

HOSPITALITY

Volume 5, No. 1

January 1986

Nonprofit
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Atlanta, Ga.
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Providing hospitality to the homeless, & to those in prison, through Christ's love
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Marginality: Life on the Edge

by Ed Loring

Jesus Christ calls us to follow him. He lived on the edge of society, at the edge of the systems of the world. He was a marginal man; and Jesus calls us to be marginal women and men in our lives as we follow him.

The first way that we move to the margin is the call to live by love. This love is an active love that is as harsh and dreadful as the cross of Christ. This love is finally and fully tested and achieved as we love those who are closest to us (the community) and those who are the farthest - (our enemies).

The world operates on force and is divided by hate and fear. To live by love is to move out of the main stream of the world to the margin. On the margin one is called a fool, unrealistic, a judgemental person who is self-righteous, sick, lazy, and maladjusted. This is just as the Bible says it would be.

To follow Jesus is to begin to love and to find the basis of our lives in relation to others in love. Active love bears fruit in the world. Marginal love is a sociological reality.

The second dimension of the marginality of discipleship is the call to become foreigners in the land of the poor. We who are middle-class, educated, white folks can never be naturalized citizens in the land of the poor. But we can come as guests and foreigners who live lives of voluntary poverty, who join the margin on the economic level. We must, as Dorothy Day suggests, give up our "compensations" that come from our citizenship in this world.

The power of poverty in the spiritual life is a power that comes through our sacrifice and the growth in the Spirit through that discipline. In our lives on the margin we are also empowered by the experience of the oppressed and those who suffer as we join them as foreigners, even strangers in their land. But in their land is where we are called to be - to find ourselves, to die.

A third aspect of the marginality of discipleship is language. We must develop a language on the margin that comes from the Holy Spirit and the scriptures, and like love, these sources put us on the edge of the world.

The first significance of marginal language is silence. Unlike the world and the powers about us we must find large amounts of time and important places to be silent. Noise is so disruptive and violent in our days that only silence can create the space for the incarnate word of God who is love to be heard.

Thus, each disciple needs to find daily periods within the active life to be silent. We need to share silence in our community and from the outward stance of silence let grow a new inwardness of God's presence in our souls.



Ade Bethune

In addition to silence we must keep our language Biblical and this means, too, not to rush to a new translation of the Bible every few years. We need standards. But more importantly the Bible has a syntax and a reality that is expressed in language and we must never forsake the Biblical basis for the language of discipleship.

The Bible always roots reality and truth in God and persons. Today's world threatens us not so much by secularity, as a mathematical base for language. The computer needs are shaping the whole of our lives and we are reducing reality to fit mathematical computations.

We always relate to people (image of God) and that means names, not numbers. We always relate to God and that means ultimate values are and must be talked about on a daily basis. We cannot, today, simply talk about

cont. on page 2 - Edge

the budget problems and the poor. We must talk about justice, right, God's will, the good life and all the issues and values that are being erased in our minds by the latest news and tomorrow's economic forecasts.

To talk about values is to be on the margin in a world that prides itself in being non-ideological and yet says that the crisis is such that the only consideration is what works.

But disciples must speak out on the relation of ends and means and the ultimate ends of the historical process which is the coming again of Jesus Christ who is the judge of the world.

The final aspect of language within the Christian Community is that of encouragement. Paul begins his letters with thanksgiving and joy for his fellow believers. Paul's writings end with exhortations of peace and friendship - words that encourage and bring hope to lives which are filled with struggle and defeat even while the disciples live by hope. *



Dear Editor

Dear Ed ,

Thank you for keeping me on the mailing list of Hospitality. I feel deeply touched every time I read an issue, and I feel close to you and your friends.

We here in Wheeling are working hard on Central America and on the arms race; always focusing on the people who are involved in the suffering.

I remember the moving experiences we shared in Nicaragua in 1984. The insanity keeps increasing.

You and your work give me strength and hope for the work I must do.

Shalom,

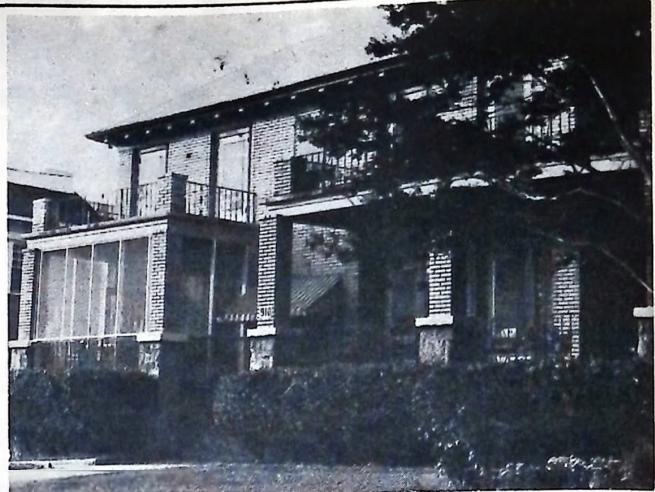
Leornora Cayard

Dear Staff:

Thanksgiving with you was a rich religious experience. It was the most meaningful Thanksgiving experience I have ever had. You are walking up the trenches of true Christian service. In Senior Adult Sunday School (First Baptist Church of Oak Ridge) I read a few selections from Hospitality for a departmental devotional on December first.

I enclose a small check as a token of appreciation knowing that it will be used as a bit of relief for some of God's creatures in dire need. I am also grateful for my niece, Jane.

Sincerely,
Granvil C. Kyker



HOSPITALITY is published 10 times a year by 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 newspaper request form is included in each issue. Manuscripts and letters are welcomed. Inclusive language editing is standard. For more information about the life and work of the Open Door and about others involved in ministry to Atlanta's homeless, please contact any of the following:

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Rob Johnson - Treasurer
Ed Loring - Correspondence & Resident Volunteer Co-ordinator
Joanne Solomon - Administrative Assistant (Volunteer Co-ordination, Hardwick Prison Trip)

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Pickens, Eva Dell Neel, Rob Johnson; Layout - Rob
Johnson, Eva Dell Neel, Dee and John Cole-Vodicka,
Circulation - Norman Gale and a multitude of earthly
hosts and guests

NATIONAL COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS

105 East 22nd Street, New York, N.Y. 10010
(212) 460-8110

December 18, 1985

Shirley Franklin
City Hall
Mayor's Office
68 Mitchell St., S.W.
Atlanta, Georgia 30335

Dear Ms. Franklin:

We have been informed that the Mayor's office has recently made the commitment to provide shelter for any person seeking it in the City of Atlanta, and, further, that the City will provide transportation to any shelter within the city limits when a person is turned away from a facility that has no space.

We applaud the Mayor's commitment to sheltering Atlanta's homeless. By making such a commitment voluntarily is particularly laudable because, even though other cities are required to provide shelter upon demand, nowhere has such a commitment been made without concomitant legal action.

Sincerely,
Cynthia Bogner
Cynthia Bogner
Co-Director

cc: Mayor Andrew Young
bcc: Ed Loring

3 Druid Hills Night Shelter

by Eva Dell Neel

Homelessness in Atlanta is not likely to end tomorrow nor will it end in the near future. For this reason, small shelters are an absolute necessity for many homeless folk. The Druid Hills Night Shelter is one small shelter which houses men from mid-November to April.

The men line up behind the Open Door Community each evening where they are given a ticket to enter the shelter. The shelter has space for 15 Black men and 15 White men. They are served a supper meal as well as breakfast. Each person is given a mat and a bed roll for the night. Often games of checkers, chess, and cards are played until the lights go out at 9:30 pm. For most people that is a fine time to sleep because they are tired from a long cold day.

Lights are turned on at 5:30am; breakfast is served by 6am. Everybody is gone by 6:30am. According to Nancy Ray, a volunteer with the shelter, "Most of the men have some work they do during the day; so, most of them have to get up early and get going."

Nancy sees this volunteer position as, "a way of sharing the good things in life with folks who don't have it."

Volunteers from fifteen different churches in the city work as a collective to voluntarily run the

shelter. Santana Herrera is the facilitator and volunteer coordinator for the shelter while his wife Miriam coordinates menus and food bank buying.

The Druid Hills Shelter has been open every winter for three years. This year the Inman Park Trust as well as Druid Hills Presbyterian have helped to provide a nicer facility as a gesture of hospitality; this includes a shower, a washer and dryer, and a nice kitchen area.

Santana believes, "the poor have a lot to teach us - like humility. We become too proud," he said. "We have food and a roof over our head." According to Santana the distance between the poor and others is too great.

If Santana is right, homelessness is likely to increase drastically in the next fifteen years. There will be a greater need for shelter and hospitality. He said, "This is just a beginning, with economic changes, war, population increase through immigration...by the year 2000 there will be a massive problem that many people will be involved with."

Santana shared his frustrations of wanting to serve more people in the shelter. Even so, Druid Hills is doing a hospitable job of providing shelter and food for 30 men every night of the winter. *



Walls

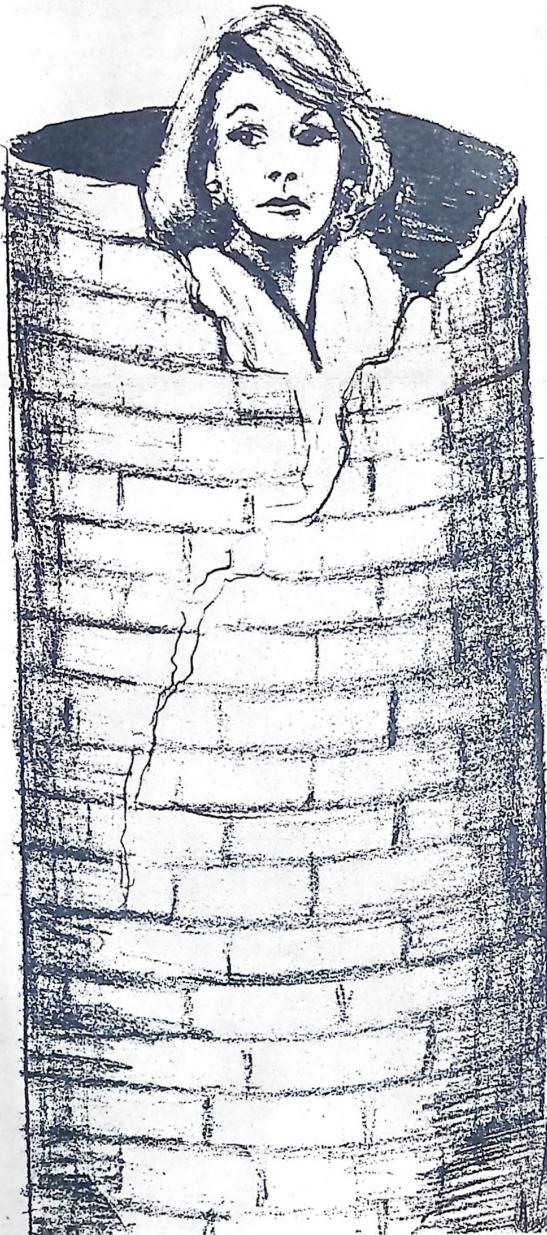
by Ann Fitz

I build my wall and think it will protect me.
 There comes a crack in that wall and I panic,
 Lest it fall and expose me.
 So I look for mortar and sand to patch it.
 There are lots of materials that are good for patching.
 I can use good works,
 or compliance,
 or submission,
 or diplomacy.
 or how about bluffing arrogance; that's good
 for patching up holes one might see through.
 Whatever material is at hand - that's what I use -
 Because it really doesn't matter, does it?
 Just as long as the wall is repaired.

Then one day I find that the very stones themselves
 Are beginning to crumble.
 Now what will happen to my cover?
 My wall is crumbling,
 One stone at a time....
 Even now, in its own destruction, my wall is
 my protection.
 It knows I cannot bear to be exposed too suddenly,
 So it lovingly deteriorates ever-so slowly.

I start to see, little by little, what was hidden,
 Both inside and out.
 It comes to me that all I have been hiding from
 Is my fear of not hiding.

I have been exposed and I have, indeed, survived.



Killing Kids: Age and the Death Penalty ⁵

Donna Pickens (adaptation of uncredited sketch)



by Jane Okrasinski

On January 10, South Carolina electricuted Terry Roach for a crime he committed when he was seventeen. In Arkansas last September, a fifteen-year-old boy named Ronald Ward was sentenced to die. Ten days earlier the State of Texas executed Charles Rumbaugh for a crime he committed when he was seventeen. If South Carolina, Arkansas and Texas were in Iraq or Libya or South Africa, rather than in the United States of America, Terry Roach, Ronald Ward and Charles Rumbaugh could not have received the death penalty. Thirty states, including Georgia, permit the execution of kids under eighteen - a practice prohibited by at least three-fourths of the countries of the world and opposed by groups ranging from the ABA to the Vatican.

Two hundred seventy-one children have been legally executed in America. Seventy percent were black and ninety percent of their victims were white. Since 1900, Georgia has executed forty-one juveniles, more than twice as many as any other state. These forty-one kids included two whites and thirty-nine blacks, one girl and forty boys, and three children between twelve and fourteen.

Since World War II, the youngest person legally executed in this country was George Stinney, who was electrocuted by the State of South Carolina in 1944. Stinney was a fourteen-year-old black boy convicted of the murder of an eleven-year-old white girl. He was represented by appointed counsel who offered no evidence in his defense and who never told Stinney or his parents of the right to appeal. He was sentenced to death by a jury of twelve white men who deliberated for only ten minutes, and was executed less than two months after his conviction. Newspapers reported that the guards had trouble strapping Stinney into the electric chair because he was so small. George J. Stinney Jr. stood five feet one inch tall and weighed ninety-five pounds on the day he died.

At the beginning of 1986 thirty-two men and two women in sixteen states (three men and one woman in Georgia) wait to die for crimes they committed as children. The wait is usually a long one, so most kids sentenced to death have or will become adults during their time on death row. Perhaps that will lessen the horror for some, but is the spectacle of a child strapped to an electric chair truly more of an abomination than the spectacle of a child caged on death row?

Of the thirty states which permit the execution of kids, fifteen have set minimum ages ranging from ten to seventeen, twelve expressly require that age be considered as a mitigating factor in the death sentencing decision, and three neither have a minimum age nor require consideration of youth in mitigation. It all boils down to the fact that today in the United States of America a ten-year-old could be legally executed in any one of sixteen states, a fourteen-year-old in any one of twenty-three states, and a seventeen-year-old in any one of thirty states.

Several states, including Georgia, are considering legislation to prohibit the imposition of the death penalty for crimes committed by persons under eighteen. Opponents of this legislation will point to the fact that most of the kids on death row committed shocking, brutal crimes and that some seventeen- (or fourteen- or ten-) year-olds are mature and more dangerous than others. That is true. Nevertheless, to abandon hope for the rehabilitation of any seventeen- (or fourteen- or ten-) year old is to abandon hope for us all. To exact death as retribution for any crime committed by a child, legally too irresponsible to vote, borrow money, or buy beer, is unconscionable. *

Open Door Schedule

WE ARE OPEN...

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

OUR MINISTRY...

SOUP KITCHEN - Monday-Saturday, 11-12 noon; Sunday 5:15-5:30 pm. BUTLER ST. CME BREAKFAST Monday-Friday 8-8:30 am

SHOWERS & CHANGE OF CLOTHES - Monday, Wednesday, Friday - 9:00 - 10:00 am

USE OF PHONE - Monday-Saturday, 9am - 4pm. SHELTER REQUESTS - Monday-Saturday 9am - noon.

SUNDAY WORSHIP - 7:30 pm. BIBLE STUDY - Alternate Wednesdays 7:30 - 9:30 (Jan. 29, Feb. 12, 26)

FELLOWSHIP MEAL - Alternate Wednesdays 6:30 - 8:00 pm. (Jan. 8., Feb. 5)

ALL-DAY RETREATS - Every 6th Sunday (for our household & volunteers/supporters) - Jan 12, Mar. 2 (call for details)

Our Children at ⁶ the Open Door

by Ed Loring

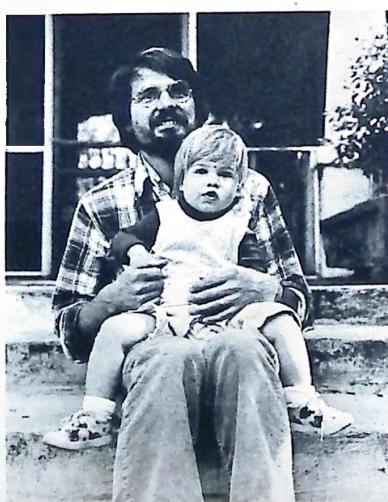
The night was warm but unusually dark on May 3, 1979. Seven of us sat in a circle on the floor of Carolyn and Rob's apartment. We were holding hands. We were praying, asking God to re-shape our lives with the homeless and the prisoners. Something we knew only too well that we could not do ourselves. Suddenly Carolyn left the room and in a few minutes called out for help. Although she was only in her seventh month of pregnancy, Carolyn's water had broken. The doctor asked that we rush her to the birthing center twenty-five miles away, and we did. Rob gently held Carolyn on the back seat of our old and unreliable van, Murphy rode shotgun, intermittently praying and singing hymns, and Ed drove seventy-five miles an hour. The next evening at 7:30 pm Carolyn gave birth to our Christina. She weighed one pound and fifteen ounces. Ten weeks later Christina was able to come home from the "High Risk Infant Center" at Grady Hospital. A fragile gift from God had become part of our lives.

Christina was present five months later when Hannah was born. Rob and Carolyn joined Ed and Murphy at the birthing center to await Hannah's laborious birth. Being nine pounds one ounce she moved slowly, then got stuck and had to be helped immediately. All of a sudden six of us were together!

Ten days after Hannah's birth, on November 1, 1979, Clifton Presbyterian Church opened its front door to thirty homeless men for night shelter and hospitality. Ed was Clifton's pastor, and Murphy had her Southern Prison Ministry office there. Carolyn was the administrator of the new Night Hospitality Ministry, and Rob was a Ruling Elder for the congregation of thirty members. During the summer Rob and Carolyn moved in with Ed and Murphy and the seeds of the Open Door Community were planted. As we began to evolve into a residential Christian community, we agreed that parenting and childcare would be fundamental concerns of our common life.

We four parents were bound together by the work God gave us to do among the homeless and the prisoners. We were also tightly tied by prayer and Bible study which had led us to a common vision of shared life. We had learned much from many of our sisters in faith, so that biblical feminism was an important source of our hope and vision. From the very beginning of our life together we discerned a call to live in a new order of relationships where men and women, mothers and fathers, relate to each other in mutual submission and equality under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

As Kingdom living reorders the female and male relationships, the Kingdom community restructures the ways of parenting. We knew from our broken and battered lives in the world that the nuclear family often is a form of oppression for mothers, daddies, and children. Shortly after Hannah came home from the birthing center, we began to share the parenting among the four of us.



Sherry Marshall



During the two years of serving the homeless at Clifton Presbyterian Church, our relationships grew among the six of us and with the men who slept on the church floor before returning to the streets in search of food and work or shelter for the day. We had learned much from Dorothy Day as we prepared to open the church for shelter. Now the time was at hand to take the additional step: to live with our homeless friends as a family in a house of hospitality. In 1980 we formed The Open Door Community. A year later we left Clifton Presbyterian Church and moved to our present location. Before many months passed the community grew from the four partners and two girls to include twenty-five guests and five-to-seven resident volunteers.

The Open Door Community is an upside-down patch of God's Kingdom in downtown Atlanta where thirty people live together in an old apartment building. Seventeen of us are homeless, and we come from weed-patches, cat-holes, hospitals, jails, and prisons. Within the community the homeless are named "guests;" outside they are called "street people." Resident Volunteers reside at the Open Door for periods of six months to a year. Rob Johnson, along with Murphy Davis and Ed Loring are long-term members of the community. Carolyn left the community last April and now works with Atlanta's Habitat for Humanity project. She, Rob, and Christina live in an apartment nearby. Christina Johnson and Hannah Loring-Davis, both six years old, are the children of the entire community and have many close friends on the streets and in the prisons of Georgia.

The homeless and prisoners, especially those 120 men who are sentenced to die in the state electric chair are the subjects of the servanthood life and ministry of the Open Door. Hearing the cries of Jesus Christ in the cries of the homeless poor and the poor prisoners, we join together to live a life of love and liberation with

cont. on page 7 - Children

Children

(Cont. from page 6)

the oppressed. We also resist the powers and principles of the American way of life whose sacred idol is the BOMB. Christina and Hannah are central to our insights we would be less able to grasp the significance of our lives. Without their love and compassion we believe that children are a gift to common life and to the struggle for liberation in the U.S.A.

The work of The Open Door is demanding. We begin the day at 6:00 a.m. cooking eggs and grits breakfast for 165 folk whom we serve in the basement of Butler Street CME Church next to two labor pools. At 9:00 a.m. we bring in forty to fifty people who have slept outside or in a nearby church shelter for a change of clothes and a shower. Between 11:00 a.m. and noon we serve 70 - 100 people soup and sandwiches. In addition we visit in several prisons and jails, provide transportation for prison visitation, advocate against the death penalty, and carry out civil disobedience during the awful period of state executions. Needless to say, the two little girls easily could get lost in the midst of the common life and mission of the Open Door Community.

To serve Hannah and Christina with the same love and loyalty that Jesus gives us to serve the homeless and the prisoners, we have structured child-care responsibilities into the daily community life. In the morning Hannah remains with Ed and Murphy until 7:45 a.m. This gives time for the morning rituals (hide and seek under the covers, and will puppy get the newspaper?), breakfast, and getting dressed. Then Hannah goes down-stairs and out the front door to board the van. She sits among cups, bowls, and oranges as the van and workers head out to Butler Street CME Church to serve the breakfast. At the corner of Auburn Avenue and Boulevard, three doors from the birthplace of Martin Luther King, Jr., and across the street from his tomb, Hannah gets out of the van and begins her day of Kindergarten at Our Lady of Lourdes. Here she is taught gospel values, nonviolent conflict resolution, that capital punishment is wrong, and that Christmas is Jesus' birthday. Also, to the sorrow of the community, she pledges allegiance to the flag.

From her loft bed a mile away from 910 Ponce de Leon, Christina awakes to a family life that resists stereotypical sex roles. Both Carolyn and Rob take turns preparing breakfast, packing lunch, dressing Christina, and walking with her around the corner to Mary Lin Elementary School. Within that socioeconomically and racially diverse public school Christina seems to be thriving as a first grader.

Around 3:00 p.m. when Hannah (and several afternoons Christina) returns to the Open Door child-care rotation begins, which lasts until supper time at 6:00 p.m. From supper to bed time the children are again with their parents for play, bath, reading, prayers, and lights out.

The key to child-care rotation is the desire to work and play with Christina and Hannah. When a resident volunteer arrives at The Open Door, he or she is asked if they wish to participate in child-care. At



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any given time we have two or three folk who choose not to. Beyond the parents and resident volunteers we also have a neighbor who, up until school began, came each Tuesday morning at 8:30 and often kept the children until lunch time. Salome Betts is 72 years old, a retired librarian and a radical disciple of Jesus. She began her child-care with our girls four years ago. Salome sees a direct relationship between care for children and the works of peace. On December 28, 1984, The Feast of the Holy Innocents, with pictures of Hannah and Christina pinned to her blouse, Salome and seven other Christians walked onto the Kings Bay Submarine Base in southeast Georgia. Because of Salome's life and witness, peace is a major concern of the children's prayers. "Jesus, don't let there be wars," and "please stop the bombs," are intercessions which often rise towards the heavens around 8:30 p.m. from our homes.

Shared parenting within the community is a foundation stone of our common life and servanthood mission. Perhaps such a statement is as confessional as it is descriptive. Much of our Christian heritage relegates front line ministry to childless men and women. Many communities, past and present, which sustain our hopes in many areas, put mothers and children in the home and see parenting as a Christian vocation separate from direct action for peace and justice. Other communities share parenting between parents but not within the larger family. We also struggle against the oppressive cultural values of the American way of life which teaches us that security for ourselves and our children is the aim of life. Thus, many people who feel that they should follow Jesus into the streets, ghettos and prisons simply cannot act because they have children. A fundamental issue for Christians in these days revolves around front line, radical discipleship to Jesus as a family. How may we be free in Christ to take risks, to carry our cross, to follow him as a family? Joyfully, the answer is obedience to Jesus in a community which shares the parenting of the children.

God seems to be pleased with the way we structure our family and servanthood. Little five-month-old Gabriel just brought his parents along from California as advent began. John and Dee and Gabriel will be with us until the New Hope House is completed. Jane Okrasinski, who is Hannah's second "Mama," will give birth in March. All this happened just as our two little ones got big and went off to school!! Thus, here we are again, struggling to welcome Gabriel and to prepare for Little Okrasinski even as we listen for the Voice of God to blast forth from our babes. Thank you, Jesus. *

Newspaper Requests - If you or a friend would like to receive HOSPITALITY, please fill in this form and return to Ed Loring at the Open Door Community, 910 Ponce de Leon Ave. NE, Atlanta, Georgia 30306

Name _____

Street _____

City, State, Zip _____

Christian Witness

at

Kings Bay Submarine Base

(Future home of the Trident Submarine)

St. Marys, Georgia

