and positive. I like to think of these staff persons as a strange kind of ambassador. Our doors are open and one of the reasons is that there is someone to meet the public and to assist them with their needs.

Again, thanks for sharing this letter with me.

Sincerely,
Rev. Charles D. Black
First Presbyterian Church
Atlanta, GA

Dear Murphy,

We recently lost our friend Jim Gittings to this life. He was full of spit and vinegar right up until his last couple of days. His bags were packed, and he seemed quite satisfied that he'd not left anything out.

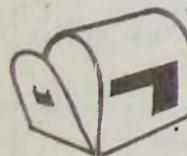
I have attached the obituary as it appeared in our paper. There are also a couple of good pieces on the PCUSA website.

I was especially fond of the piece by Jim which was published in *Hospitality* not too long ago. He describes an old European woodcut in which the sword of justice diverts resources to those in need. Jim's love of history and respect for traditions fueled his sense of social justice.

Steve Vance of Columbia led us this Saturday in the memorial service at Westminster. Among the many fine memories I hold of Jim, there are none I value more than his insistence that I meet you and experience first hand the ministry of the Open Door. I have you both to thank for that! Please keep us in your prayers – as we will you.

Sincerely,
Charlie Warth
Greenville, SC

(Editor's note: We are grateful to report that at the urging of Jim Gittings, Charlie Warth, and other leaders at Westminster Presbyterian Church, the church has begun a monthly trip modeled after our Hardwick Trip to transport families of prisoners from Greenville to visit their loved ones in prison in Columbia, SC.)



Grace and Peaces of Mail

Dear Ed, Murphy, and the Open Door Community,

Warm greetings from Donegal. Please find enclosed a cheque for IR210 for the work of the Open Door Community from the Presbytery of Donegal. It comes as a token of our solidarity with you. As moderator of Presbytery for the year, I designate the work which the collection from the Presbytery community service goes to support, and have chosen yourselves for your important missionary witness.

All good things in Christ. Peace and strength for the journey.

Mark Gray
Presbytery of Donegal
Ireland

Open Door Community Ministries

Soup Kitchen: Wednesday – Thursday, 11 a.m. – noon

Weekday Breakfast: Monday – Tuesday, 6:45 a.m.

Showers: Wednesday and Thursday, 8 a.m.

Use of Phone: Monday – Tuesday, 6:45 a.m. – 7:45 a.m.,
Wednesday – Thursday, 9 a.m. – noon

**Harriet Tubman Free Medical Clinic and Soul Foot Care
Clinic:** Thursdays, 7:00 p.m.

Clarification Meetings: Selected Tuesdays, 7:30 – 9 p.m.

Weekend Retreats: Four times each year (for our household,
volunteers and supporters)

We are open...

Monday through Saturday: We answer telephones from 9:00 a.m. until noon, from 2:00 until 6:00 p.m. The building is open from 9:00 a.m. until 8:30 p.m. those days. (We do not answer phone and door during our noon prayers and lunch break from 12:30 until 2:00). Please call in advance if you need to arrange to come at other times. **On Sunday we invite you to worship with us at 5 p.m. and join us, following worship, for a delicious supper.**

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

Come Worship With Us!

Join us in February as we celebrate African American History Month. We will gather for worship and Eucharist at 5 p.m. followed by supper together.

Sunday, January 20	Worship at 910 Celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
Sunday, January 27	Worship at 910
Sunday, February 3	Worship at 910 Randy Barge preaching
Sunday, February 10	Worship at 910 Celebration of the Partnership of Ronald Williams
Sunday, February 17	Worship at 910 Marsha Snulligan Haney preaching
Sunday, February 24	Worship at 910 Bridget Piggue preaching



Clarification Meetings at the Open Door

Plan to join us on selected Tuesday evenings for presentations and discussions of topics relevant to the justice struggle. Call us for dates and times.
404-874-9652

Medical Supplies

(for our Thursday Evening Harriet Tubman Free Medical Clinic)

Can you help with the medicine cabinet?

- aspirin
- Tylenol
- bandages and band-aids
- antibiotic cream or ointment
- Ibuprofen
- antifungal cream
- cold medicine (alcohol free)
- cough drops
- foot powder

Open Door Community Needs

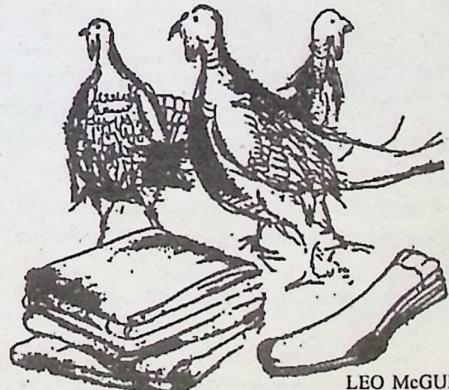
JEANS
T-Shirts
Men's Work Shirts
Quick Grits
Cheese
Coffee
Multi-Vitamins
MARTA Tokens
Postage Stamps
Underwear for Men
Men's Shoes (all sizes)

**Meat for the soup in
our Soup Kitchen**
Sandwiches
Table Lamps
Floor Lamps
Vacuum Cleaners
Twin Beds
Alarm Clocks
BLANKETS
Eye Glasses

Disposable Razors
Women's Underwear
Toothbrushes
Deodorant
LOTION
Vaseline
Towels
Socks
Shampoo
Men's Belts
Washcloths

Box Spring and Mattress for Double and Single Bed

Our sisters and brothers are cold and hungry. Can you help us with blankets and socks to give out and turkeys for the stew pot?



From 11am 'til 1:30pm, Wednesday and Thursday, our attention is focused on serving the soup kitchen and household lunch. As much as we appreciate your coming, this is a difficult time for us to receive donations. When you can come before 11 or after 1:30, it would be helpful. THANK YOU!

LEO McGuire