

HOSPITALITY

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Providing hospitality to the homeless & to those in prison through Christ's love

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Atlanta's Coming Winter How Much Room In The Inn(s)?!

Editor's Note

For the past ten months a handful of people representing Atlanta's new "church night shelters" have gathered weekly for early morning breakfast, prayer, and reflection upon our common work with the homeless. The group has been a vital source of nurturance, empowerment, and information exchange. Now, as dormant and even new shelters are about to open for the winter, the "Tuesday Morning Group" is eager to facilitate sharing between all disciples involved in shelter ("hospitality") ministry. A first step toward such sharing is in your hands; beginning with this issue of HOSPITALITY, the Open Door Community will be using its bi-monthly newsletter as a written link between church shelters and volunteers. Each issue will include information, analysis, and reactions on the issues we will all be encountering this winter. Please write and let us know how we can best serve you.

The enclosed article (page 3), written by Susan Weber of All Saints' Episcopal Church is an appropriate start: a comprehensive listing of all the church shelters planning to open their doors to Christ-among-us this winter.



Hardwick Hospitality

In our prison work we have found that a visit with a family member is one of the most important events in a prisoner's life. However for many families, the location of the prison and lack of affordable transportation mean they seldom see their loved ones. For example approximately 50% of the women at the women's prison in Hardwick, Georgia are from Atlanta. Hardwick is a small rural community two hours south of Atlanta. The only "public transportation" to that town is by Greyhound bus. To reach the prison from the bus station, one must take a taxi. The expense of such a trip is impossible for many prisoners' families.

In March 1981, Southern Prison Ministry began to respond to the need for transportation for families to visit in prison. Over the past 20 months, two or three volunteers have taken several families to visit loved ones each month at both the women's and men's prisons in Hardwick. Presently there are 6 volunteer drivers who periodically make the trip; they are: Trudy Green, Cathy Alexander, Donna Pickens, Jean Jones, Marietta Yarnell and Roselyn Thompson. The commitment by this handful of women means that children, parents, sisters, brothers, and grandparents are enabled to visit regularly and maintain family relationships.

This past summer Milledgeville Presbyterian Church became involved with the ministry to families. A group of concerned church folk met with Southern Prison Ministry to talk about how they could help. The planning group included: John & Gretchen Campbell, Charles & Elaine King, Edie & Joe Covert, Fred & Faye Heal, Ed Andrews, Georgina Powell and Robbie Hattaway. These folks decided to host the families at the church. Each month, members of the church prepare a delicious lunch for the travelers. They also give the children crayons and coloring books--something "fun" to do while in the prison and on the journey home. This short lunch break at the Milledgeville church is a time of good food, relaxation and fellowship. The hospitality also gives the families needed support and encouragement and a sense that someone does care. Indeed, one church member now plans to begin visiting a prisoner whose family he met during these Saturday lunches.

We are certainly excited about this ministry of transportation and hospitality. We want to use this space to recognize and say "thank you" to the women who drive the cars and to the folks at Milledgeville Presbyterian Church. We know your gifts are deeply appreciated by the families and by the men and women locked away in prison.



We continue to need volunteers who will drive families to the prisons in Hardwick. We make the trip once a month, usually on the 3rd or 4th Saturday. We leave Atlanta at 9:30 a.m. and return around 6:00 p.m. While looking for volunteers who could drive on a regular basis, we are flexible on how that is arranged. We need you! Call Carolyn Johnson, 874-9652

Atlanta : How much room in the inn(s) ?!

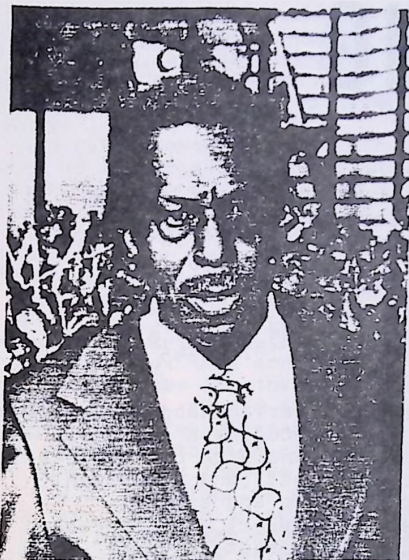
Many changes in church supported emergency shelter for Atlanta's homeless have occurred since Clifton Presbyterian's night shelter program started in November 1979. Since then seven additional churches and communities have offered, at minimum, the use of their facilities to persons seeking protection from inclement weather and assault. At present, shelter and hospitality for the homeless in Atlanta's metropolitan area is diverse and growing if unable, nevertheless, to serve numerous persons turned away nightly from shelters because of lack of space. Estimates of the number of persons homeless each night range from 1500 to over 3000. The space detailed in this article will hold about 950 people.

Trinity United Methodist, St. Mark's United Methodist, All Saint's Episcopal, St. Bartholomew Episcopal, Central Presbyterian, Clifton Presbyterian, First Presbyterian, the Open Door Community, Oakhurst Baptist, the Community of Hospitality, and the Power House Church of God in Christ all plan on having shelter programs this winter. Policy varies at each place, though generally alcohol, drugs, and weapons are not allowed in shelters. Fighting usually leads to eviction. Some food is available at all shelters and a few offer showers. Only two (Clifton & Oakhurst) provide transportation from downtown to their shelter. Listed below are more details on each program, including address, phone, and contact people. Programs are clustered by those which are *) Year-round +) Winter only (opening for at least their second season), and :) New programs planning to start this winter.

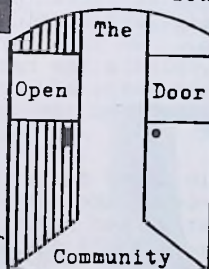
- *CLIFTON PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (369 Connecticut Ave. NE. Atlanta, Ga. 30307; contact Rocke Thompson 378-1536 or church 373-3253) runs a year-round shelter and hospitality program for thirty men who are provided with transportation at 6pm from downtown Atlanta to the Lake Clair location of the church and are returned at 7 am. Dinner and breakfast are provided as well as sleeping mats for the night. Guests may shower and wash clothes while they are there. Persons are usually given a card in the morning assuring them a place again that night if they wanted. Most nights only a few "new" spaces are available.
- *THE OPEN DOOR COMMUNITY (910 Ponce de Leon Ave. NE. Atlanta, Ga. 30306; contact Carolyn, Ed, Murphy, or Rob 874-9652) was begun by former members of Clifton who now live themselves in a Catholic Worker-type hospitality house. Twenty five people (including eight women) are provided housing, meals, and other essential support. Interviews are given to people off the streets, with a priority for older and/or physically/mentally disabled persons with no income. Showers, clothes, and a soup kitchen are also available to nonresidents Mon.-Sat am; soup kitchen only on Sunday (5pm).
- *FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (Sixteenth and Peachtree St. NE, Atlanta, Ga. 30357; contact Mary Jo Dellinger 892-8461) reopened November 1 and will be operating a year-round shelter for twelve women. Guests must arrive at 6:00 pm and will be given a dinner and a light breakfast. Mattresses, linens, and showers are also provided.
- +CENTRAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (201 Washington St. SW. Atlanta, Ga. 30303; contact Betty Knott 753-3600 or Elizabeth Bryan 266-0266) will continue to operate the largest capacity free shelter in the city: 150. Guests will be allowed in between 7:30 and 8:00. If necessary, tickets will be given out in the morning to those desiring to return. Sandwiches and beverage provided to guests who sleep on a bare gym floor (a separate room is available for women) 6am is leaving time.

- *COMMUNITY OF HOSPITALITY (305 Meade Rd. Decatur, Ga. 30030; contact Ann Connor or A.B. Short 378-7840) is related to and supported by Oakhurst Baptist Church. A.B. and Ann share their house with four friends from the street. Guests are semi-permanent so there is little turnover
- +TRINITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH (256 Washington S.W. Atlanta, Ga. 30334; contact Mary Leslie Dawson 659-6236) will provide space for thirty men from Nov. 15 through March 31. Guests enter the basement room used for the shelter at 7:30 pm and must leave at 6:00 the following morning. Sandwiches and hot tea are provided for the guests and showers and towels are also available. Smoking is not allowed.
- +ALL SAINTS EPISCOPAL CHURCH (634 W. Peachtree St. NW. Atlanta, Ga. 30308; contact Lynn Epslinger 881-0835) will be administering a night shelter program from December 1 through March 31. It will serve fifty guests each night and a system that may assure at least some guests a place for more than one night is currently being considered. Guests will receive a light supper and breakfast. Sleeping mats will be provided for sleeping in one large room while others play cards in an adjacent room.
- +OAKHURST BAPTIST CHURCH (222 East Lake Dr. Decatur, Ga. 30030; contact Ann Connor 378-3677 or 378-7840) will operate a hospitality program for twelve men beginning December 1 through March 31. Guests are picked up downtown behind St. Luke's Episcopale Church on Peachtree & Courier Sts. at 6:00pm (same time & place as Clifton's pick-up) and are provided transportation back the following morning. The men stay each night in the church's Sunday School building. Dinner, breakfast, showers, laundry, and clothing are provided. If he wishes, a guest may receive a ticket which will assure him of a place to stay in the shelter for the entire winter. Guests may stay at the church all day on Sunday and are invited to share Wednesday night fellowship suppers with the whole congregation.
- !ST. MARK'S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH (781 Peachtree St. NE Atlanta, Ga. 30308; contact Jim Mingle or Gladys Wiggins 873-2636) plans to begin a shelter and hospitality program for women and children on Jan. 2 and continue until March 31st. A total of fifteen women and children will stay in individual sleeping rooms with each family having the use of one room. Sleeping mats are planned and possibly showers. Other details are still being planned.
- !ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH (1790 LaVista Rd NE., Atlanta, Ga. 30329; contact Martha Evans 634-3336) plans to begin a shelter for families beginning December 1, with space for fifteen people (up to five families). They will primarily take referrals, asking those referring to provide transportation to their church.
- !POWERHOUSE CHURCH OF GOD IN CHRIST (350 Hills Ave. SW. Atlanta, Ga. 30312; contact Mike or Bernadette Fletcher) is awaiting completion of their new building which will accomodate from 30+ people. A small house nearby will be used for women and children. Showers, laundry facilities, clothes, and an early evening soup kitchen are also planned.
- ?GOSPEL LIGHT RESCUE MISSION (352 Peachtree St. NE., Atlanta, Ga. 30308; contact Rev. Bill Henderson) opened earlier this summer, providing three nights of free lodging per person. Guests arrive at 6pm, receive dinner and breakfast. No phone is available, so guests must arrive as walk-ins.

"That's my son!"



Charlie Young Sr. (above) is a member of the Open Door family. He came to live in our home in mid-July after eating several times in our soup kitchen. Charlie can be found on almost any day sorting the donated clothes in our living room and taking them to the clothes closet--a much needed work in this house.



We speak often at the Open Door of how our work with our homeless and hungry friends overlaps with our work with sisters and brothers in prison. This summer one kinship pattern made itself abundantly clear as we discovered that Charlie Young of our resident family was the father of Charlie Young, our good friend in prison. Through this relatedness to the streets and the prisons father and son have been reunited.

In the first chapter of Luke's gospel the angel tells Zechariah of his son John the Baptist:

"He will go ahead of the Lord
strong and mightily like the
prophet Elijah.

He will bring fathers and children
together again..."

The father had been scorned by a society which says, "There is not enough housing, food or employment to go around.

You must do without." The son has been scorned by a society that says, "Because of what you have done you are no longer worthy to be called human. We will kill you."

In the Open Door home both father and son are loved because each one of us stands in the need of God's loving mercy. And the Lord is gracious to call us--each one of us--God's children

Charlie Young Jr. (at right) is a long-time friend of the Open Door. He has been on death row since 1976 and a brother to us for the last four years. Charlie is known on death row and to his friends and family outside as an encouraging friend. In spite of his situation he is always able to offer an encouraging word to others. Last year Charlie's conviction and death sentence were reversed in Federal court. However, Charlie will soon be facing a retrial.

The state is again seeking the death penalty.

Upon seeing this photo, Charlie Young Sr. jumped up and down in our hallway, shouting, "That's my son! That's my son!"



SERVING

So Jesus called them [the twelve disciples] together to him and said, "You know that the people who are considered rulers of the heathen have power over them and the leaders have complete authority. This, however, is not the way it is among you. If one of you wants to be great, he must be the servant of the rest; and if one of you wants to be first, she must be the slave of all. For even the Son of Human-kind did not come to be served; he came to serve and to give his life to redeem many people." MARK 10: 42-45

We here at the Open Door take this passage about servanthood very seriously. Indeed, we believe that following Jesus Christ means becoming a servant. We must struggle with issues of authority and leadership and with our desires to be great and important. And we realize that to be "great" and "important" Christians means we must become servants of our brothers and sisters.

In particular we see ourselves as servants of the poor. We understand the Gospel to say that we meet Jesus Christ among "the least of these"-- among the poor (matthew 25: 31-46). We take seriously the commands to feed the hungry, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, visit the sick and the prisoner. Perhaps the most obvious image of our lives as servants is our serving of soup, sandwiches, crackers and tea to dozens of homeless poor every day during our Soup Kitchen.

As we opened the doors at 910 Fonce de Leon, we knew we were committed to being servants. We planned to provide shelter, food, showers, clothes and friendliness to street folk. What we had not yet grasped was that we ourselves would be served--our streets friends would minister to us!

One way in which we are served is simply by knowing street people and hearing their life stories. For many daily life means trying to survive-- searching for food and shelter. Their bodies are often full of pain: teeth and stomachs hurt from poor diets and legs and feet ache and are swollen from so much walking. Sometimes faces are cut and bloody from street violence. Minds are confused and depressed from lack of meaningful work, the loss of loved ones, family rejection or too much alcohol or drugs.

However, in the midst of the suffering and confusion, we often find incredible faith--a love of God and fellow human beings that defies the physical pain and difficult circumstances. It is a faith that speaks of hope, a faith that endures hurt, loneliness and poverty and a faith that even enables caring about and helping others.

It is sometimes easy to glamorize--and therefore, simplify--poverty. I do not intend to do that by describing some of our friends' faith. What I do want to celebrate is the way this faith ministers to us. To see, hear, begin to understand a faith that stands out even in life's most painful places is a powerful witness and a sustaining force in our own lives.

Our street friends also minister to us through work. Maintaining the Open Door is much like maintaining a regular household: home renovations and

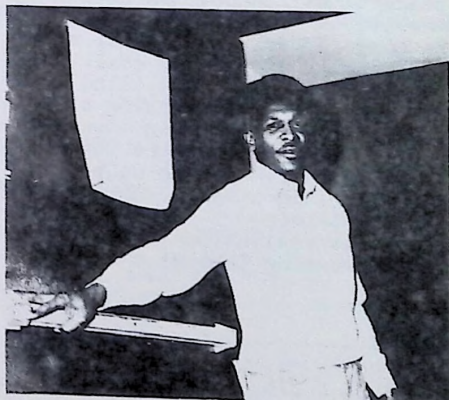
repairs, upkeep on autos, menu planning, grocery shopping, meal preparation, washing dishes, washing clothes, cleaning house, answering the phone, writing letters and so on. However, for the Open Door you must multiply by about 10 to conceive of the amount of total work to keep the household running smoothly!

And our friends from the streets--our guests--do much physical work, helping us in our daily lives. We do not require our guests to help with the work, but almost everyone who stays with us wants "to do something meaningful" to contribute to the maintenance of the community. They help with the preparation of meals, they clean bathrooms, mop floors, go to the Food Bank, answer the phone and the door, do the laundry, clean the yard, water flowers, paint, clean the rugs and stuff envelopes or collate newsletters.

This shared work creates an interdependence that I believe God wants for all of us. It isn't simply that our guests do the little "extras" that make life more pleasant. Their work is essential to all our lives. How exciting to recognize that they are serving us! By getting through daily life together--by doing the tasks together that must be done in order to eat and sleep and survive, we grow to need and depend on one another. Gradually some of the labelling that always separates people begins to fall away: we are not always divided into rich and poor, black or white, guest or partner. It is at such moments that we catch a glimpse of the kingdom. We understand more fully God's intention for all God's people to really share this life on earth.

We are learning to accept with humility that we, the partners at the Open Door, are not the only servants. We are indeed grateful for how well and faithfully we are served by our friends from the streets.

Carolyn Johnson



"And you visited me...."

(A Note from Ed Loring: Billy Neal Moore, friend of mine and many of our readers, sits this day on Death Row in Georgia. I have visited with him over the past four years, and he has taught me very much about the Gospel. The following is a letter from Billy.)

Early in the morning as I was sitting on the end of my bed, peering between the bars, gazing over the railing through the chain-linked fence, inside...then out the small concrete squares--viewing in distance, heaven and earth as they meet, becoming one. Why... it appears that the skies are kissing the crest of the trees...

The beauty of the Lord--God's peace and tranquility! ahh...as heart warming as a visit from a friend: one who cares completely--physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually about you, because you...are you! Sharing precious moments together, expressing love and learning the secrets that only comradeship brings.

What does all this mean to me? contact, exchange, friendship and love??? Friends setting apart a special time to stop everything; leaving their home environment and entering this institution--a prison; being subjected to the humiliating process just for me...As our eyes inter-look, the radiant smiles dance across the lips expressing (You know, what you feel is real!), embracing affectionately, hugging, encircling of arms: assurances that you're accepted as a human being!

Communication proceeding where conversations include you, not at you. Opinions are respected. Ideas are freely discussed in depth, rather than elicited for your harm, abuse or shame! As a rose with its graciousness, yet bearing thorns--these qualities are incongruous, yet growing together in peaceful existence. As well as us, agreeing but also being adverse in some beliefs: nevertheless, helping and assisting one another to obtain that much sought after relationship of the Love in life in sunshine.

Christ is our common goal. The light of God's Love brings the paths in union for his reason, not blind fate! But God's alone, inspiring and freeing us up in this ever increasing closeness, an association of being involved in the unique: an ascending, transcending family of God where all limitations are broken down through the Love of Christ; aspiring to the best in others (mainly yourself, opening up pent emotions, being honest with self about what you feel in a death row situation), seeking their riches, making them the better person.

What is visitation to me? Life itself! It is giving and receiving of Christ's blessing through others, especially the Love of God in others.

William Moore
--Billy--

The previously mentioned shelter programs provide free overnight shelter and are largely run by volunteers recruited from churches throughout the metro Atlanta area. In addition to these newer programs, two organizations provide low cost shelter: The Salvation Army and the Atlanta Union Mission. Another, The Help House, offers space for families.

THE SALVATION ARMY (400 Luckie St. N.W. Atlanta, Ga. 30309; phone 688-2884) Their current capacity is 109 (about 80 men and the rest women & children). Services are on a first come basis, with suggestion that people arrive no later than 4:00 pm to get in line. If admitted, the first night is free. Lodging after that costs \$8.00 for adults and \$6.00 children.

ATLANTA UNION MISSION The men's facility is at 54 Ellis Street NE; 659-1708 Three free nights are offered after which lodging and meals cost \$3.00. Guests must be there at 7:30 p.m. to attend worship first. The women's facility is at 921 Howell Mill Rd. N.W; 874-0891. Lodging and meals cost \$7.50 per night, though some free space is available. If a woman has no income, she can charge each night until she finds work or receives SSI.

HELP HOUSE (ATLANTA EMERGENCY SHELTER) (830 Boulevard SE, Atlanta, Ga. 30315; 627-8447) has space for families at a cost of \$10.00 per night per family. Referring agencies or groups are usually encouraged to give the financial support.

RECOVERY CENTER (169 Trinity Ave. S.W. Atlanta, Ga. 30303; 577-3352) provides 90 transient beds at a cost of \$3.50 per night. Residents must be willing to sign up to go to a Labor Pool across the street.

Susan Weber, All Saints Episc.



TURKEYS

On Christmas Day, instead of our regular soup kitchen, The Open Door is planning a special dinner--roast turkey with all the trimmings. We expect to serve several hundred people. We hope that most of the turkey and dressing for this meal will be donated. If you can bring us a cooked turkey (and/or dressing) for this joyous feast, please call Carolyn Johnson, 874-9652)

HELP

CENTRAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH'S night shelter program needs a freezer and a refrigerator to help with food storage this winter. Please call 659-0271.

Also, the COMMUNITY OF HOSPITALITY is in need of a freezer. A.B. Short can be reached there at 378-7840 or at the Atlanta Community Food Bank 874-0120

WORSHIP

The coming of winter to Atlanta, bringing both the exciting opening of church shelters and the frightening reality of increased suffering by our homeless friends will be the focus of a special ecumenical worship service at ALL SAINTS EPISCOPAL CHURCH on THURSDAY December 9th at 7:00pm. All volunteers and friends of all of our sanctuaries for the homeless are urged to attend.

11/19/82

J. DOE DAY

Literally as we go to press, a number of advocates for the homeless are organizing a symbolic FUNERAL PROCESSION AND SERVICE for John and Jane Doe. They represent people who will die from freezing, hunger, and disease on the streets of Atlanta this winter. FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 19 at 10:45 you are invited to gather at Peachtree St. at Five Points Marta Station for a procession to and funeral service at City Hall, 68 Mitchell St.



woodcuts by Fritz Eichenberg