

HOSPITALITY

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Providing hospitality to the homeless & to those in prison, through Christ's love
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Photo by Ken Kunkel

One More Human Being is Dead

by Murphy Davis

At 8:00 am on December 15, in the third week of Advent, John Eldon Smith walked from a small cold isolation cell in the prison at Jackson into Georgia's execution chamber. He calmly sat down in a large oak chair and guards fastened leather straps around his legs and arms. Father Rick Wise, a Catholic priest employed by the prison stepped forward to read Eldon's choice of "final words" from II Corinthians 5 beginning: "Indeed we know that when this earthly tent is destroyed, we will have a dwelling prepared by God..." Eldon said, "Thank you, Father." The black leather hood came down over his shaved head and three guards pushed three buttons. One of them sent 2,300 volts of electricity through his body for two minutes. At 8:17 am, Ralph Kemp, warden of the prison, pronounced John Eldon Smith dead. John Siler of the Department of "Offender Rehabilitation" called the execution, "textbook." A nice clean execution.

So John Eldon Smith is dead. The media and the courts have described him in many different ways. I describe him as my friend. For more than three years I visited with him in the small sterile visiting room at the Georgia Diagnostic and Classification Center. I came to know him as a person whose first concern was always for other people. Despite his nine years on death row, I never heard the first word of self-pity from this man. Rather, he spent his time and his energy in active concern for his family and friends, the other men on death row, and his lawyers. Many of the younger men knew him as a sort of father figure. He had a quick wit and a capacity to understand life as God's good gift.

(Cont. on page 2)

VIGIL For Justice

by Carolyn Johnson

Over this last year, we here at The Open Door have had a growing awareness of God's call in our community to more action and advocacy on behalf of our street friends. For four years now we have shared life and work and worship and meals and conversation with our homeless sisters and brothers. We continue to see much pain and suffering, and we hear constantly the needs of our street friends. Although we have been able to meet some of the needs of some of the homeless--food, shelter, clothes, showers, medical care--most of the suffering is directly related to the very structure and values of our society. As Christians we believe that God calls us to work against injustice. As we witness the many injustices that our street friends must endure, we can no longer be silent.

On December 1, 1983, at 4:30 pm a 24 hour prayer and fast vigil began on the steps of Atlanta's City Hall. The vigil represented the collective efforts of religious and community folk called together by the Open Door. The vigil was held to bring attention to the needs of the city's poor, particularly the hungry and the homeless, and specifically to focus on the fact that there were no public toilets in Atlanta. The timing of the vigil was significant. December 1 marked the opening by various churches of several winter shelters. The opening of shelters reminds us that although many homeless folk have a warm place for the winter months, many are still left out; many will suffer, and some will even die from the cold. The timing of the vigil was also significant because on December 2 the utilities committee of Atlanta City Council was considering again a proposal for public toilets.

The vigil began on Thursday afternoon with a press conference. Colleen Brady (Georgia Clearing House on Jails and Prisons), Bishop Joseph Coles (CME Church), Betti Knott (Cont. on page 3)

Eldon was baptized as a Catholic early in his time on death row, and over the years he grew in his delight in the faith. He never missed a chance to attend mass and he loved the scriptures and the Church. On the night after Eldon was killed we celebrated a memorial service at St. Anthony's Catholic Church, and it struck me how appropriate it was for us to gather in a place that Eldon himself would have so loved to visit for prayer and worship.

John Eldon Smith was known to the State of Georgia as a condemned murderer--in spite of serious questions that remain about the coerced testimony that led to his conviction. Whatever he had done in his life, Eldon was God's child and forgiveness was his. What a tragedy it is that Ronald and Juanita Akins were killed in 1974. But how the tragedy is deepened by killing yet another person!

What is gained for anyone by John Eldon Smith's violent and pre-meditated killing? Are the victims returned to life? Are their families comforted and their wounds healed by more violence? Is Georgia a safer place to live? Is the human family nurtured and encouraged in love? Is God glorified?

I think not. Rather, it seems that we as a people have spent literally millions of dollars to try, condemn, cage, and kill one human being. In the process, the careers of various politicians, lawyers, judges, law enforcement and prison officials have been enhanced. The careers of others have been nearly destroyed by lies and half-truths. And the attempt has been great to assure the public that something has been done about crime. The law works, you see.

One more human being is dead in Georgia, the execution capital of the United States. Others will follow. They will be poor and they will be selected according to our patterns of racial discrimination. Beyond that "method" they will be a randomly selected few who will be offered up to pacify the public rage and frustration over the way things are.

In the process, we mock God's gift of life. We reject God's promise of mercy and redemption for any one of us no matter what we have done.

Lord have mercy on us all.

Cage Count

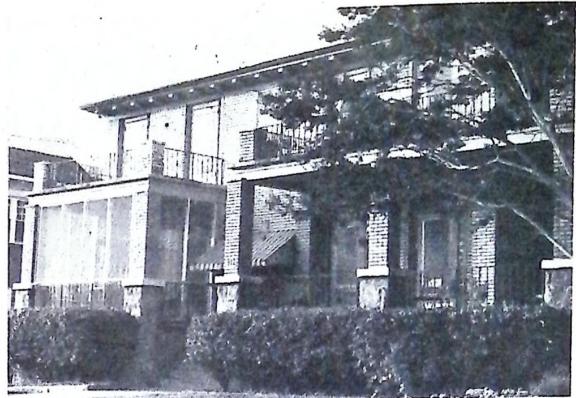
Georgia cages a larger percentage of its men, women, and children than any other jurisdiction in the world, including South Africa and the Soviet Union.

Presently, the state prison system is caging 15,504 people. This does not count anyone from the 142 county jails, 150 municipal jails, or any of the children's jails--variously called "Youth Detention Facilities" and "Youth Development Centers."

In the State Prisons we find the following breakdowns as of January 1984:

	White	Nonwhite	Total
Male	5,999	8,748	14,747
Female	304	453	757
Total	6,303	9,201	15,504

Figures provided by Georgia Clearinghouse on Prisons and Jails



HOSPITALITY is a regular publication of the Open Door Community, (P.C.U.S.), Inc., an Atlanta community of Christians called to ministry with the homeless poor and with prisoners, particularly those on death row. Subscriptions are free. A newsletter request form is included in this issue. For more information about the life and work of the community and about others involved in ministry to Atlanta's homeless, please contact any of the Resident Partners, listed below with their current administrative functions:

Murphy Davis - Southern Prison Ministry Director

Carolyn Johnson - Volunteer Co-ordinator
Rob Johnson - Treasurer, HOSPITALITY Editor
Ed Loring - Resident Volunteer, Building, & Correspondence Co-ordinator

Cold Crisis

by Carolyn Johnson

On Christmas Eve day, terribly cold weather blasted our city and lasted through New Year's day. At times during that week it was 3° below zero with a wind chill of -26° . It was weather that killed and maimed. As we celebrated Christmas, the birth of a baby born in a barn, 20 people in Atlanta who could find no room in an inn, died. Many more of our street friends suffered frostbite and will lose toes, fingers, feet, and maybe even legs.

The response to the weather crisis was disastrous. Very few people made any extra response at all during that week. Those folk operating the shelter at Druid Hills Presbyterian Church did. Michael Hall, the pastor, gave immediate approval for the shelter to stay open during the day. Sheryl Marshall, the volunteer co-ordinator, spent many hours calling and scheduling volunteers. We wish to thank all those who came on short notice to host the day shelter that week. At times there were as many as 70 street folks staying inside during the day and as many as 50 spending the night in space usually accommodating thirty. And many thanks to Stan Foster, the overall shelter co-ordinator, for all the extra work he did at this time. Druid Hills has set an example for all who work with the homeless: they responded IMMEDIATELY to the crisis.

Other responses were notable too. Grady Hospital allowed people to stay in their lounges and the Samaritan House day shelter extended its hours. Rev. Joe Boone opened additional space and fed people at one of his restaurants. And a few weeks later the wonderful news came that the City of Atlanta will now open emergency shelter at the old Pryor Street school any night the temperature is projected for below 32° .

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(St. Vincent de Paul Society), John Pickens (The Open Door Community) and Tom Brown (Butler Street CME Church) spoke of the religious, legal and societal mandates for public toilets. The urgent problems of hunger and homelessness were also raised again at this press conference. After the press conference, from 5 to 9 p.m. Thursday and from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday, religious and community leaders gave a meditation on the hour, every hour. The meditations lasted 15 to 20 minutes and included prayer and singing as well. We found these times of meditation very important. Our stomachs may have been empty but feeding on the word of God each hour kept us from feeling so hungry! Thanks to John Adamski, Al Winn, Joanna Adams, Mary Leslie Dawson, Derek King, George Mamo, Steve Daniels, James Vernon, Tom Brown, Ken Kinnett, G.S. Hardeman, Sandra Robertson, Bill Bolling, Alice Browner, and John Storey for giving the meditations. And we are very grateful to John Pickens Robert McGlassen and Murphy Davis for playing their guitars and leading us in many, many songs. Ed Loring kept it all flowing well.

Twenty-three people spent the night on the steps of City Hall Thursday night, bundled in lots of clothes and blankets. In addition, several of our street friends joined us. More of our homeless brothers and sisters joined us during the day vigil and their presence was particularly encouraging to us--that we could share the witness of word and body together.

Throughout the vigil there were at least 20 people with us at any given time. At 11:30 a.m. Friday we were joined by others and we held a public rally. At this time Charles Stovall (Calvary U.M.C. & Shelter), Joe Gross (Committee for More and Better Marked Toilets) and Ed Loring (The Open Door) addressed the issue of free public toilets. The speakers emphasized that the City of Atlanta should provide for the needs of her citizens. Public toilets are a need that would serve everyone; however, the lack of public toilets particularly hurts the poor and the homeless. Not only do our street friends experience pain and humiliation because there are no public facilities, but many--four to five on an average day--are arrested for public urination. The city pays an estimated \$50,000 each year just for the arrest and court processing of these people. Many spend up to 20 days in jail if convicted and unable to pay a \$75 fine. Public toilets would provide more sense of human dignity for our street friends, would improve the health and cleanliness of our city, and would cut down on some of the city's expenses.

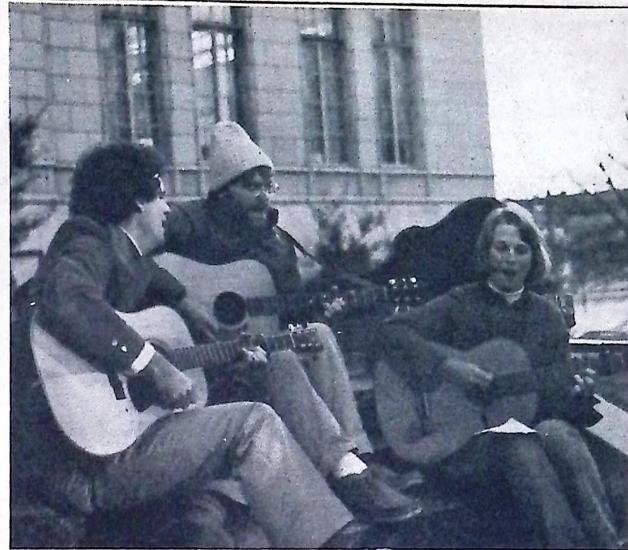


Photo by Ken Kinnett

At 2 p.m. on Friday we all went inside City Hall to hear the utilities committee discuss again the public toilet proposal. The committee listened to Dan Sweat from Central Atlanta Progress who spoke against public toilets, and Ed from our community who spoke for the need. After questions and debate, the committee decided to recommend that a temporary toilet be placed in Plaza Park on a trial basis. After the committee meeting, about 4 p.m., we went back outside for prayer and meditation and the vigil ended at 5 p.m. We broke the fast with a celebration of the Lord's Supper at the Open Door Community.

The prayer and fast vigil was a powerful experience for us. A primary concern, of course, was to focus on the injustice and suffering of our homeless sisters and brothers. And we feel that did happen. Not only did we witness to those who joined us and to those who walked by, received a flyer or heard the meditations, but we also received good media coverage. Many folks were reached by radio, television or the newspapers. Indeed we heard from people for days afterwards, saying their hearts had been moved and they were more concerned about the need for public toilets.

Yet as we reflect about the vigil, we realize that not only did we dramatize issues, but we were able also to share directly some of the experiences of suffering and pain that our street friends know daily. Sleeping outside on cold, hard concrete, waking up cold and miserable, going without food, searching for a bathroom during the night--all these experiences heightened our sensitivity to the struggles of the homeless and gave us a sense of solidarity with the poor.

The 24 hour prayer and fast vigil was a direct response to the suffering and humiliation we have seen our friends endure because there are no public toilets. We know that over the years we will be called again and again to prophetic action and public witness on behalf of the homeless and the hungry.

The witness we made on the steps of City Hall is certainly connected with the acts of feeding and sheltering that we do at 910 Ponce de Leon. Both the public witness and the work at 910 are responses to God's call in our lives to practice mercy and to work for justice. Love--God's love for us and in turn, our love for needy sisters and brothers--brings mercy and justice together. As we shelter our friends we must also call for more homes and better

(Cont. page 9)





tried to sneak through our community.

But our vigil never came to pass. We later learned that the train, learning of our planned actions in Birmingham, Atlanta, Comer, and other spots east, changed course and slipped through south Georgia. Friends from the Jubilee Community were able to catch up with the Nuclear Train above Waycross. On and off they were able to escort it through Savannah and to its destination in Charleston, South Carolina. There we believe its awesome arsenal was headed for Trident submarines and for the Pershing missiles in Europe.

Death did not pass through Atlanta--this time. The White train did not pass slowly across Lenox road near the home of our dear friend and volunteer, Robin Raquet. It didn't roll through the Emory University Campus. It didn't lumber through downtown Athens and Comer. Yet for about 48 hours over a hundred of us in Atlanta thought it might. And our waiting brought the reality of the nuclear arms race "closer to home" in a new and powerful way.

Thanks to several years of prayerful commitment by a group in Bangor, Washington called Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action, the movement of the Nuclear Train is becoming less of a secret. Most likely this same train has been passing through Atlanta several times a year for over 20 years. We know that it originates in Amarillo, Texas. The Pantex Corporation there is the final assembly plant for our nation's nuclear weapons. For several years, people of peace have been tracking the train as it travels from Texas to the west coast. But this past October was the first time that anyone had tried to follow its route eastward.

We know that the train will come again. So we now invite friends in the South who trust in the power of our Lord to rise and stand firm in witness to God's presence. The only way that the nuclear arms race will stumble and fall, is if people make known their intention of running a different race. Protecting the presence of nuclear weapons in your state is one clear way of communicating the race you wish to run.

Nuclear Train

by Rob Johnson

"Some trust in their war chariots
and others in their horses,
but we trust in the power of
the Lord our God.
Such people will stumble and fall,
but we will rise and stand firm."

Psalms 20:7-8

Back in October a telephone call led me to a bridge in the middle of northeast Atlanta. It was early evening and already dark at the Sage Hill shopping center at the Briarcliff/Clifton Road intersections. Many times I have crossed this bridge--seldom aware that it really is a bridge. Seaboard Coastline railroad tracks pass essentially unseen beneath. Normally it's a rather passionless place in Atlanta, though I do remember a few years back hearing about a careless person being killed by a train on a raised tressle just a few yards away.

On that brisk October night the bridge over the tracks had suddenly become sparked with emotion for me. The phone call I'd received earlier had led me to suspect that this very spot would soon be filled with the terrible presence of death. Again, my mind flashed back to a time in Atlanta, not so long ago, when bridges were carefully being perused by citizens and police trying to anticipate and hopefully prevent death: murdered black children's bodies were being found along our city's river banks. Here I was, again hoping to unmask death.

I did not succeed. Death chose another dumping place--south Georgia. On the following page is an article just printed in the Atlanta Clergy and Laity Concerned newsletter. It is about the NUCLEAR TRAIN or WHITE TRAIN, in reference to its exterior color. Along with friends from CALC and a few others quickly called in October, we of the Open Door Community were waiting for this 20-car train carrying 200 nuclear bombs to travel through our city. We knew it was coming because of a phone call. Other people of faith west of Georgia had already seen the train, and as pre-arranged, had called us a brief 24 hours ahead to say that death was on its way. I had gone to the Sage Hill bridge after looking on a city map. We were seeking a suitable spot for a group to gather and silently to greet the train as it

Homeless Update

by Rob Johnson

This is about the third re-write of this short column. The first one began by bemoaning the fact that 1983-4 appeared to be the first winter in four years not to see any new shelters in Atlanta. Oh ye of little faith! In recent weeks two synagogues have opened their doors!! Congregation Shearith Israel in the Morningside neighborhood opened January 23 to provide hospitality to 15 women. Rabbi Mark Wilson and volunteer co-ordinator Sara Duke and over a hundred volunteers are to be congratulated! More recently the Temple on Peachtree Street has opened for couples--the first shelter to do so for those without children. Larry Hecht & Ken and Patti Cohen are contact people there.

Other exciting news is that All Saints Episcopal Church (634 W. Peachtree St. - already providing winter shelter) is now providing the first day shelter for children and/or mothers and children, Mon.-Fri. from 8:30 to 3 pm.

Finally, the Born Again Christian Center (Raymond Gray, pastor, 479 Marietta St. N.W. offers another day shelter!

Nuclear Weapons Pass through Georgia

Protest the Death Train!

For more than twenty years, special "white trains" have criss-crossed the country, carrying nuclear weapons between manufacturing facilities, depots, and points of deployment. Like the boxcars that carried millions of Jewish people to their death in Europe in the 1940's, the trains have passed among us invisibly.

They are not literally invisible, of course. In fact, painted white and uniquely designed, they are quite conspicuous. And the Nuclear Trains are beginning to be noticed, their cargo protested by those of us along the train's routes. In October, many of you waited with us for an impromptu vigil at the Nuclear Train's passage through Atlanta.

The vigil never happened: the train was re-routed through south Georgia to comply with the Department of Energy's (DOE) policy to keep the Nuclear Train "moving at all times including re-routing as necessary to avoid demonstrations." Our goal: to make such evasions impossible -- to ensure that whatever route the train takes, someone will be there to protest.

If you want to join the challenge to the Nuclear Train, you need to write or call to let us know how you can help. We will not know until about 48 hours before the next train reaches us, so we need to have our network and plans together ahead of time. (See below for details on help needed and who to contact.)

We believe shipments will continue to be on the Seaboard Coast Line, probably through south Georgia. DOE places responsibility for handling all demonstrations first on the railroad, and second on local authorities. Personnel on the



train are to "advise demonstrators that armed couriers are present [on the train] and that these couriers will take appropriate action if the shipment itself is threatened." The "couriers" are believed to be armed with rifles, shotguns, machine guns, and hand grenades.

Challenging the Nuclear Train: How to Help

If you could potentially take off, on short notice:

Tracking the train: we need people to stay with the train from the time it crosses the Georgia border; riding beside it and reporting back to regional coordinators. (Train tracks parallel roads, and the train travels between 15 and 30 mph.)

Meeting the train at a vigil site (probably several hours from Atlanta) with signs, prayers, songs. The vigil will not be dangerous or illegal, though it may be inconveniently timed and/or distant.

Civil disobedience: a few people plan to try to blockade the train. They will be glad to share information and ideas with you but strongly recommend that you not undertake such actions without careful thought and consultation.

Help in Atlanta:

Telephone tree: we need to quickly contact as many people as possible when we know the train is headed this way, and contact them again as its route becomes clear and a vigil site is selected. You can help either by listing yourself as a contact for your organization or a group of your friends, or by volunteering to call other interested folks we know of.

Telephone coordinators: If you know you could not leave town for a vigil, you could serve as a coordinator from here: receiving updates from trackers and other organizers; passing it on to folks wanting to go to the vigil.



If you live outside Atlanta:

Tracking the train: routes may vary widely from those used in the past -- let us know if you could be available in your area (even if it doesn't seem very likely), and how far you might be willing to travel.

Hospitality - South Georgia: Since we expect the train to be routed through S. Ga, and most potential vigilers would come from the metro-area, we need hosts near the sites of potential vigils. Ideally a church or other facility where people could re-group, perhaps bathe, sleep, or eat, get updated information about vigil site and time, and meet up with others going.

Organizing in your area: Let us know if you're willing to be a key contact to let others know what's going on in your area. Then let your friends and neighbors know the situation.

Nuclear Train: For Information or to Volunteer

Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action near the Bangor, Washington Trident base, has coordinated actions in the western U.S. along the Nuclear Train's route. They have a highly informative newsletter with details on the train, its deadly cargo and past protests. It's available from CALC or Jubilee -- see below.

Return the coupon, order Ground Zero, or make written inquiries to: Clergy and Laity Concerned, 222 East Lake Drive, Decatur, GA 30030. Or call: 377-6516.

To volunteer or get more information by phone in the Atlanta metro area, contact:

- Rob or Carolyn Johnson: 874-9652 (day)
- Pam Beardsley or Margaret Roach: 586-0460 (day)
- Ken or Loyd Kinnett: 622-2202 (day); 622-4344 (evening)
- Gene Guerrero: 523-5398 (day); 523-3243 (evening)
- Mark Hurst: 622-0186 (day); 627-2346 (evening)

To discuss possibilities for civil disobedience:

- Mark Reeve: 377-6516 (day); 378-7846 (evening)

Southeast Regional Coordination (tracking, key contacts outside the Atlanta metro area): Contact CALC or:

- Don Mosley, Jubilee Partners, PO Box 68, Comer, GA 30629.
- Phones: (404) 783-5000; 783-5244; 783-5245.

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address & Zip: _____

JANUARY, 1984

A Peek at Peakload

by Ed Loring

I often visit the places and institutions where our homeless friends gather. One such place is Peakload Labor Pool on Ponce de Leon Avenue. Peakload is much like the other nine labor pools in the downtown area. Places where those who are starving for work and thirsty for employment gather in desperation and hope for a few hours work at minimum wage--minus transportation and rent for gloves, boots, or hard hats if such are needed.

On this particular Monday morning I arrived at Peakload at 5:45 a.m. Since this labor pool opens at 5:30 a.m. I missed the early gathering of the folk before the doors opened. At 5:45 there were about 20 men in the large single room and one Peakload employee. By 6:15 the room was filled with men--about 75--and by 7:30 some 120 had come through the doors. During the 2 hours I was there, no women came inside, although several stood near the door and talked with some of the jobless men. The unventilated room quickly filled with smoke and offered the only resistance to the hostile glare of the low buzzing fluorescent lights. A wide variety existed among the men. The racial composition was nearly even between black and white, but it seemed that more whites were sent out on jobs. The ages ranged from the 20's to the 50's, with the majority in their late 20's and early 30's. No one had a disability that I could see--so unusual in a grouping of the homeless and very poor. A few folk had automobiles and were sent out on jobs first. If one has a car, Peakload gives the owner \$3.00 for gas and each rider pays \$1.00 to and from the job. This is primarily for jobs outside the perimeter where buses do not go.

The restroom had a poorly printed "out of order" sign on the doors. Two people used it anyway, and at 7:30 I entered. The tiny lightless room was filthy and useable only in the greatest distress. I can understand why many of our friends risk arrest and relieve themselves in doorways and behind dumpsters. Several folk looked at me in surprise as I came out of the restroom door.



There is no water fountain at Peakload, but vendors have placed a cigarette and a coke machine along one of the walls. While I was there no one used either machine. High above the seats on a platform sits the modern slave-master, a television set. At 7:30 a.m. one of the men from the crowd turned it on.

I came away from this sad and lonely place with several reflections and impressions. First, I know one of the reasons hell is pictured as a place of fire and smoke. The smoke was terrible! My eyes hurt; my nose ran. The air was so heavy and mean feeling that the tentacles of oppression, depression, and hopelessness encircled us and closed a lid upon our heads.

A second impression is the function of language and conversation. What do people do when they have nothing to do? At first they talk. Later, I think, they go insane and my feeling is that insanity is first expressed by babbling. I thought Thomas Merton and his call to silence from the depths of his spiritual experience. I find another reason to practice silence. The city is so filled with talk that attempts to mask suffering, and the talk that fills the voids of nothingness. Perhaps, we may serve our troubled friends and this city with silence.

Time is short, and time is long. 7:30 a.m. seems to be the time that anxiety begins to grasp people. If one is not sent to a job by that time, the day is over. I heard one man say he would stick it out until 9:00 a.m.

But 7:30 a.m. is just the beginning for me. At 7:30 Barbara drove up in our red van and off we went to Butler Street C.M.E. church to serve our breakfast meal. In the van I shouted a silent prayer to my God... "Why, Lord, Why? Please hold me tight, Lord, so I can keep my feet on the street. Thank you, Jesus. Amen."

Open Door Schedule

WE ARE OPEN

Monday through Saturday, telephones are answered from 7:30 a.m. until 6:30 p.m. and from 7:15 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. The building is open from 9:00 a.m. until 8:30 p.m. those days. Please call in advance if you need to arrange to come at other times. On Sunday we are closed until 5:15 p.m. Then our phones and door are answered from 5:15 until 8:30 p.m.

OUR MINISTRY....

SOUP KITCHEN - Mon. - Sat. 11:00 - 12 noon; Sunday 5:15 - 5:30

SHOWERS & CHANGE OF CLOTHING - Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday 9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

USE OF PHONE - Mon. - Sat. 9:00 a.m. - 4 p.m. SHELTER REQUESTS - Mon. - Sat. 9:00 a.m. - Noon

SUNDAY WORSHIP - 7:30 p.m. BIBLE STUDY Wednesday 7:30 - 9:30 p.m. (Currently on Luke)

* Bill is a current Resident Volunteer at the Open Door

Christa Ochiogrosso
Graphic

United Nations 2nd Special Session on Disarmament. The last day of our march was June 12 in New York City, when we marched with close to one million other people!

Now being the Yankee that I am (I grew up near Youngstown, Ohio), when I first decided to join the march my images of the South were anything but hospitable. In my mind I envisioned the marchers of the southern route being pelted with rocks (shades of the early civil rights days), especially since we were being led by a group of Japanese Buddhist monks.

But when I joined the march in Birmingham my experience was totally to the contrary. Never had I been treated so hospitably by people in all my life! Even if they did not necessarily agree with all of our objectives, they went out of their way to help us; all races, creeds, and beliefs. And thanks to the monumental efforts of the southern route coordinator, Pamela Blockey-O'Brien, we had a roof over our heads every night, and always plenty to eat.

So from my 1200 mile, four month walk from Birmingham to New York, I can say with all confidence, Peace is possible. If Southern Baptists can still extend the hand of friendship to Japanese Buddhists, there is no cause to give up hope. We saw peace catch fire in the hearts of the people who supported us that spring, and it is a fire that we hope has not been extinguished even yet.

After the march ended in New York and the excitement died down (temporarily, let us say), I finally ended up at the Catholic Worker in the inner city of Los Angeles. It is there that I spent 13 months prior to coming to the Open Door, and there I saw the other side of the coin. While we may have marched into New York victorious, there I saw in our soup line of up to 1000 per day those who our society

Doing Zedakah

by Bill McCormick*

If you live somewhere on the road between New Orleans and New York you may have heard us. We were the World Peace March, and in 1982 we were just one of four routes that crossed the country in support of the

would rather forget--the wounded and broken, those who are not victorious. And it is undeniably hard to make time for them, to bridge the gap from have to have-not. Sometimes I think it is a wonder that we can communicate at all.

So now that I have come back to work in the South again, I have a very keen sense of the juxtaposition of these two events. And then I have the added knowledge of the tremendous shelter movement afoot here in Atlanta--church after church almost seemingly trying to outdo each other in how much time and energy they can put into feeding and sheltering those who have nothing to eat or no place to go. And it brings to mind the days of the peace march again--people's generosity overflowing until almost a utopia of possibilities is glimpsed. And I dare say this movement is no less significant than the one a man led out of this city a quarter of a century ago.

Wouldn't it be great if we could export this shelter movement to other cities? (Not that there still is not plenty of work to do in Atlanta, mind you; as long as there is one person hungry or homeless in this city of plenty we are disgraced.) But wouldn't it be great if in every city of this nation we could make each day a march for peace--each act an act of hospitality?

I have learned from experience that if one wants to work full-time for peace, it is incapable that one must work with the poor. The arms race and poverty are inseparable. The money cut from the federal budget for social programs in recent years was not really cut; it was merely diverted to the already bloated defense budget. The Vatican II statement says it all: "The bombs kill even when they are not used by causing the poor to starve."

And if you decide to commit that final act of civil disobedience in your commitment for peace, you are thrown in jail. And with whom? The poor! It is the poor who fill the prisons! So we couldn't escape this connection even if we wanted to.

There is a word in the Hebrew Talmudic tradition--ZEDAKAH. It means to give hospitality with justice. Ultimately this is all we have to do--give Zedakah. If we all did I know that peace would come.



In the March '83 edition of HOSPITALITY Ed Loring wrote about the terrible suffering our street friends endure because of feet problems: pain caused by too much walking, poor shoes, hot pavement, frost bite, diseases undiagnosed and never treated.

Our good friend, Ann Connor read this article and wanted to help. Since June she has come to the Open Door weekly to care for the feet of our street friends. Ann is an RN and she can tell when medical treatment is needed, but she doesn't come just to examine feet and do referral. She bathes and soaks the aching painful, swollen feet. She massages them and rubs soothing ointment on them. She talks and listens and offers advice and comfort. Watching her, our understanding of servanthood is deepened. The loving, gentle way she treats each man and woman is a powerful witness of hospitality and ministry. We thank you Ann for all the feet you have washed and healed, for all the suffering you have alleviated, and we thank you, too, for the way your giving has ministered to us as well.

(Editor's note: The following article written by Ann and her husband A.B. Short tells more about their foot ministry and work in the Community of Hospitality they started here in Atlanta.)

Shoes That Almost Fit

by A.B. Short & Ann Connor

The conversation was punctuated with old, southern "yes ma'am's" and "yes sir's". The politeness coming from one who was beholding. Eugene was his name and he was unsure of himself, so he was being overly polite; he was being a beholding southern gentleman. Eugene needed a place to sleep. A place of safety from the cold of the night and the violence of the street. Providing "hospitality" to some of the homeless people in Atlanta had become a daily opportunity for us. Eugene was welcomed into our home, the "Community of Hospitality."

To backtrack a bit...We had begun our work with homeless people three years ago. Because we had felt a call to be in closer contact with the poor we had both spent time as volunteer host at Clifton Presbyterian Church's Night Shelter. It wasn't long before we realized how important the work was and sensed a strong call to begin the "Hospitality House" night shelter at Oakhurst Baptist Church (in Decatur, Ga. 7 miles from downtown Atlanta). We later bought our own home--the "Community of Hospitality" to provide residence for a few homeless people. The Hospitality House at Oakhurst Baptist shelters, feeds, clothes, and provides showers, beds, rest, and recreation for 11 men each night from October - April. The church van is driven downtown each night to pick up the 11 guests. Preference is given to the older, weaker persons and to those who have stayed with us the previous night. Frequently, after we have taken on the 11 men for the night someone else is left standing there needing a place to stay. Eugene was one of these. This was Eugene's second time to come to the van and

find that there was no room left. He had been there two nights before and we had been full, so we drove him to another church shelter in the city hopeful that he might find a space to sleep. After dropping him off, there was a stronger than usual sense that we should have brought him to our home, rather than taking him to another church shelter. It was a significant feeling and it persisted. So we were back two nights later and Eugene was there waiting. It was a relief to see him and to be given another opportunity with him. Even though the van was full we decided to bring Eugene with us and have him sleep at our home.

Little did we realize that our offering Eugene a place of rest would become a gift to us. What happened so often in the past, happened again. We who thought we were the "givers" and the "hosts" became the "receivers" and the "guests." Somehow things got turned around again. Because we are people of so little faith, we don't know how to expect and anticipate those twists of grace.

Eugene had been on the street this time for 4 days, walking in new plastic shoes that "almost fit." After walking in these shoes for 4 days, his feet were "bothering" him so he decided to go to a local hospital early that day, to have his feet looked at. After more than 8 hours of waiting to be seen Eugene was told that he had contracted blood poisoning from wearing shoes that rubbed open sores on his feet. The wounds had been caused by walking in shoes that "almost fit." After the long wait Eugene was treated with an injection of

(Cont. next page)

penicillin and a filled prescription and was discharged from the hospital that same day. His "almost fitting" shoes were returned to him. Eugene was back on the street walking in the same shoes that had caused the infection. We found Eugene on the streets that night and offered him a place to stay in our home. It was there that he shared with us a part of his life story, his time on the streets and his experience at the hospital earlier that day.

After dinner together, Ann, a nurse, suggested to Eugene that he allow her to take a look at his feet. With some hesitation and embarrassment Eugene pulled off his socks and shoes to show us his swollen and infected feet. The sight of his puffy and oozing feet moved us. After gathering footbasin, soap, hot water towels, ointment and bandages, Ann began her work of soaking and cleaning. A.B. sat beside Eugene engaging him in conversation. All the while, A.B. watched with a great sense of awe, as Ann carefully worked with Eugene's feet: soaking, washing, drying, applying ointment and bandages. The nursing of Eugene's feet became Good News in a more powerful way than any sermon could. The caring, attentive footwashing and Eugene's response were moving. Eugene was overcome with thanksgiving for the very little we had given to him. He didn't expect the kindness, the meal together, the conversation, the attention to his feet. It didn't seem like much, but it was much for Eugene.

The footwashing brought into clearer focus the importance of being Christ to one another, in concrete touching ways. To be on the streets is to be sentenced to a life without touch. Relationships on the streets are such that there are seldom ways to touch or be touched. The touching and caring we had given to Eugene had moved him, moved him into a more trusting relationship. His embarrassment and discomfort had turned to some openness and comfort and he shared a bit of his story with us.

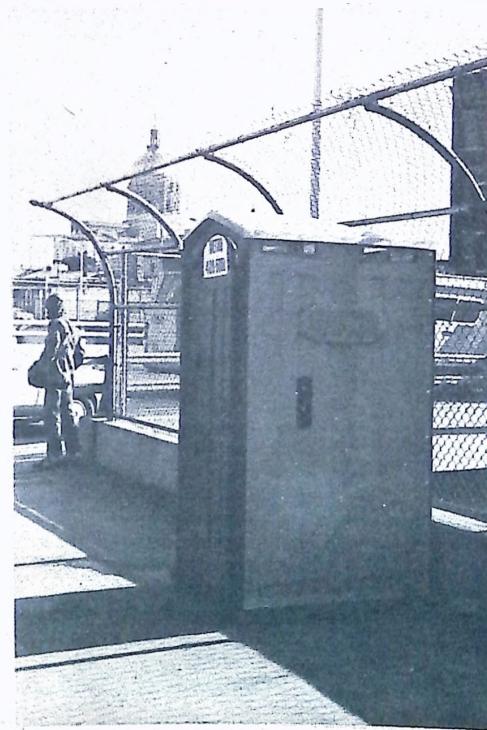
Eugene was born and raised in rural North Carolina. He had grown up with hopefilled dreams. Most of those dreams had never been realized. Alcohol had been Eugene's flaw in life. Because of his relationship to alcohol his dreams had not become reality. Instead, he was a man whose life had been fits and starts. He was in and out of relationship with family and friends, in and out of jobs, in and out of boarding houses, on and off the streets. He was someone lost in the shuffle and scuffle of life.

Few of us have known the day-in, day-out pain of wearing shoes that "almost fit." Few of us have been on the streets to know the painful isolation from human touch. Eugene knew these pains. He opened our eyes and we were given a glimpse of the pain as we looked at, and touched his swollen and infected feet. We were given a hint of the pain of life on the streets as he shared his story. Eugene had given to us a bit of understanding of the pain in his life. So we had been touched and moved in new places. He was the giver and we were the receivers, an illumination of that twist of grace. Eugene has left us with healed feet and shoes that fit. Before he left, he gave to us in an abundant way. He shared his story. He opened himself and gave back to us. We who were hosts became the guests.

Out of the experience of the healing foot-care to Eugene, came a "call" to continue to seek out ways to touch the untouched. A.B. had a strong sense that we ought to find somehow to

housing. As we feed the hungry, we must call for more jobs. As we bathe and massage feet, we must call for more and better preventative health care. As we witness our friends being arrested and locked in jail for urinating in public, we must call for public toilets. As we see friends freezing to death, we must demand emergency shelter for every man, woman and child in the city who needs it. The more we live and work with needy sisters and brothers and as we learn names, get to know one another and become friends, we know we are called to share more than a bowl of grits or a cup of coffee. Because we share life and work and food with those in need, we experience a deepening of God's love in our lives and a deepening of the love we have for our brothers and sisters. And this deeper love pushes us forward into the fight for justice; we can no longer watch those we love suffer. To fight for justice is to live and witness in a way that will bring change--that will enable God's kingdom and God's vision to enter into our broken world. And in this kingdom--the world God wants for us--no one would have too much when some have nothing. It is a kingdom where the abundance that God has given us on this good earth is shared by all.

We stood, sat, prayed, slept, sang and talked on the steps of City Hall to raise the cry of the poor for justice. We presented our bodies to heighten the awareness of the needs of the poor and to show our solidarity with needy sisters and brothers. We presented our bodies to show that we will not be silent when our friends suffer, and to demonstrate the lordship of Jesus over the whole of life including City Hall. We know that our work and our witness, and our voices will not turn the city around overnight. Indeed since our vigil, City Council voted to "allow" one temporary public toilet in Plaza Park (across the street from the 5 Points MARTA station for a trial period of three months. This is only a small beginning, but it is a beginning. We may not have "won" a big victory, but our witness was a struggle to be faithful. As Christians we know our lives are not based on winning or losing but on being faithful to God's call for justice and mercy.



Editor's note: The following article has been written by JOHN PICKENS, a lawyer in Atlanta who serves the least in many ways: His law practice is offered primarily to poor people. He often provides assistance to guests living at the Open Door. But he also prepares and serves meals to the hungry as a volunteer, scrubs out refrigerators, runs errands, files receipts, and plays his guitar for us.



Photo by NICHOLAS F. PAPAS

THE

CRIMINAL!

Over the past two years a large part of my law practice has been devoted to the defense of persons accused of crime in the City of Atlanta and Fulton County, Georgia. Through this experience I have come to realize that the operation of this criminal "justice" system mirrors the oppression of and injustice to the poor that exists throughout the United States. Criminal justice in Atlanta is a microcosm of such oppression and injustice because in it you see the inhumane and unjust replay of the poor and powerless (principally these persons are poor and most often black) being pushed further down at the hands of those with more money and greater personal resources in an atmosphere which fosters ill-will and alienation and diminishes the self-esteem of those who stand accused--thereby widening the gulf between the haves and have-nots in our society. Furthermore it seems to me that fear--fear of crime & fear of the dangerous, violent criminal thought to be lurking around every corner--is at the root of this injustice and oppression, thereby again mirroring a society that operates more out of fear than out of love, compassion, and understanding. Although the court systems handling criminal cases differ in each city and state, I believe the majority of such courts in this country exhibit the same injustices that are found here in Atlanta. Thus, a study of our court system here provides a glimpse of the larger criminal "justice" system in our country. I have placed quotation marks around the word, "justice," because it is my belief that true justice is rarely achieved and the current system is more aptly called the criminal "injustice" system.

The oppression and injustice fostered by the criminal "justice" system in Atlanta manifests itself in four ways:

1. The system impacts principally on the poor, plus a large majority of those accused of crime are black;
2. Access to adequate legal counsel is limited;
3. An unequal amount of money and personal resources are brought to bear to achieve a conviction of persons accused of felonies (crimes punishable by over a year in jail or death), as opposed to that spent on the defense;
4. Many of the people operating this system (from the jailkeepers to the judges) treat those accused of crime with a very hostile, cynical, uncaring, and authoritarian attitude which not surprisingly elicits a like reaction,

thereby further alienating those accused and convicted of crimes and planting the seeds of resentment and distrust.

I have set forth below a few facts & personal observations about the two courts handling criminal cases here in Atlanta--the City of Atlanta Municipal Court and the Fulton County Superior Court. The Municipal Court has two functions: 1) to try persons accused of city ordinance violations and, if convicted, to fine them and/or send them to jail for up to six months; and 2) to hold preliminary hearings on state law criminal charges and, if sufficient evidence is presented to think that a crime has been committed, to transfer the case (i.e., "bind over") to the Superior Court of Fulton County (less serious crimes punishable up to one year in jail, called misdemeanor crimes, are transferred to the State Court of Fulton County). The following facts and personal observations clearly show, I believe, the injustice and oppression characteristic of the system operating here in Atlanta.

Municipal Court

1. The City Municipal Court is located on the second floor of the Police Headquarters building. Its very location belies a certain bias and prejudicial association. At the current time, the City Council has a proposal before it to build a separate municipal court building. If it passes, hopefully its planners will design the building in such a way so as to eliminate several problems mentioned in this article.
2. The Municipal Court has three courtrooms two of which are very small. Before entering the courtroom areas, everyone has to pass through a metal detector and is subject to being searched. On entering any of the courtrooms during court sessions, you are met with a mass of people (who are accused persons, victims, and witnesses) who are crammed into a small space. Such overcrowding creates a very negative, inhospitable atmosphere and these negative feelings quickly turn into feelings of oppression when you see that most of the people crowded into these rooms are black and poor.
3. When the accused persons (who are not out on bond) are brought over from the jail and brought into the courtroom, they are placed in "the cage," a small locked area surrounded on three sides by 10-12 foot sections of clear plexiglass (the fourth side is a wall). This structure clearly resembles a cage and

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always makes me think of an animal cage. It has to be dehumanizing to be placed in such a structure--right in front of a packed room of people who are not so contained.

4. On each case, the city/state's side is presented by an attorney (called a solicitor) and, in many cases, by a police officer, both of whom are often educated and, in practically every case, present a good personal appearance. Contrast this presentation with most of the persons accused, who are often uneducated, inarticulate, poorly dressed and visibly intimidated by the surroundings and the better prepared and more articulate solicitors and police.

5. The great majority of persons accused who appear in this court are not represented by an attorney and try to represent themselves. When this happens it is obvious that most of the people really do not understand what is going on, are confused when it is all over, and are not given an adequate explanation about what happened. The City has appropriated monies for a staff of public defenders in this court, but the staff of three public defenders and one investigator is simply insufficient to handle the caseload. In any given year, approximately 65,000 to 75,000 arrests are made by the City of Atlanta police, with all these cases coming before this court. The public defenders staff currently handles approximately 3500 individual cases a year and turns away approximately 4000 qualified indigent clients a year. 3500 cases a year is a tremendous number of cases for such a small staff to investigate and handle in court, and the sheer burden of these numbers undoubtedly adversely affects the preparation for and presentation of each case. A much larger public defender staff is clearly needed.

6. Persons convicted in this court of City ordinance violation who are given jail sentences are sent to the city stockade (jail) on Key Road in southeast Atlanta. It has recently been reported that 90% of the persons in this jail are homeless. This fact alone reveals on whom the criminal "justice" system in Atlanta is falling, not to mention the clear implication that our city is dealing with its homeless and poor by jailing them rather than caring for them humanely and compassionately.

Fulton County Court

1. At the time a case is transferred to this Court, the scales of "justice" markedly swing in favor of the State, mainly because of a greatly disproportionate allocation of monetary and personal resources. The prosecution of all criminal cases in this court is carried out by the District Attorney's (DA) office. The DA's office has an annual budget of approximately \$1.9 million which supports a staff of a District Attorney, 11 assistant DAs, 16 trial assistant DAs, 6 deputy DAs, 16 investigators, and a large clerical staff to support this group. On any given case the DA's office works closely with and has the full cooperation and support of several other law enforcement agencies, such as the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, the Atlanta & Fulton County Police departments, the Fulton County Medical Examiner's office, the Grady Hospital Forensic Medicine office, the State Crime Lab, and the FBI and Department, the State Crime Lab, and the FBI and all its related departments. Rarely are any of the personnel with these agencies very cooperative or helpful to defense counsel--often they will not even speak to the accused's attorney before trial. For indigent defendants needing legal counsel, Fulton County provides a Pub-

lic Defender in this court, but the Public Defender's office is grossly under-staffed and under-budgeted. For example, the Public Defender's office has a budget of approximately \$600,000, almost 3 times less than the DA's budget. The staff of the Public Defender's office is comprised of a head Public Defender, 15 assistant public defenders, each assigned to a particular judge, 2 investigators, and 3 secretaries. The above budgetary and staff differentials are telling indicators of the prejudicial nature of the entire system.

2. Once a case is transferred to this Court, it is reviewed by a staff of assistant DA's and investigators and then presented by an assistant DA in a closed and secret session to the Grand Jury, a body of citizens selected at random to hear such presentations, to issue, or not issue, a criminal indictment, which is the formal criminal charge. The accused and his/her attorney are not allowed to be present at these grand jury proceedings and pre-grand jury discussions with the assistant DA's are rarely very fruitful. Although the closed-door, secret nature of these grand jury proceedings is common throughout the United States, nevertheless there is something inherently unfair about such a secret, non-public, and one-sided process--undoubtedly the process renders many "rubber stamp" indictments. It is commonly known in legal circles that, if a DA's office wants a case indicted, it will be indicted.

3. There is one public defender assigned to each judge (11) in this Court and this public defender handles all the indigent defendants that come before this assigned judge. The caseload of these public defenders is extremely high--way too high for the efficient and effective handling of each case. The public defenders typically are assigned their cases on arraignment days, with there being at least 3 to 4 arraignment days per month. At each arraignment, it is not uncommon to see the judge assign 10 to 15 cases to the public defender. Not all of these cases are disposed of on the day of arraignment, so the caseload continues to build with each successive arraignment day. Such a large caseload places undue burden and pressure on the public defenders to dispose of as many cases as possible as quickly as possible, which usually means a large number of negotiated guilty pleas. The fault lies not with the individual public defenders, but with a system that makes their task almost impossible. That public defenders by necessity have to handle their cases in this fashion is fairly well known by the urban, in-town residents of our lower income neighborhoods and public housing projects. I have had numerous clients tell me that they did not want anything to do with a public defender, even if it meant asking relatives and friends to get together some money to pay my fee for representing them. Additionally, I've had several folk refer negatively to the public defenders as the "state's attorney." Another potential problem in Fulton County, although I have not experienced it personally, is the fact that the head Public Defender is appointed by the Superior Court judges and serves at their pleasure. Such a system has the potential of destroying the independence necessary for the full effectiveness of criminal defense counsel.

A final observation relates to the way persons accused of crime are treated by persons in positions of authority from the jailhouse to the courthouse. This observation is

general in nature and does not by any means apply to all such persons in positions of authority, as I have encountered jailers, bailiffs, DA's and judges who have exhibited kindness, compassion and understanding. By and large, persons accused of crime are treated by those in authority over them with little or no respect, often with cynicism and disgust, frequently with impatience and distrust and occasionally with downright ridicule. The entire process often leaves me with the impression that it is a process that does not involve a human being and all the societal factors and circumstances that contributed to person's being accused, until I again come face to face with my client. Unfortunately, this attitude spills over to the attorneys representing the criminally accused. I have noticed a vast difference with how I have been treated by some judges when I have come before them representing a criminal client and when I am representing a civil (non-criminal) client. At first, I was surprised by the hostility, impatience and disrespect with which some judges confronted me when I was representing a criminal defendant--an attitude I had rarely encountered in civil cases. Now I am not surprised by such an attitude, only maddened that they too have been victimized by the forces in society fueled by fear that play upon the weak and powerless. The effects of such direct and indirect disrespect and degradation on those criminally accused I can only surmise. However, if such an attitude raises the temperature of my blood level--a white, middle-class-raised male, who walks free out of the courtroom irrespective of the outcome of the case can we be surprised at reactions of those who are accused. Often poor, powerless, black and essentially voiceless, they walk the other way back into prison with boiling-level feelings of disgust, hatred, anger, and worthlessness. Out of the courtroom they often face the intensified attitudes of those persons running the prisons. Thus, this system of Criminal "justice" and the attitude of those running it, takes many people on the edge of brokenness and breaks and degrades them a little further, stripping them at each turn of whatever measure of self-respect and hope they may have left. Not surprisingly then, many men and women come out of prison ill-equipped emotionally to do anything other than repeat the cycle already started in their lives or to do something equally as devastating to them personally. To say the least, a human tragedy of major proportion is played out time and time again.

In conclusion, I believe the above facts demonstrate that the criminal "justice" system in Atlanta, even with all the legal and constitutional safeguards for the criminally accused, fosters and perpetuates injustice and oppression of the poor and black in our community and to the extent, which it is representative of "justice" in this country, it reflects a major national problem. I believe we must either face this problem and bring to it the compassion, love and understanding of those radically committed to the discipleship of Jesus, or else be prepared to face and bear the anger, hatred and brokenness of those victimized by it.

Newsletter Requests If you or a friend would like to receive HOSPITALITY, please fill in this form and mail to Ed Loring

Name _____

Street Address _____

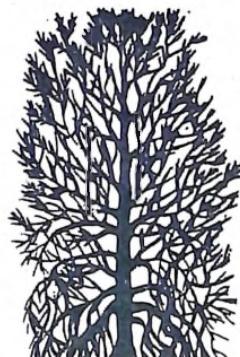
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continue to do this work of footcare. So we began caring for some of the street-worn feet through a weekly clinic of soaking, cleaning, massaging and healing at the Open Door Community. Those who come to the Open Door to shower and share soup are given an opportunity to see the "foot nurse." Some of those seen have corns, calluses, ingrown toenails, sores, fungal infections or worn feet from walking in shoes that don't fit. Some have major problems that must be referred to a podiatrist or surgeon. All that are seen seem comforted by the care and touch.

Through this ministry we have found new, deeper, and more personal meaning in the New Testament description of Christ girding himself with towels to wash feet. Those served by the foot care at the Open Door are touched in a literal sense. And we who serve are also touched. By lowering our bodies to wash their feet, our spirits are lifted, while looking up to those served, new relationships are created. Jesus invites us to gird ourselves with towels and open ourselves to our sisters and brothers. By touching we will be touched; by healing we will be healed; by hosting we will become guests, "for it is in giving that we receive." Amen.

Atlanta has 21 churches & synagogues that provide shelter for the homeless during the winter. No other city has seen such a strong response by the faith community to the needs of the homeless. Yet after this Christmas we can no longer be boastful or complacent. Twenty people died in only a few days, despite the number of shelters and despite the efforts to meet the weather criis. And winter is not over.

Those of us who are concerned about the homeless must strengthen our commitments to shelter. We must urge church shelters to face and meet weather crises by expanding their night shelter and by keeping their doors open during the day. It is sadly ironic that so many of our homeless and poor friends died at Christmas time. Christmas is the time we celebrate the birth of Jesus and it is Jesus who taught us to feed the hungry and bring the stranger into our homes. Did our Christmas plans and celebrations obscure the neediness of our street brothers and sisters? As American Christians we always face tough paradoxes at Christmas and too often the market place dims our focus on Jesus. Let us recommit ourselves to sheltering the homeless and let us be willing to sacrifice, if necessary, to see that there are warm and safe places for all those in need. May we struggle to see that no one else is maimed or killed by the cold, at Christmas or at any other time of the year.



Nita Loring