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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

July 1997

Who is My Neighbor?

by Floyd Rhodes

(Editor's note: Rev. Floyd Rhodes is staff person for urban ministry and racial justice of the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta. This is an excerpt of a sermon he preached at the Open Door worship in October 1996.)

Who is my neighbor?
Just who is my neighbor?

Every day, the world forces us to ask this question, and no wonder. In these times of stress, we see many people without work or without jobs to provide enough income to support their families. We see entitlement programs slashed, and so-called welfare reform that threatens to undo many families.

We see our government retreat on civil rights and affirmative action, and say "no" to refugees seeking asylum; we watch as our officials continue to debate the concept of open housing; we see our public schools become segregated again; and we watch as our nation's leaders stand by silently, as poor nations cry out for justice.

Who, indeed, are our neighbors?

Are our neighbors people who think as we think, look as we look, and live where we live? Do they belong to the same organizations and earn the same income as us?

The lawyer who put this question to Jesus no doubt expected a clear and precise definition, such as: "Your neighbors are these people here, or that race there."

Often, the trouble with definitions is that they create limits. Had Jesus replied, "Your neighbors are these people" or "that race," the lawyer would also have learned who his neighbors were not. How simple, how easy, it would have been!

How easy for us, too.

If only we knew which people we are duty-bound to treat as we treat ourselves, and which people we can rightfully avoid, yet still enjoy God's favor—how easy that would be for us.



Children waiting for breakfast in front of the Butler Street C.M.E. Church.

ROAR CHRISTIANSEN, Bergens Tidende

in accordance with then-current teachings of the Law. And perhaps that would cause them to miss their service in the Temple. So they pass by, stepping quickly to the other side of the road.

Just so, many in our nation who call themselves "Christians" ignore their Christianity by making laws that pass by the poor and needy among us. In many places, churches close off their property to exclude those who are not part of their official families. And when attempts are made by some within these church families to open up the facilities and resources to persons who could benefit by using them, many of our "good" Christian men and women,

like the Priest and the Levite, choose to pass by on the other side by making their congregations exclusive clubs, ones that are open only to a select clientele, to people like themselves, forgetting, it seems that they are part of the Body of Christ. They forget that Jesus—the very one who brought their congregations into being—lived and died not just for some, but for all people. They withhold themselves, by withholding their financial resources and talents when things are not going their way!

Yet because he came to earth so that all people, not just some, could have abundant life, Jesus refused to single out one person or people as "neighbors." Instead of a definition, Jesus gave the lawyer a parable, which was entitled by some editor in the early Church as "The Good Samaritan."

This parable tells us, simply and directly, exactly what it means to be a neighbor. First, it tells us that to be a good neighbor, we must give aid, relief and comfort wherever it is needed. Second, it tells us whom we are to treat as our neighbor; that is, anyone in need whom we have the power to help—no matter what that person's religion, beliefs, race, or station in life may be!

The parable teaches us other things, as well. For one thing, we see evidence that the religious profession may not have any connection whatsoever with real service and compassion! We hear how the Priest (who in this tale represents the highest position of religious leadership among the Jews) and the Levite (as his lay-associate) hurry past a man who is clearly in extreme suffering, and perhaps even dying.

No doubt the two fear that if the man is already dead, touching him will render them unclean,

And regardless of what side we are on in the matter of the homeless and their access or non-access to the parks and other public areas in downtown Atlanta, as Christians we know that the biblical, humane thing to do is to make room for them, to be hospitable to them. But many Christians agree with those who make the laws that deny the homeless access. In doing so, they, too, step quickly to the other side of the road, knowing full well that the other side is always the easiest side; often the least expensive side; and almost always, the least controversial and most popular side.

(continued on page 2)

HOSPITALITY



MICHAEL SCHWARZ

910 Ponce de Leon

Hospitality is published 11 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, please contact any of the following:

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(“Who is My Neighbor?” continued from page 1)

Now, when Jesus introduced the Samaritan into the parable, his listeners undoubtedly pricked up their ears. No matter how badly the Levite and the Priest had behaved, they thought, surely now the real villain of the story had arrived.

As all Jews of that time knew, Samaritans were crude and awkward, one of the lowest forms of life. Why, they didn’t even know how to take care of themselves! They were scum, lower even than a homeless drunk—people from whom nothing good was ever expected!

In Jesus’ day, Jews would travel 15 to 20 miles out of their way just to avoid passing through Samaria as they journeyed between Judea and Galilee. In John’s Gospel (4:9), we read that Jews and Samaritans had no dealings with each other. The situation was somewhat like the scene in the movie “Schindler’s List,” when the Nazi colonel says of the Jews, “They are not even human; they have no emotions as we have.”

Certainly, the Samaritan in the parable was not expected to be the model neighbor. Yet he gave time, his money, his service; he kept nothing back. He was not trying to do his duty; indeed, he seemed not to have been aware of any duty at all, no more than we are when we act generously toward ourselves.

Nor does the Samaritan wait for the unpleasant situation to correct itself. This parable teaches us that need is the determinant of neighborliness! Anyone in need is the neighbor to whom our goodwill must go out. We see

that the Samaritan’s actions are calculated, not constrained by duty. The Samaritan loves his neighbor by the roadside as readily as he loves himself. When we encounter people in need today, Jesus says to us through this parable, we are to “go and do likewise!” That, he says, is what it means to be neighbor.

Instead of asking Jesus to tell us who is our neighbor, perhaps we should ask instead, “How can I show myself to be a neighbor?” Here in Atlanta, and in the surrounding towns and counties, people are suffering. People are exploited. People are forced to live under inhuman conditions. People cry out for our help.

Many Christians, Christian congregations, and non-profit organizations have the means to help. They have the time, the talent, the connections, and the resources to lend a hand. If only all of us would open ourselves up to be neighbors, we would quickly discover who our neighbors are.

The character Alyosha in “The Brothers Karamazov” says, “We are all responsible for everyone else, but I am more responsible than all the others.” Israel Salanter, the Lithuanian rabbi, adds: “. . . the material needs of my neighbor are my spiritual needs.”

“Hear O Israel,” says Jesus. “Listen, Church: the Lord our God is one Lord, and we must love the Lord our God with all our hearts, with all our minds, with all our soul, and with all our might! And we must love our neighbor as we love ourselves!”

We, too, are called not to pass by, but to stop and show love—without pausing, without hesitating, one neighbor to another.

Notice:

The National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty recently released *Mean Sweeps*, a comprehensive report examining the 50 largest cities in the U.S. and the increasing trend toward the criminalization of homelessness. The 75-page report shows how some local governments are adopting and enforcing anti-homelessness laws and policies, such as restrictions on homeless people’s use of public spaces, constraints on begging, “police sweeps,” and discriminatory enforcement of existing laws.

Mean Sweeps is an invaluable resource for advocates, policy makers, service providers, and law enforcement. It provides statistical information on numbers of homeless people, available resources, and existing city ordinances, an overview of legal challenges across the country, and examples of constructive alternatives to criminalization.

To order *Mean Sweeps* write or call: National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 918 F Street NW, #412, Washington, DC 20004; 202/638-2535. The report costs \$20 + \$3 postage and handling; a discounted rate is available for non-profits.

For an information packet on how to develop a Festival of Shelters in your community, please write to:

Ed Loring
 910 Ponce de Leon Ave., NE
 Atlanta, GA 30306-4212



Sweet Security

by Chuck Campbell

The security business must be booming. Everywhere I go, it seems, uniformed—and often armed—security guards are there. When I go to the bank, I enter past a security guard. In the shopping malls and grocery stores, security guards abound. Businesses, restaurants, and hotels employ them. Woodruff Park is swarming with them. At the seminary where I teach, a security guard occasionally pokes his head into my office to make sure everything's okay. And security guards are not just limited to where we might expect them. I recently attended a youth soccer tournament, and there, at the entrance to the parking lot, was an armed security guard. And when I go to worship on Sunday I am often greeted by a uniformed guard. Ironically, as our prisons grow more and more crowded, many of us feel less secure on the streets, in the stores, even at church. Security guards are becoming an accepted part of life.

As a privileged white male, I experience very little threat from these security personnel. They don't look suspiciously at me or give me any hassle. In fact they are usually cordial, pleasant people. I simply don't fall into the category of person they have been told to watch out for and guard against. Indeed, I am one of those persons the guards seek to make feel safe and secure. The security guards present no real problem for me personally. Maybe that's why they are becoming an accepted part of life; they pose no threat to people in power.

However, I often wonder what these guards look like from the perspective of a Black man in our society. I wonder how the guards appear to poor people—Black or white or Hispanic or Asian—especially those who may not be dressed very well or smell very good. What is it like to be looked at suspiciously by a guard every time you turn around? What is it like to feel threatened or uncomfortable when you walk into a store or hang out at a park or enter a church? What is it like to live in a world of security guards when you are the one being "watched," when you are the "suspect," simply because of the color of your skin or the clothes you wear? It's hard for me to imagine security guards as the "enemy"—just as it was hard for me to imagine the police as the "enemy" until I was placed under arrest one night in Woodruff Park. However, such is the reality for many homeless people I have talked to. And from this perspective, security guards are disturbing symbols of the system of race and class that pervade our society.

With all this in mind, what is happening at a local business establishment appears even more remarkable. Every night the management of the business allows—indeed welcomes—about twenty-five homeless men and women to sleep against the west wall of the building under a protective awning. The police have been notified and do not hassle the homeless folks who gather there. Indeed, the business even provides a place for the men and women to store their belongings during the day. On some evenings, church groups bring food for the small homeless community. And one evening each week, people come to lead worship nearby. For their part, the homeless people agree to keep the area clean and urinate in designated places.

I learned about this odd arrangement during Holy Week, when I slept there during one of the Open Door's 24-hour vigils. As I discovered the details of the arrangement, I became curious. Why does this business welcome homeless men and women at the very time when most of downtown seems to be trying to secure itself against them? Why does this business view these people not as threats, but as friends? The answer came as a complete surprise: SECURITY! The business, I discovered, had been having break-ins on the west side of the building. So the management invited the homeless men and women to make that space their home. And because of the presence of the homeless community, the break-ins have stopped.

Like Jesus, this local business establishment has turned the world on its head. While most of downtown lives in fear of the homeless and guards itself against them, this business has sought security not against homeless people, but *alongside* them. Whenever I pass a security guard now, I remember this local business establishment. Indeed, maybe real security lies not in uniformed guards, but in hospitality, relationships, jobs, and homes.

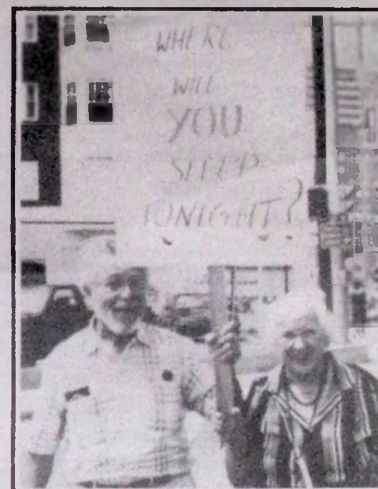
Chuck Campbell is professor of Homiletics at Columbia Theological Seminary, and a volunteer at the Open Door Community.

UNSUNG HERO PHILLIP WILLIAMS



We are so pleased and proud of our own Phillip Williams who received the Annual Unsung Hero Award from Concerned Black Clergy. Members of the Open Door Community attended the Salute to Black Fathers Dinner with Phillip and cheered him on.

Frances Pauley *Stories of Struggle and Triumph*



Edited by
Murphy Davis

Foreword by
Julian Bond

Afterwords by
Marcia Borowski, Mary Eastland & Lewis Sinclair, and Jim Martin

Frances Pauley: Stories of Struggle and Triumph is a rich collection of the highlights of this remarkable woman's lifelong commitment to justice and freedom. In an age when it's easy to feel overwhelmed and powerless about making change, and hard sometimes just to keep on keeping on, this treasure trove of stories is an inspiring balm for the soul.

- Joyce Hollyday

- An Open Door Community Book -
for your copy, please send a \$10 donation to the
Open Door Community

Reflections of a Chaplain at Grady Hospital

"Stand Up, Take Your Mat and Walk."

John 5:1-9

by Stacy Rector

(Editor's note: Stacy Rector is a graduate of Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia. She has volunteered at the Open Door and been a regular part of our worshipping community. Stacy is currently serving as a chaplain at Grady Hospital—the Hospital that provides indigent care in Atlanta.)

We have become alarmed at the increasing attacks on Grady Hospital. Certain political forces from North Fulton County are applying pressure to limit funding for indigent care at Grady. Mitch Skandalakis (spelling?) and his recent appointments to the hospital authority that governs Grady Hospital, are undermining the role of the Hospital to fulfill its mission.

The following piece by Stacy shares some of her experiences ministering to those in need at Grady Hospital.)

Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate there is a pool, called in Hebrew Beth-zatha, which has five porticos. In these lie many disabled persons—blind, lame, and paralyzed.

Now in Atlanta, downtown on Butler Street, there is a hospital, called Grady, which has many floors, units, clinics, waiting rooms, labs, beds. In these beds lie many disabled persons—blind, lame, paralyzed, schizophrenic, addicted, AIDS infected, gun shot....

As one of the chaplains at Grady Memorial Hospital in Atlanta, I do not have to stretch my imagination too far to understand the setting of this story from John 5. I know something of this pool of Beth-zatha, the way it looks, the way it smells, the way it sounds. I know something of those who are gathered at the pool, waiting for those magic waters to stir just once, hoping to be the one that makes it into those bubbling waters first. People say that the first ones to the pool when the waters begin to stir will be healed of their afflictions. The pool grants health to that one who can scramble and scratch, push and pull, and beat all others out of the way.

Health care, like housing and legal representation, is a precious commodity in our society. Is there enough of it to go around for all those who seek it? Grady Memorial Hospital serves approximately 3,500 people per day. One-third of those people have no health insurance; therefore Grady constantly searches for the money to care for these people. Without Grady, where would they go?

Who has a right to health care and who decides this question? Society seems to have decided that issue for some people, particularly those with AIDS. Drugs called protease inhibitors, are now available which are extremely effective in fighting AIDS. For some treated with such drugs, the HIV virus is no longer detectable in the blood, though it is still present. People treated with these drugs are remaining much healthier for much

longer. However, these drugs cost thousands of dollars per person per year. For those who do not have the insurance money to pay for them, these drugs are not an option. Most of the AIDS patients at Grady are not treated with such drugs. Most of the AIDS patients treated at Grady are poor and Black. Health for some of those afflicted with AIDS in our society is not seen as a right for all but a privilege for those who can buy it.



Jesus meets a man at the pool. This man has been there for thirty-eight years, almost as long as Israel wandered in the desert. The text tells us that among those who lay beside the pool are the blind, lame, and paralyzed. One translation of "paralyzed" in this story is "dried up." Irony that one who lies beside a pool of water day and night for thirty-eight years is the same one who is described in the story as "dried up." Grady Hospital is a place where one meets many of those who are "dried up" on a daily basis.

At Grady, I met a woman named Alice. Alice is a young, African-American woman with a smile that lights up the room. She is dried up. Crack dried her up. It dried her up so much that her lungs would not work. She got better. She decided to move in with her sister. She thought that if she got away from the old crowd, the old neighborhood, the old pain, the crack would not find her, but it did. A month later as she lay in the ICU unit again, she saw me walk by but could not speak to get my attention. Her voice was dried up. The crack had found her again. It dried us both up, it dried the nurses up, it dried the doctors up.

Jesus asks the man at the pool a question: "Do you want to be made well?" The man does not answer directly. Instead, he gives reasons as to why he has not yet won the race to the pool. After thirty-eight years, he has accepted the prevailing ideology of his society concerning who deserves to be healed and who does not. He can even recite it. He accepts this definition as one who is "dried up," and as one who has no power to change his life. Alice realizes that crack controls her life. She wants to be free, but she does not know if she can resist the power of the crack. The world defines her as one more junkie. However, Jesus does not accept the definitions of the world. Instead, he confronts them: "Stand up, take your mat and

walk." Use the power that I have given to you. Allow my living waters to restore your wholeness, quench your thirst, water your dryness.

Jack is incarcerated. He has been charged with a crime for which he has yet to be tried. He has now been in jail for several weeks awaiting his day in court. He is a young man, only thirty-eight. He suffered horrible chest pains at the jail. He did not say a word to anyone for three

hours because he did not want to go to the hospital. He finally was brought anyway, and he was told that he had suffered a heart attack. I met with him while he was eating lunch a few days later in the Coronary Care Unit. He was angry. No one in his family knew where he was. The last time he talked with them, he was still in jail. When incarcerated people are brought to the hospital, they are usually not allowed to speak to family members for security reasons. When people are the most vulnerable, they are also the most isolated. Jack is angry.

Jack refused to let the doctors run tests on his heart until he spoke to his family. He stood up. The doctors convinced the guards to allow him to

make one phone call in order that they might run the tests. He was able to speak with a family member. After talking with her, he allowed the doctors to run the tests. Jack was not trying to stop the doctors from doing their job, only asserting his right to be treated as a human being, a human being who wished to talk to his family before making an important health decision.

The text of John 5 has come alive for me during my year as a chaplain at Grady. From time to time, I have felt powerless in the face of death and its forces—violence, addiction, poverty, homelessness, imprisonment. At Grady Hospital, I see the effect of these forces in the lives of many patients who are "dried up" by the injustice in our society. I watch as AIDS patients leave the hospital, only to return later as their illness rears its ugly head again, perhaps never to leave this time. I cry as I see one more young, Black man brought into Grady's emergency room with multiple gun shot wounds and as the screams of his mother pierce my heart. Jesus reminds all of us that we are not ultimately defined by the values and priorities of society, but we are claimed and defined as children of God. There is power in that definition. A child of God is loved by God and must be treated with respect. A child of God must have decent health care and a place to live. When people become aware of their definitions as "children of God," they become empowered by the Spirit as the lies of death are unmasked. As I am empowered by the love of God, I remind others with my words and with my presence that they too are "children of God," and that the definitions of the world lose their power in the face of such knowledge. Jesus tells us to "Stand up, take up our mats and walk," together toward a society where health and wholeness for ALL people are the priorities. ♦

Polar Bears and Other Myths

by Gabriella Boston

(Editor's note: Gabriella earned her Master of Political Science from the University of Lund in Sweden. She has been in the United States for about one year, and among other projects, has been volunteering her time as Copy Editor of Hospitality. We welcome her knowledge and insights to our pages.)

Ten million children lack health insurance, and that number is growing by 900,000 per year. At the same time, \$54 billion in cuts have been proposed in anti-poverty programs over the next seven years. More than 35 million Americans are officially poor. At the same time, this country has experienced six years of solid growth and a soaring stock market. No wonder the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer.

In this society, we live in clusters, socializing mostly with people of similar social and racial background. We seldom give ourselves the opportunity to find out what it is like to belong to another segment of society. We have enough on our minds. When did you who are white last ask the African-American cleaning lady at your work what she thinks of the future or how she makes ends meet? In fact, a large majority of American whites have never set foot in an African-American's home.

We are a divided people, and there seems to be little understanding between the different segments of society. Why, otherwise, would serious, educated people say, "he is poor because he's lazy," "she lives on the streets because she wants to" or "anybody can make it if they try hard enough"? Many successful people call themselves self-made, and we have been fed this partial truth enough times to believe in it. But think about it: does self-made mean that no one gave birth to them, that no one fed them, that no one provided shelter and clothes for them while they were growing up? Most likely, these "self-made" people had a family, or some other type of network, that provided these things and much, much more for them. Whatever the success story is, it would be more useful to talk about how the 10 million Americans who live in extremely poor neighborhoods, and the rest of the 35 million poor people in this country, can get a job with a living wage, than to dwell on and praise the occasional millionaire who came from poor circumstances. But, I guess the point is that the poor are poor because they want to be and that they all would be working on Wall Street if they hadn't been so darn lazy.

When we are detached from other groups in society we start believing in all kinds of things, even if we have no direct personal experience to base these "truths" on. Being from Sweden, I once had someone ask me how we deal with the polar bears in the streets of Stockholm! That's like asking an Atlantan if there are whales in the Chattahoochee. But what are we supposed to believe? We turn on the local news where every item is highly personalized and you are led to believe that the young Black man on your screen, who is being led away by police, hand-cuffed and solemn-faced, sold drugs because he was evil, or maybe we'll settle for lethargic. The crime is attributed to flaws in his personality and his law-

breaking viewed as an isolated event. We get no in depth analysis of what kind of background the man has. Could his situation have something to do with the poverty in his neighborhood? Could it have anything to do with that major plant not far away from his home that closed down and moved its production abroad in favor of cheaper labor? And while you're at it, do you think the CEO of that particular company was penalized for putting thousands of people out of work? Whatever the truth is, it's most likely much more complicated than what we are led to believe.

If we have no insight into how a person feels or what he or she has gone through, it is difficult to feel any empathy or compassion for the individual. In fact, we may feel more sorry for our neighbor's dog that recently broke its leg, than for that homeless guy we heard about, the one who froze to death in the ice storm. The difference is that we personally know the dog, but we never knew the man who wanted to live and die

on the street and never got a job because he was too lazy.

If we have never starved, we probably will never know what true hunger is; if we have never been homeless we will probably never understand what it's like to constantly freeze and fear; if we're not Black we will probably never understand the true meaning of racism; if we aren't raising our kids on minimum wage we may never know what it's like not to be able to feed our children. But if we make the effort to penetrate the myths, we can come closer to an understanding. After all, we do know that through hard times everyone needs a helping hand. And in the long run, we may all benefit from a society in which cooperation and empathy are considered virtues and in which myths about poor people being lazy and unwilling to work for a living wage, polar bears roaming the streets, and whales splashing in the rivers are punctured and ultimately discarded. ♦

The Urine 8 Are Free

(But We'll be Back)

by Murphy Davis

On June 16, 1996, eight members of the Open Door Community and People for Urban Justice were arrested in the office of Atlanta Mayor Bill Campbell (see *Hospitality*, Aug. 1996, "Following Jesus: Clamoring for Public Toilets."). We had gone there to ask once again (as we have asked repeatedly for 14 years) that the city provide public toilets for the needs of all its citizens. We also demanded that the city stop all arrests of the homeless for the crime of public urination until public toilets have been provided. After five court appearances, our case was dead-docketed (and yes, we were certified as Youthful Offenders--what a victory!).

We are celebrating this resolution of our case but are amazed to realize that our city spent countless resources removing us from the

Mayor's office, arresting us, taking us to jail, and processing us through five hearings in Atlanta Municipal Court and Fulton County State Court, and still there are no toilets. And still hundreds of homeless people are churned through our courts and jail for the crime of doing what every human being must do: they cannot pee legally because there are no public toilets in Atlanta, Georgia.

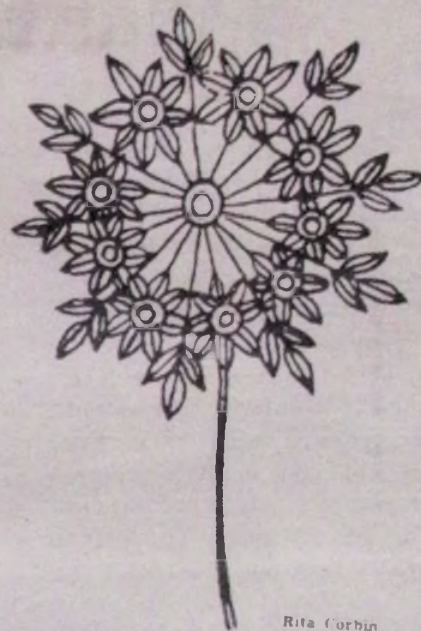
Once again, we call on Mayor Bill Campbell, Council President Marvin Arrington, and every member of City Council to stop this idiotic policy and the waste of resources. For what we spend on the arrests, court, and jail time in any six-month period, we could put up toilets all over downtown.

Build public toilets in Atlanta! And until they are in place, and available to homeless people, stop the arrests.



The "Urine 8" (minus two members) from left to right: Ed Loring, Jennifer Lee, Todd Cioffi, Attorney Brian Spears (advocate for the "8"), Phillip Williams, Murphy Davis, and Adolphus Victrum.

Scenes from the Community



Rita Corbin



GLADYS RUSTAY

The Open Door Community recently was pleased to announce Dr. Betsy Lunz as a new addition to the Community's Advisory Board. Here, Dr. Lunz chats with long-time Partner Willie London after our dedication ceremony for our recently renovated Koinonia Room.



GLADYS RUSTAY

Brother Hubert Harper shows off the newly renovated bathrooms at the Butler Street C.M.E. Church. Brother Harper has been providing support and leadership at our Butler Street Breakfast since its inception back in 1983. The new bathrooms will make the Breakfast more accomodating to both our men and women guests.



Dawn Weir celebrates her marriage with Joseph Brunet on May 31st. Members of the Open Door Community were glad to attend the ceremony in Athens, Georgia, and later the reception at Jubilee Partners in Comer. Dawn is daughter of Ed and Mary Ruth Weir, former partners of the Jubilee Community and founders and present members of New Hope House which hosts the families of death row prisoners. Dawn is pictured above with members of her family (left to right): Bill (brother), Mary Ruth and Ed, Sabrina (sister), Dawn, Rachel (sister), and Mari Ohta (sister-in-law).



GLADYS RUSTAY

The Open Door recently received new living room furniture and new beds thanks to Beth and Kelly Chrisman. Kelly is a United Methodist pastor in Macon, Georgia, and Beth just completed her first year of seminary at nearby Candler School of Theology. This past academic year, Beth and several other students participated in life at the Open Door as part of a supervised ministry class at Candler.

Adolphus Victrum's Partnership



Adolphus Victrum

(Editor's note: On May 31st, during our Sunday evening worship celebration, we welcomed Adolphus Victrum into the partnership of the Open Door Community. Adolphus has been a member of the Community since April of 1995. Over the past two years, we have enjoyed and been enriched by his spirit, skill, humor, and leadership. Will Coleman, professor at Columbia Theological Seminary, gave the meditation, and gave Adolphus the charge as Partner. Printed below are Adolphus' reflections during the celebration.)

by Adolphus Victrum

On Easter Sunday, two years ago, I was at the Municipal Market for the Open Door Community's Easter Sunrise Breakfast. I had a conversation with Amos Jones, who was a

member of the community at that time, and he suggested that I come to the Open Door.

It was about a week later that I was led to 910 by the Spirit. I was on my way to work on Wednesday, April 19, 1995, but when I got to the door, I couldn't enter the building. I turned around and came to the Open Door, and I have been here ever since. God is good!

The lectionary reading from Isaiah 6 tells me that, like Isaiah, I was touched by the hot coals, and I was sent here to do

God's work

In our journey here we are confronted with Matthew 25 every day of our lives because we feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the prisoner, pay a call to the sick, and we open our doors to the stranger. All of these are important to our God.

As a member of the Open Door, it is my duty to serve the oppressed, the prisoner, the sick, and to always have time to be a voice for justice. I was sent to the Open Door to be a servant for God through the ministries of the Open Door.

My journey here has been one of enrichment with eye-opening blessings and challenges, which come with growth, understanding, and love. It has not all been good, but to grow you have to take the bad as well as the good.

Before I came to the Open Door Community I had never been to jail. But the call to justice has led me even there. I used to think that people were homeless because they wanted to live on the streets. But now I know, and I feel it with deep pain and conviction, that the suffering of my homeless brothers and sisters is nothing they would choose. The humiliation of public urination because there are no accessible toilets for the homeless is hard to bear. And so I went to jail because I was a voice for justice for my voiceless sisters and brothers.

As a partner now at the Open Door Community I commit my life to the cause of justice for the homeless people on the streets of Atlanta, for the children who ride with me on the Hardwick Trip, and to Stanley Allen and all his friends on death row in Georgia.

Peace and love—

Adolphus Victrum



Will Coleman gives the meditation during the worship service at Adolphus's partnership.

DICK RUSTAY

IF YOU PUT AN END
TO OPPRESSION,
TO EVERY GESTURE
OF CONTEMPT, AND
TO EVERY EVIL WORD;
IF YOU GIVE FOOD
TO THE HUNGRY
AND SATISFY THOSE
WHO ARE IN NEED,
THEN THE DARKNESS
AROUND YOU WILL
TURN TO THE
BRIGHTNESS OF
NOON.
ISAIAH 58:9-10

Join us as a Resident Volunteer!

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Contact: Elizabeth Dede
910 Ponce de Leon Ave., NE
Atlanta, GA 30306-4212
404/874-9652; 874-7964 (fax)

Spend 6 to 12 months as a
Resident Volunteer

JIM POWERS

- REDUCING THE DISTANCE -

by Dick Rustay

It was March, 1995 that Jim Powers knocked at the front door of the Open Door and said that he was coming to volunteer. His first job was washing dishes for our Soup Kitchen lunch. He didn't stop at dish washing, but made sandwiches, dipped soup out of the huge ten gallon soup pots into the hundreds of soup bowls brought to him to refill, and then he served our friends coffee. All this activity evidently didn't discourage Jim. He has continued to come ever since and is one of our most faithful volunteers. Every Thursday, and on many of our holidays when we serve special meals to our friends on

the streets, Jim is here. His special job is making coffee on cold days and ice tea during our long hot summers. Many times, during our big holiday meals I've seen Jim putting ice in the thermoses, and carefully measuring out the amount of tea solution to put in each five gallon container. (He has his pencil and paper out to mathematically make sure he is accurate to the last drop!) He then adds water, stirs the mixture and frantically keeps ahead of the demand for that great iced tea. This goes on for hours, measuring, filling and mixing until all our 400-plus guests are fed.

For several years prior to volunteering, Jim had heard of the Open Door Community and its various ministries. He would occasionally bring clothes to donate, leave them in our sorting room and then leave. After retiring, Jim had more time, so he called us at the Open Door and asked when we could use him. Our need was for Soup Kitchen volunteers, just as it is today, so he joined us every Thursday and we are blessed by his presence among us. Jim tells us, "One of the reasons I come is because your quality of soup is something special and week after week after week it's the same high quality."

Not only does Jim come to the Open Door for our Soup Kitchen, but he also picks up donated coffee and delivers it to us. Instead of bringing his own clothes to donate, people now ask him to take items of clothing, disposable razors and toiletries. So he continuously brings us many needed items for our clothes closet and shower ministry.

During a recent conversation, Jim told me, "I'm constantly amazed at the many cultural backgrounds of the people living at the Open Door. There are African Americans, middle class college graduates, European Americans, and people who have lived on the streets for years. All struggle to live together and to be faithful to God's calling 'that they all may be one.' There is such a sense of incredible commitment."

Jim goes on to say, "I feel the pain that you have when people leave the community, sometimes never to come back. Some will be dead on the streets, others will return to your soup kitchen and show the ravages of the street in their faces. It is only Christ's life and love that sustains you. You try to live out the love of the Lord. Your hospitality is such a powerful force. You have such a crucial sense of hospitality. I saw it when Herman, who was living in the house, had just received a Christmas present of house slippers. When George came into the house from living on the streets for years, on Christmas Eve, you

had to literally cut off his socks so his skin wouldn't go with them. Herman gave those new slippers to George because, 'He needed them more than I did.' What incredible hospitality."

Continuing our conversation, Jim shared his understanding that not all of us at the Open Door are saints. "I was a Jesuit priest for



Jim Powers serving up iced tea at the Open Door Soup Kitchen.

GLADYS RUSTAY

Hospitality Mailout Crew

We would like to take the chance to recognize a few of the special people who work hard each month to get Hospitality out to our readers who span 23 countries and all 50 states of the U.S., including the District of Columbia.



Open Door Partner, Phillip Williams leads the process. He is shown here sorting labels for the bulk mailing.

GLADYS RUSTAY



James Walker (left) and Joe Miller enjoying themselves as they work together preparing to mail out yet another issue of Hospitality. James and Joe have been faithfully volunteering at the job for many years now.

GLADYS RUSTAY

many years and I know how hard it is to live in community. But your struggle to live out God's calling is liberating to me. You are living in another way that causes all of us to be more faithful and listen to the cry of the poor.

Jim finished our conversation by saying volunteering at the Open Door Community made him much more aware of racism in this country. "I'm much more sensitive to what so many whites take for granted; a good home, good education, contacts for jobs. All of these are not available to so many African Americans, and so they start out with two strikes against them. Volunteering at the Open Door reminds me of the huge gap between the homeless and those of us who live in the suburbs. We need to connect with each other. The Open Door is a place where we can."

We at the Open Door are thankful to Jim Powers for the hope that he brings us at the Open Door and his faithfulness that keeps us going.

(Editor's note: Jim Powers was a Jesuit priest for twenty years prior to his twenty-five year marriage to Kathleen. Jim is Executive Director of Carmel Retreat House, a Catholic retreat center located just north of Atlanta. Unfortunately, Jim will not be able to volunteer for a month or so after undergoing knee replacement surgery which is scheduled soon. Our prayers are with him for an excellent recovery.)

Dick Rustay is a Partner at the Open Door Community.

A Hero in Disguise

by Sharon and Ed Rugg

(Editor's note: Sharon and Ed are members of Roswell Presbyterian Church who participated with us in Holy Week with the Homeless.)

His name is Joe Dan, one of our "guides" during our 24-hour walk with the homeless during Holy Week. Joe Dan was introduced to us during the Maundy Thursday Communion Service on the steps of City Hall where our vigil began. As we stood in a circle—those who were ending their vigil and those of us who were about to begin singing to the music of a guitar and mandolin, breaking a loaf of homemade bread and dipping it into a ceramic cup of grape juice, we first heard about Joe Dan's story. Five months into his third attempt to remain straight, he had been asked to prove to the Open Door Community that he was really serious this time by sleeping on their front porch for a full month before gaining entrance in the Community again.

We became personally acquainted with Joe Dan over a game of poker once we arrived at a remote corner of downtown where we were to bed down for the night. Our hosts, the homeless, welcomed us by calling out, "Grab a slab!" of cement, which would be our home away from

home for the night. We were blessed that night with mild weather and no rain. From Joe Dan we learned that we could "borrow" a little padding from a nearby dumpster that made sleeping in the open air under lights that stayed on all night, on a slab of cement not nearly as uncomfortable as it might have been. As we played poker with an old pack of Santa cards and a set of plastic milk jug tops for chips, we fell in love with this tall, slender Black man, who wore a colorful, handmade hat that reminded me of Joseph's coat of many colors. One of the Community's founders and longtime resident ministers, Murphy Davis, had presented the admired hat

to Joe Dan once she finished cancer treatment and had received a clean bill of health. He proudly wears it all the time.

We "overslept" the next morning and didn't have time to make it to the labor pool at 5:30 a.m. before standing in the first of three long soup lines that day. It felt like old home week when we recognized the residents of the Open Door who brought us our first meal of the day—a sack with a hard-boiled egg, two pieces of bread, an orange, and hot coffee with plenty of milk and sugar. Sur-

rounded by our homeless friends, we ate on the steps of the Butler Street CME Church across from the Sweet Auburn City Market and down the street from Grady Hospital, all familiar haunts of the homeless. Later, we recognized some of the same folks as we breakfasted a second time in an old warehouse taken over by Blood and Fire—another ministry that serves the homeless and offers a nine-month program called "Disciples" in an attempt to encourage those addicted to drugs and alcohol to find their strength in the Lord. In our third soup line outside St. Luke's Episcopal Church, we were told we needed IDs by security guards who wore guns—an ironic contrast to the smiling, elderly volunteers inside who handed us plates of hamburgers, rice soup, and packages of left-over chips and sweet rolls. Through all of these experiences, Joe Dan was the one who provided the link for us, the one who knew by name so many of the homeless, who never hesitated to reach out to witness and offer the services of the Open Door to his friends on the street.

Our charge on Thursday evening had been to look for signs of hope in suffering. We found such signs of hope wherever we went. So many of the homeless who talked with us and welcomed us were hopeful, not hopeless. Joe Dan stood out from all of these—his hope and his strength shone brightly as he ministered to so many on the streets and to us. May the Lord continue to do God's good work through Joe Dan and everyone at "910."



Joe Dan celebrates Easter morning with friends Vondrell and Lukas.

Inch by Inch

a column by Murphy Davis

I grew up the third of four children between two brothers. I held my own by learning to fight and to play every sport. Our front yard football games were played between the sidewalk to the Corbett's front door and the sidewalk in our yard. The baseball diamond stretched from a small pine tree to a cedar to a magnolia to a ligustrum shrub. Basketball was in the backyard.

But it was the baseball I loved. I watched jealously as my brothers played Little League. My parents were less-than-thrilled with my athletic ambitions, particularly since they were mixed up with my propensity to run, wrestle, tumble, and scrap with the boys. But by the fifth grade I took matters into my own hands. I decided to start a Girls' Little League. Joe, my sister's boyfriend who was on the high school baseball team, agreed to coach. I got permission to visit the fifth grade classes at Elmhurst Elementary, and I made a recruiting speech. Saturday morning practice came, and a few other girls turned out—but not enough for a team, never mind two teams. We played for a while, picked up some pointers from Joe and his buddies, and went home. I kept playing with the boys and a few other girls, but never got to be on a team.

When I was in the sixth grade and went to a family reunion, my uncle Jim found out how much I loved baseball and that I didn't have a glove. The next week a package arrived with my very own glove, and one for my younger brother Les. I can see mine now, and smell it, too. It had a picture of Sandy Koufax in the palm. It was

beautiful. I rubbed it, socked my fist into it, and played ball for as many hours of the day as I could get away with.

Junior high school cured my baseball fever. Girls didn't do that, and what other people thought began to matter more to me. I laid my glove aside.

But I'll have to say the thrill came back to me this month. My good friend Marie Fortune is a diehard baseball fan. She lives in Seattle, and the Mariners are her team. She and Anne Ganley even go to Spring training. I'm talkin' Serious Fans.

Marie is also founder and Director of the Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence. Over the past year or so, she worked with several other folks to convince the Mariners that they should initiate their own campaign against domestic violence. And it worked!

In 1995 the Mariners came from behind to win the American League pennant, and the refrain chanted by the fans was, "Refuse to Lose." So the team picked their refrain for their campaign against domestic violence: "Refuse to Abuse."

On May 14th there was a press conference to announce the campaign. The coalition against domestic violence was joined by the Seattle Chief of Police, the Governor of Washington, and Mariners management and players. Several team

members have made public service announcements to be aired through the season: men talking to men saying things like, "It's never okay to hit someone you love. . . . It's not cool to be violent. . . . Refuse to abuse."

That night at the game the first pitch was thrown by none other than Marie. We saw the video, heard the announcer boom, "The Reverend Marie Fortune. . ." saw her wind-up, watched the pitch. As she said, "Yeah, the ball got there—a little low, a little outside, but it got there."

It was wonderful to see her out there in the middle of the diamond on the pitcher's mound. I knew this was going to be the thrill of the decade for Marie. I didn't realize how much it was going to do to me.

And of course this is a first in professional sports. The Mariners have taken a stand. They've decided to make the most of their capacity to influence other men and discourage abusive behavior and violence against women. Maybe I'm becoming a Mariners fan. And I can almost feel my Sandy Koufax glove.

Murphy Davis is a Partner at the Open Door Community.



Marie Fortune and Anne Ganley at the ball park.

HANNAH LORING DAVIS

Congratulations
Hannah Loring-Davis
- High School Graduation -



On June 14th, the Open Door Community, family, and friends turned out at the Atlanta Civic Center to Celebrate Hannah Loring-Davis' graduation from Henry Grady High School (Atlanta Public Schools). Hannah was two years old when she moved into 910 Ponce de Leon with her parents for the founding of the Community. We are cheering her on her way as she prepares to enter Guilford College in Greensboro, North Carolina, in August.

JOHN SWEET



Hannah with Christina Johnson who lived at the Open Door Community until she was six. Christina graduated the next day from North Atlanta High School.

KATRINA GUETTLER



Hannah and her aunt Dorothy Davis Moyer.

GLADYS RUSTAY



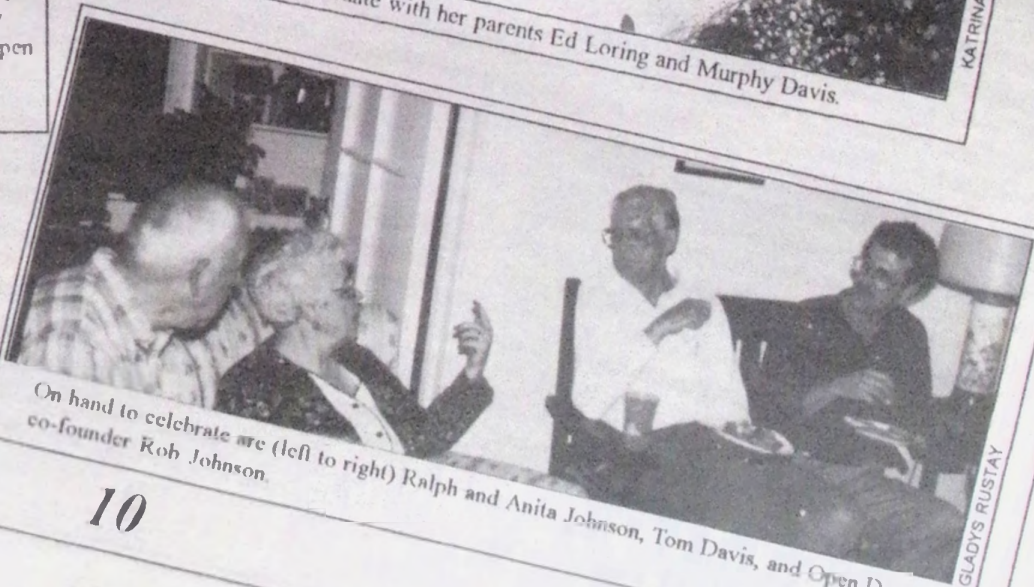
Mark Gray (left to right), Chuck Campbell, and Ed Loring also celebrated with Hannah. Mark and his wife, Betsy Cameron, are long time friends and volunteers at the Open Door, and were visiting from their home in Belfast, Northern Ireland.

GLADYS RUSTAY



The graduate with her parents Ed Loring and Murphy Davis.

KATRINA GUETTLER



On hand to celebrate are (left to right) Ralph and Anita Johnson, Tom Davis, and Open Door co-founder Rob Johnson.

GLADYS RUSTAY

Dear Partners in Christ,

On Friday, May 18, I was privileged to share your worship service. As one who has come to believe that empowerment is a major channel to equity, I found Adolphus' introduction and acknowledgement of the persons and the tasks completed in the morning to be awesome. From the perspective of an applied academician who teaches management and team building, it was a winner, A+.

I have enjoyed the transition from the Centers for Disease Control to the School of Public Health. Teaching and dialoging with students are a privilege. I am off to Malawi, visits with our children, and later on in the summer a consultancy in Bangladesh. I should be back to Atlanta in late August.

As for my two children who experienced the Open Door, Paul finishes his residency in family medicine in Seattle and will be moving on to a National Health Service Corps assignment, working with the poor in South Tucson. Becky is finishing up a 9-month assignment with Population Services International in Bolivia (promoting condoms to prevent poorly timed pregnancies and to reduce STDs/HIV.).

Sincerely yours,

Stanley O. Foster
Atlanta, GA

(Editor's note: Stan Foster is a physician retired from the Centers for Disease Control, and an Elder at Druid Hills Presbyterian Church in Atlanta.)

Dear Ed,

I enjoyed the recent issue of *Hospitality*, [April 1997] especially your "Ten Questions" and the oral history of LeBron. As you may know, I am in business school right now. I'm actually learning some applicable information. I guess what I am after is a way to combine faith, community, and business—a place where people are proud of the work they do, are compensated for it, and yet have a way of finding grace with one another. A tall order to be sure.

I have also enclosed an excerpt from *Night* by Elie Wiesel. I immediately thought of it when I read your questions.

I would like to be in touch, especially around the idea of business/faith/community. There is so much potential here, and I am excited to be at the beginning stages of exploring it.

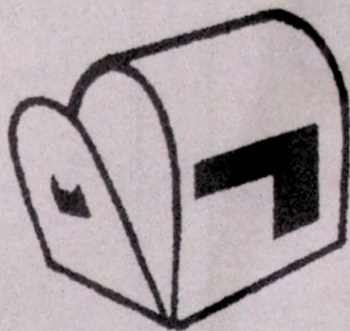
Take care,

Andrew Newsom
Austin, TX

The following is a quote from *Night* by Elie Wiesel, an autobiographical book about Wiesel's experiences as a young Jewish boy before and during the Holocaust. This passage comes at the beginning of the book when the young Elie is talking with a poor but wise man named Moshe the Beadle. The narrator is Wiesel, and the person he is talking to is Moshe.

He had noticed me one day at dusk, when I was praying.

Grace and Peaces of Mail



"Why do you weep when you pray?" he asked me, as though he had known me a long time.

"I don't know why," I answered, greatly disturbed.

The question had never entered my head. I wept because—because there was something inside me that felt the need for tears. That was all I knew.

"Why do you pray?" he asked me, after a moment.

Why did I pray? A strange question. Why did I live? Why did I breathe?

After that day, I saw him often. He explained to me with great insistence that every question possessed a power that did not lie in the answer.

"We raise ourselves toward God by the questions we ask God," he was fond of repeating. "That is the true dialogue. We question God and God answers. But we don't understand God's answers. We can't understand them. Because they come from the depths of the soul, and they stay there until death. You will find the true answers, Eliezer, only within yourself."

"And why do you pray, Moshe?" I asked him.

"I pray to the God within me that God will give me the strength to ask God the right questions."

Dear Ed,

Sorry, I don't have the answers to your questions. But what struck me when reading them is that they are very important questions to ask. I feel they hit the right core of our problems.

And I do know that asking important questions will lead us the right way. Those questions come to us when we compare Jesus' way of life to ours.

Thank you for your questions!

By the way, this week we celebrate the first anniversary of the first guest coming to our first little "Place of Hospitality." Today twelve of us live together. Please continue to pray for our small and fragile community.

Yours in Christ,

Jens Schild
Bread and Roses Base Community
Hamburg, Germany

(Editor's note: Jens Schild has been a volunteer at the Open Door and Jubilee Partners. Jens is a founding member of the Bread and Roses Base Community, which is a house of hospitality in Hamburg.)

Dear Ed,

Are you surprised? I have not been very good at keeping in touch with you, or anyone else in the Open Door (but I did see Zdenek just recently!) though I really do remember all of you a lot. *Open Door influenced my life in the greatest ways. It is a part of the reason why I am here in Taizé now.* Have you heard of this place? It is a monastic community where young people come to experience Christ through singing and other beautiful things. Thank you Ed and all others for all that your friendships have done for me...

Pavel
Czech Republic

PS. "Hello" to Ed Potts, Gino, Dick and Gladys, Murphy, etc!

(Editor's note: Pavel Gmuzdek is a friend from Prague, Czech Republic. He graduated from Warren Wilson College in North Carolina.)

* * * * *

In *Hospitality*, April 1997, p. 9 Ed Loring posed ten questions for himself and our readers. Number 7 is reprinted below with one response:

7. *Housing precedes home. What is the relationship between homelessness among God's friends on the streets and the divorce rate, domestic abuse, drug use, public educational failures, and job insecurity among those who have housing?*

Dear Friends,

In your April edition, it struck my eyes to see photos of some people I got to know when Manfred and I were at your place quite some time ago. It's Willie London, whom I remember as the "super-duper-washer-man" and friendly, pretty Millie Dean with her children [students].

As to Ed's ten questions, under number 7, I have this answer: Many families are ill within their construction (also in Germany). That might end in homelessness either for some family members directly concerned or later on for their children. In destroyed families, they grow up without love and the feeling for being accepted and sheltered. The result might be crime or anything else like homelessness. Excuse my bad English, I seldom practice it. I would like to say a lot more answers to your questions, although some of your problems are different than ours.

Peace and love,

Margot and Manfred Gerstner
Pforzheim, Germany

(Editor's note: Margot and Manfred Gerstner are the parents of our former Resident Volunteer, Dietrich Von Gerstner. Dietrich is now a member of the Bread and Roses Base Community in Hamburg, Germany. Dietrich and his parents are great friends and supporters of the Open Door Community.)

WE ARE OPEN. . .

Monday through Saturday: telephones are answered from 9:00am until noon, from 2:00 until 6:00pm, and from 7:00 until 8:30pm. The building is open from 9:00am until 8:30pm these days (Both phone and door are not answered during our noon prayers and lunch break from 12:30 until 2:00). Please call in advance if you need to arrange to come at other times. **On Sunday we are open from 7:00am until noon.** Sunday afternoon our door is answered until 5:00pm.

OUR MINISTRY. . .

SOUP KITCHEN: Wednesday-Saturday, 11am-12 noon
SUNDAY BREAKFAST: Sunday morning at 9:10, 7:15am
BUTLER ST. CME BREAKFAST: Monday-Friday, 7:15am
SHOWERS & CHANGE OF CLOTHES: Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, 2-4pm (Be sure to call; schedule varies)
USE OF PHONE: Monday-Saturday, 9am-noon, 2:00pm-5pm
CLARIFICATION MEETINGS: Alternate Tuesdays, 7:30-9pm.
WEEKEND RETREATS: Four times each year (for our household and volunteers/supporters), next retreat is our annual planning retreat, August 22 - 24.

Our Hospitality Ministries include: visitation and letter-writing to prisoners, anti death penalty advocacy, advocacy for the homeless, medical services including clinic visits by Dr. Jann, daily worship and weekly Eucharist.

Open Door Community Worship

We gather for worship and Eucharist at 5pm on Sunday evenings followed by supper together.

Please join us!

July 6	Worship at 910;
July 13	Worship at 910; Ed Loring, preaching
July 20	Worship at 910; Hattie Hill, preaching
July 27	Worship at 910;

Open Door Community Needs

JEANS	Disposable Razors
T-Shirts	Women's Underwear
Men's Work Shirts	Car Seats for Infants and Children
Quick Grits	Toothbrushes
Carpeting	Deodorant
Cheese	Vaseline
Coffee	Towels
Multi-Vitamins	Socks
MARIA Tokens	Shampoo
Postage Stamps	Men's Belts
Underwear for Men	Washcloths
Men's Shoes (all sizes)	
	Sandwiches
	Chests of Drawers
	Table and Floor Lamps
	Soup Kitchen Volunteers*
	Butler St. Breakfast Volunteers*

* contact our Volunteer Coordinator, Brenda Smith at 404-874-9652

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

Moving?

Bulk rate mail is not forwarded by the U.S. Postal Service. Send **Hospitality**, 910 Ponce de Leon Ave., NE, Atlanta, GA, 30306-4212, your new mailing address as soon as you know it. Please enclose the mailing label from your most recent issue. *Thank you!*



**July 2nd marks the
21st anniversary of the
Reinstatement of Capital Punishment
in the United States.
Don't repeat the crime.
Abolish the Death Penalty.**

If you have found Hospitality helpful and would like to know more about the Open Door Community, please fill out, clip and send this coupon to **The Open Door Community • 910 Ponce de Leon Ave., NE • Atlanta, GA 30306-4212.**

Please ADD to the Hospitality mailing list.

Please accept my tax deductible donation to the Open Door Community.

I'm interested in volunteering. Please give me more information.

I would like to explore a six to twelve-month commitment as a Resident Volunteer at the Open Door. Please send more information.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____, State _____ Zip _____ + _____

Phone _____