

HOSPITALITY

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July 1998

A New Heaven and a New Earth: Thanksgiving for African History

Isaiah 65:17-25

by Ed Loring

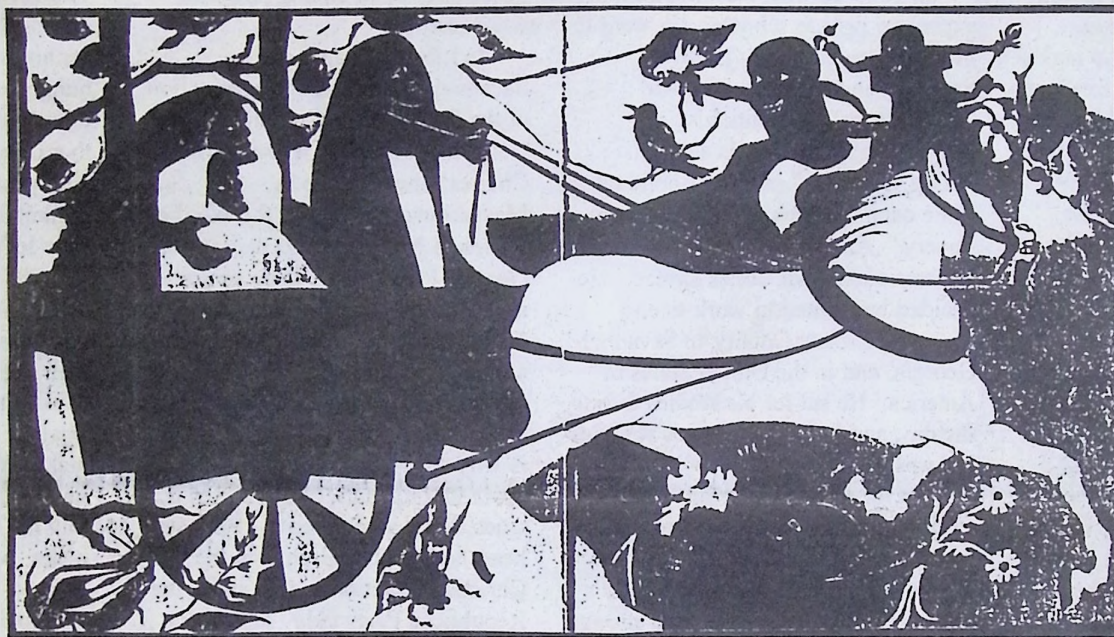
(Editor's note: This article is based on a sermon Ed preached at St. Philip Monumental AME Church in Savannah, Georgia, on May 17, 1998. The Open Door Community was on its annual African-American History Tour. Ed is a Partner at the Open Door.)

The Open Door is an interracial community. We are in the words of the great hymn of the Civil Right Movement, "Black and white together." Approximately half of us are Black and half of us are white. Some of us are half Black and half white.

But we're working! We've got a long way to go, but you should have seen where some of us came from!

We take history most seriously as a way and means that God speaks to us. We believe in the stories of the past that have not been given credence by mainline and dominant culture. There is a dangerous memory that can teach us of rebellion, love, reconciliation, and justice. We believe that there are stories of people who speak though they were hushed; who can be remembered though they were blotted out; who were hidden and now God wants to reveal these people because there is, just as there is in the Lord's Supper, subversive memory. Our God is the God of Exodus. The God of the oppressed. There is no word of God apart from liberation and freedom. Our God is a God who calls us to equality and promises every one of us a Promised Land with milk and honey—40 acres and a mule, or 80 acres and a tractor, or a house to live in and a minimum wage that is a living wage.

Through our study of history and travel, our encounter and engagement, we learn that there is no history worth remembering or appropriating that is not costly. There is at the center of our lives, and even at the heart of our Lord God Almighty, suffering, even innocent suffering. There is blood as there is blood on the cross. There is endurance as our mamas and daddies talked and walked the long and weary ways for us. There is character formation as we travel and follow Jesus together. We don't believe what's on



from "Harriet and the Promised Land" by Jacob Lawrence

TV. We don't believe what's out there in the capitalist society. We don't believe the American propaganda machine. We want to be faithful to the cross, for we are those who have been washed in the blood of the Lamb, who gives us integrity and truth. We are, even often against our will, brothers and sisters. We've got each other. If you don't want it, don't worry about it. The Lord can pick up some rocks out on the road and make brothers and sisters.

This is the very reason that as we work together, we know that we are opposed to the death penalty. For it is the power of God that creates a new heaven and a new earth now, and can say time and time again to the state, to Herod, to Caesar, to whomever: "Life belongs to God. And there are new possibilities. The state has no right to kill and maim and hurt." This is why we're opposed to abolishing parole, for it is a denial of God's grace in history and how the doors of this church got opened to somebody like me. It is a way to say NO to the redemptive power of the Lord Jesus Christ, who comes into the city on the back of a donkey. Do you think he couldn't ride a white stallion? He could have. He came on a donkey. Do you think he couldn't have come in a Cadillac convertible? He could have. But he came on a donkey. The Prince of Peace, who was executed to stop executions. Who spent time in jail and in the tomb, but came out to say that pardon and parole are in the Blood of the Lamb, the new covenant of forgiveness, in the bread broken and the

cup shared.

As a people who travel together, listening and wanting to learn and to claim and appropriate the Gospel, we have to fire Georgia's Commissioner of the Department of Corrections Wayne Garner! We've got to build places that are sanctuaries in our society for people to come back and be mended, redeemed, reconciled, reborn with hope and love. We need places of training and education and hope. We've got to stop the racism that puts 70,000 men, women, and children in prison and jail in Georgia alone, not including the jails

for our children. Most of those people are African-American men.

We remember and we thank God, the God of our history, who moved us to have the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. It took a war; it took blood; it took struggle in Congress, in the State House; it took struggle everywhere to rid this land of constitutional slavery. The 13th Amendment forbids chattel slavery, but protects slavery as punishment. So our prisons are growing as our economic competition grows with Latin America, the near and far East. The rich are getting richer, and the prisons are getting fuller.

What is liberation history? It is subversive memory that leads us to engage the demonic powers of prisons and homelessness in this day. But that's not all. History is also listening to the voices of our ancestors, to our cloud of witnesses. We come to Savannah because of the heritage of pride and dignity for slaves who would not work, but spent their energies escaping and going underground and demanding freedom in their own lives. We listen to the voices of Mr. W.W. Law and the new Civil Rights Museum. We have a member of our worshipping community who wanted to be here this morning—Frances Pauley. She is 91 years of age. She worked day after day, and night after night with Mr. W. W. Law and others in this city. She is a white woman.

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Mr. Law would get her to go to the midnight marches during the Civil Rights Movement and stand with the white crowd, so she could monitor the growing hate and violence in white people's hearts and minds. Frances moans and groans when she tells these stories because they hurt her heart. She worked in Mississippi. She was with Dr. King daily in the Albany Campaign. She moved her life up and down the streets of Atlanta, Georgia. But she says that she's never experienced more hate and uglier words than the white community in Savannah. We remember her and Mr. Law, and the faithful people who marched and walked in the 1960's, and we hope for the transformation, pray for the transformation, work for the transformation of white people in this society, and the undoing of white racism that cripples, maims, and makes almost impossible the soaring freedom of love and integrity among white people. **Help us!**

I. White Man Sitting

One-hundred and fifty years ago in a pulpit at First Presbyterian Church, Savannah, Georgia, there was a preacher named Charles C. Jones. He grew up in Liberty County, south of Savannah. Liberty County has a great heritage and a great name. It is so named because during the American Revolution, and out of Midway Church came leaders of the American Revolution. They believed on the basis of the Bible, and from their Reformed heritage, that people have a right to revolution. That people must demand their freedom. That people must have equality and justice.

They were unable in Liberty County to make the connection between the American Revolution for Europeans and the freedom of Africans. For not only did they believe in the right of revolution, but they also

voted that an African slave was three-fifths of one human being.

Charles Jones grew up a wealthy child and young man. His family owned rice plantations in Liberty County. Monte Vista was the name of one of the large plantations. He and his family together owned more than 500 slaves. He also prayed and studied the Bible daily. And one of the ways that the Holy Spirit worked in his life is that as he began to grow up he did not like what he saw. "There's something wrong here," he said. "Slavery is not right," he said. Even inside the system of African slavery, a white young man with privilege and wealth and ownership, who would inherit all of this wealth some day, became a critic of slavery. It wasn't right. It couldn't be aligned with the Bible.

In 1825 he went North to go to expensive private schools. He went to Phillips Academy and Andover Seminary in Massachusetts, and learned from the Abolitionist Movement. "Not only is slavery wrong, it is a sin," said the Abolitionists. "One cannot follow Jesus and be pro-slavery." And the young, impressionable Mr. Jones agreed. He decided he wanted to work to end slavery in Liberty County, in Savannah, Georgia, and in the United States of America. He sat for his studies during the day, and he bent his knees at night. He was a man of prayer.

On the horizon, as white folks were studying books, the seeds of revolt were growing among slaves. Not only "it ain't right," and "it's a sin," but it's inhuman. Winds were blowing strong. The Holy Ghost was murmuring in the land of Virginia. In 1831 the Lord lifted up a prophet named Nat Turner. After Nat Turner became obedient as he believed, after his call even unto death, after 60 white slave owners lay slain in the land and the blood going deep into the farm land of Virginia, after his dream of freedom and solidarity among the slaves, the dream that was later

picked up by John Brown, as John Brown and his group marched into Harpers Ferry in 1859, after all of this was broken and there was execution and crucifixion, white Southerners took hold of the reins. There was reaction and fear deeper than when George Bush told us in his presidency that we need to be frightened of Willie Horton and thereby all African-American men. There was death meted out, even to those slaves who refused to join the revolt. There were harsher laws passed, not only in the Virginia Legislature, but across the land called Black Codes, the point of which was to say, "No slave is a human being. No slave has rights." Another law sent a white person to jail if they taught an African to read or write. What was called the Solid South developed among powerful white people.

In Liberty County and in Savannah, there was an organization of the Presbyterian Church called Georgia Presbytery. They knew that Charles Jones was up in Massachusetts studying the Word of God, and Mr. Jones was responsible to Georgia Presbytery. They sent a message to Massachusetts: "Charles Jones, you cannot be ordained, or have a ministry in Georgia, if you are not pro-slavery." The test of the fidelity to Jesus was to be pro-slavery. That is why we've heard over and over again that up in the North and in the cities there were atheists. Why we hear the Christian Right and the Christian Coalition and people in the Republican Party today saying that if you don't hoe a certain kind of row, you're an atheist. It is still an ongoing legacy of white folks' fear of Nat Turner and the truth.

Jones got the letter. He prayed. He thought. He wept. "Slavery is wrong. But what about my family? What about my slaves? What about my plantations in the South?" he said. Like Robert Edward Lee, Charles

Jones ended up being a man of little principle.

It's an interesting story that Robert Edward Lee did not believe in slavery. He thought it was wrong. But he led an army. He killed. He murdered. He burned. And this nation still bleeds as the red Confederate flag flies in Georgia, because Lee did not have the courage, the guts, the faith in Jesus, to say no to war, no to slavery, yes to what he believed in. Lee simply forsook his beliefs and 4 million Africans, for the State of Virginia which said, "Kill 'em! Fight 'em! Tear this Union apart so we can work these darkies from sun up to sunset. We white folk are superior and these Black folk belong to us." General Lee lives today not only in the stone on Stone Mountain, but in the racist policies and violence of Wayne Garner, of the Two Strikes and Your Out prison policies of Zell Miller, who tells us that we cannot house the homeless, or feed the hungry, or clothe the naked, or without thumb-print ID we're not even allowed to go visit the prisoner. Miller tells us we ain't got no money, and yet here's \$8 million for a new prison. For Christ's sake let's get rid of Lee's legacy.

Charles Jones, as a young man, was faced with the kind of decision that no human being should have to make in their life. Yet we face it every day: "Take up your cross and follow me." That's a decision we shouldn't have to make. Yet it's an invitation to life, to have to give away our life in order to find it. That's not a decision we can make; we can't make it, except by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Charles Jones was told to leave Massachusetts and finish his last year of seminary at Princeton University. Princeton offered a degree where Jesus was no liberator, and the prophets never spoke of justice. At Princeton one could have Jesus and slaves. A Princeton degree meant you were safe for the South. If Jones did not transfer he could not come home. It was that blatant. If Jones did not leave

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HOSPITALITY

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KATRINA GUETTLER/JOHN SWEET

Open Door Community

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Wade in the Water

by Elizabeth Dede

I was born in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, and grew up playing in the water at the beaches and in swimming pools. I don't remember ever having a fear of water because my dad and mom would take us out in the waves, even when we were little babies. In fact, the day before my brother was born he was out swimming in the Atlantic ocean with my mom.

My sister was born in Nigeria, West Africa, where Mom and Dad were missionaries. When we got bigger and could swim on our own, we would swim way out from the shore, imagining that we could swim all the way across to Africa to see her birthplace.

My mom and dad gave good gifts to me in my childhood that helped me understand that there were beautiful cultures very different from the one in which I grew up. All of the art in our home was from Nigeria. There were carvings in ebony of Ibo tribesmen and Fulani women, alligators formed from elephant tusks, a map of Nigeria etched into a huge brass tray, and a painting that showed market day in the town near where they lived. My mom loved to tell us the stories of how she bartered for each of these precious pieces, and I'm sure that's where I got my uncommon gift of highly lucrative panhandling.

When I was eight days old I was baptized into the Lutheran faith at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, a small, African-American mission congregation in Ft. Lauderdale, where my dad was pastor. As a little, blond-headed, white baby I was given the beautiful gift of African-American godparents, Mr. J. Pinckney Davis and Mrs. Beatrice McLaughlin Davis, and I thank the Holy Spirit for entering into me and giving me a new life in those waters of baptism and in those baptismal vows spoken by Mr. and Mrs. Davis on my behalf, a life which must continue to be about undoing the evil power of racism.

Of course, when I was a small child I was oblivious to racism. I only knew the love and friendship of these people who had brown skin. I can remember sitting on Mr. Davis' lap in church on Sunday, and while we sang the hymns he would run his finger along under the words so that I could follow, and eventually I learned to read that way in his lap. Now in the world of Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, in the early 1960's, I couldn't sit in Mr. Davis' lap anywhere but in the church, in his home, or in our home, because it was a segregated city, and Black folk and white folk didn't mix.

When I was in kindergarten, unlike my classmates, I colored people with the brown crayon. My teacher thought that was funny and told my mother about it later. Oh well, my teacher didn't know any better. Schools were still segregated in those days, so when she looked out at the children in the classroom, people weren't brown.

Things changed the next year at Lutheran Central School. My dad said that he wouldn't continue to send his children to a segregated school. Now it would have been a bit of a scandal at a Lutheran school if a local pastor refused to allow his own children to attend, so when I was in the first grade, school bus driver Mr. Celow started driving into African-American neighborhoods and

Lutheran Central was integrated. My kindergarten teacher started seeing brown people!

At around the same time, the local NAACP chapter decided to integrate the Ft. Lauderdale beaches. Until that time, African-American people could only swim on the beach at an island south of the port. The only way to get to the island was by ferry, which ran once in the



MURPHY DAVIS

Escaping slaves hid under the basement floor of the First African Baptist Church in Savannah. These holes in the floor of the Church hall (that appear to be decorative) actually provided air flow into underground tunnels that led to the hiding place. The entrance to the hiding place has never been found.

morning and once in the evening. Consequently, African-American people really never got to go to the beach.

Our church held a picnic on the Ft. Lauderdale beach on the day the NAACP chose to test the rule of segregation. The adult leaders didn't know what they would face: Would they be arrested? Would there be violence? Would it be dangerous for the children? We all had a great time, eating together, swimming, playing, wading in the water together. The next day a small article in the newspaper reported that the beaches of Ft. Lauderdale always had been integrated.

All of this personal history was called up for me in May when the Open Door Community went on our annual African-American History Pilgrimage to Savannah, Georgia. Across that same Atlantic ocean I played in, came the ancestors of half of the members of the Open Door, crammed in the cargo holds of ships, chained together hand, foot, and neck, with bits in their mouths. Half of them died on the way. In my childhood home there was a large ebony carving of a slave. His hands were bound in chains, his feet were shackled, his neck was encased in iron, and he had a bit in his mouth. Did he survive the Middle Passage? Did he help build the First African Baptist Church in Savannah, working at the church after he had already worked 12-15 hours in his master's rice fields? Did he escape to

freedom in the North on the Underground Railroad, hiding in the basement of the First African Baptist Church, breathing the meager air that flowed in through the holes cut in the floor? Did he carve his tribal markings on the church pews? Did he continue to wear the bit in his master's fields because he tried to speak? Did he sing "Wade in the Water, Children" to communicate with the other slaves about hope and freedom in a way that the masters couldn't understand? We sat together in the First African Baptist Church above that secret hiding place of freedom, clapping and singing "Wade in the Water Children," remembering our ancestors who had such strength and dignity.

At the Civil Rights Museum we learned about the marches and the boycotts of the Savannah businesses in the early 1960's. African-American people could shop in the white-owned stores downtown, but they could not try on clothes, were addressed with disrespect, and were not allowed to eat at the lunch counters in the stores. We learned that Savannah was so segregated that the phone book did not list the names and numbers of African-American people. The peaceful protests and boycotts were so thorough and so successful that the white power had to concede to the righteousness of the African-American cause, and integration came to Savannah.

We also learned about the Wade-Ins at the beach on Tybee Island. Young African-American people, exercising their freedom and their right to swim in the waters of the Atlantic Ocean, were followed into the waters by the police, who took them off to jail, clad in their swimming suits. Like their ancestors who sang of their liberation, the young people in the 1960's waded in the water and won. The beaches were integrated.

Because of their dignity, struggle, and triumph, we swam together at the Chatham County Aquatic Center and smiled with joy at the sight of African-American children swimming and playing with white children. Wade in the water, children!

When my father reads what I write he criticizes it because it too eloquently points out what's wrong in our society without giving any helpful hints for how we might right the social injustices around us. So let me offer a few modest proposals for white people:

1. Read a book about African-American History and claim it as part of your own history. I highly recommend David Halberstam's, *The Children*.
2. Visit a Civil Rights Museum and feel pride in African-American people who struggled and triumphed to teach us all about human dignity and liberation.
3. Learn a language different from your mother tongue and thereby learn about a culture different from the one into which you were born.
4. Boycott Nike and spend two hours each week working for economic justice: a \$10/hour minimum wage and a \$100/hour maximum wage.

Wade in the water, children!

Elizabeth Dede is a Partner at the Open Door Community.

Protest Action and Civil Disobedience

People for Urban Justice

by Ed Loring

The sad and frightened editors of the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* are under the influence of Central Atlanta Progress, The Atlanta City Council, Georgia State University, the Mayor's office, the Chamber of Commerce, and urban dwellers seeking a suburban and mallish life. They are vilifying our homeless friends, the churches of Jesus Christ, the synagogues of Yahweh Elohim, the mosques of Allah, peace and justice advocates, and people of goodwill and justice.

"Homeless A Bane To Downtown Livability" proclaims the newspaper (*Atlanta Journal Constitution*, May 9, 1998), reflecting the values and character of an elite who would claim the city for the rich alone. This sordid headline is accompanied by a photograph of a white male eating ice cream on a city street. Is this a picture denying the hell of hunger in the center of our city? Is this a party time when the homeless cry out for help and dignity in our shared spaces? Are we to laugh or turn our backs in disgust at those who are urine-drenched and filthy due to the lack of public toilets, and the refusal of businesses and office buildings to share bathrooms with those who have none? Can we not feel the shame, the burden, the oppression of our brothers, sisters and children who need housing, recovery facilities, good jobs at living wages, respect and dignity from our leaders for whom too often the bottom line is profit or votes or denial that we are one people in one city living a life together?

So we went into the streets, into *Underground Atlanta*, into *Five Points* proclaiming the goodness of Dr. Martin Luther King's Beloved Community. We asked for prayer, for peace and justice, for good and fair housing, for a living wage, public toilets, and for police salaries to be raised by 21.3 percent. We can live together with respect and good work. With happy streets and friendship we can eat ice cream together when all are invited to the Welcome Table.

by Nibs Stroupe

(Editor's note: Our good friend Nibs Stroupe is pastor at Oakhurst Presbyterian Church and a leader in the struggle to undo racism in our society. He gave this meditation as preparation for the People for Urban Justice action at Underground Atlanta on May 28th of this year.)



HANNAH LORING-DAVIS
Ed Loring (left) and Jim Hinshaw (top) lying in front of the entrance to Underground Atlanta during the May 28th street action. Ed is joined by a reporter from the local CBS affiliate.

How can we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land? That is the searing question that the poet raised for her people in Psalm 137, and it is the question that Jeremiah addresses. The people of Israel have been captured and exiled into slavery in Babylon, and their view of themselves and of Yahweh is now rooted in despair and brokenness. Their

dreams are smashed, and their songs of praise are silenced.

How can people in slavery sing the Lord's song? Jeremiah brings a surprising answer from the Lord: seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile. How can this be? How can we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land? In Jeremiah's view, the answer is to be a witness to the power of Yahweh and to a new vision of life. The call of Israel in exile is to be a witness to Yahweh, even when the fig trees do not blossom and there is no olive oil.

We need to be a witness in this city. The Bible has an ambivalent attitude about the city. The people of God in the Old Testament began as nomads in the desert, with a distrust of the city and its ways. The first followers of Jesus were country folk. Yet, for both these groups in Judaism, Jerusalem is the key, the Holy City. Genesis tells us that the first city was

built by Cain the murderer of his brother. The Bible closes, however, with a reunion of God and humanity, a reunion on earth—not in Eden or in the mountains or out in the country, but in a city, the Holy City. The word "urban" comes from

Latin, and its root word "urb" originally described the wall of the city that was used to keep the barbarians out. Thus, the word "urban" came to be associated with the place where one could be safe from the barbarians. As we all know, however, in this century the city has come to be seen as a place where the barbarians are, not a place where one could escape from the barbarians. Those who escaped the city, especially after World War II in this country, did so in a great mass movement that continues today. Vast suburbs were created as safe havens as the new "urbs." (The word "suburb" means "under the city" denoting a relationship to the city, but not entirely.) Perhaps the most honest word in this mass migration is the more recent "exurb," which describes the continuing movement of people even beyond and out of the suburbs to get farther away from the central city. "Exurb"—out of the city, *not* of the city—it is a blunt but apt description.

Yet in the midst of this flight from the city, there is also movement back into the city by those who have access to money and power, seeking to re-claim the city as a place of safety. In order to do this, it is proclaimed by the new urban pioneers that the "barbarians" who inhabit the city must be removed. Who are these barbarians in modern life? They are defined as Black people, Hispanic people, poor people, and most especially homeless people, those whose homes have been taken as the city is re-claimed by affluent people. The witness of the Open Door at Underground Atlanta reminds all of us of the call of Jeremiah to seek the welfare of the city and to live a new vision where the word "urb" will not mean a wall to keep people out but rather the entrance into safe space where all people are welcomed, where the word "barbarian" no longer has meaning. The money diverted from housing for people into Underground Atlanta is a reminder of the fears and idols in our lives. We are a culture whose central, core belief is that money brings salvation. In this view, the way to build a city is to provide space for people to spend their money. And, in this view, people do not spend money where the barbarians live.

Jeremiah calls us to a different vision, a vision of a place that can be transformed from hostile space to welcoming space. A vision of a whole new world where we pray for those we believe are our enemies—yes, let us pray for the leaders of this city, that they may be transformed from people dominated by fear of barbarians to those who welcome all people as the children of God. A vision of a whole new world where we act up for justice, as we will tomorrow, to remind us all of the manner in which we can sing the Lord's song. A vision of a whole new world where hospitality and mercy and compassion are shared with those in need, a world where those usually thrown out as barbarians are instead welcomed as sisters and brothers.

How can we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land, in hostile space? This is how we do it—by feeding hundreds of people as many do in soup kitchens across the country; by acting for justice; by speaking to those captured by the definitions of the powers and principalities; by praying for our opponents and seeking their transformation and our common humanity; by giving thanks for God's grace and power and presence in our lives. Let us seek the welfare of the city—let us sing the Lord's song.



GLADYS RUSTAY
Members of the Open Door Community who were arrested in the May 28th protest action against Underground Atlanta. From left to right, back row: Jim Hinshaw, Dick Rustay, Phillip Williams, Ed Loring, Ralph Dukes; front row: Elizabeth Dede, Ed Potts, JoAnne Lingle, and Murphy Davis.

Protest Action and Civil Disobedience

5 Points for 5 Points

1. *Pray for the architects of exclusion.* Pray that their hearts and minds will be converted to a love of the poor and a commitment to Justice for All. We call for special prayers for these brothers & sisters: Debbi Starnes, Joe Martin, Bill Campbell, Charlie Battle, Carl & Gretchen Patton, Sam Williams, and Colin Campbell.
2. *Good and Fair Housing* for all Atlantans.
3. *Public toilets with disability access for all.* Let us "PEE FOR FREE WITH DIGNITY!"
4. *A minimum wage that is a living wage* with a guarantee of 40 hours per week and 50 weeks per year for all Atlantans over 21 years of age.
5. *A 21.3% raise for all Atlanta Police* with no second jobs allowed.



HANNAH LORING-DAVIS
Atlanta police officers with a city ambassador read Open Door flyers while keeping watch over protestors. To the right, one of a number of local newspeople catches the event on camera.



GLADYS RUSTAY
Those in our group doing civil disobedience by blocking the entrance to Underground Atlanta were carried off by police.

Holy "Weak"

by Stephen Goyer

(Editor's Note: Stephen Goyer is Pastor at Covenant Presbyterian Church in Atlanta. He shares this reflection after spending 24 hours in the streets with us during Holy Week this year.)

Anxious, skeptical ... no, cynical, perplexed and hoping against hope, I join up with Ed Loring, and several others brought together by fate to spend 24 hours on Atlanta's streets in solidarity with the homeless. It is Tuesday of Holy Week. We are told not to bring anything to sustain our existence, not even an I.D. I paw at the banana flavored Power Bar secretly tucked away in my jacket. I will share it if need be, but I don't like to be empty-handed.

"We're doing this for the homeless," we are told, "to let them know they are loved by God and not forgotten." I wonder what the homeless would think of us playing down and out like children playing dress-up. Only for us it is dress-down. I look around to see if everyone else is as self conscious as I am and how they're dressed. I'm reminded of that photo of the marchers crossing a Selma bridge, dots of white faces littering the sea of black marchers. The white folk seem out of place. How could they know what it is like? The gracious hospitality of the homeless, mostly African American, ironically condescending to let me and other whites in our group share their suffering for a while strikes me as funny. Is that what we are like to the homeless? Deep down we all know we're not really doing this for them. They are giving us the gift. They are coming into solidarity with us.

Things happen on the streets. Grace. Mercy. A man, small in stature, shares the Eucharist with a man twice his size. The large man asks the smaller man to move his bag so he can sit down. The small man says "no." The larger man pleads that he is tired and has had a bad day. The smaller man reaches for his bag, moves it, pulls out a soggy

piece of bread, wraps it around a chicken wing and hands it to the larger man. Nobody said, "This is my body broken for you," but everyone heard it.

We sit down in a circle at Woodruff Park under the pavilion. It's time to get to know each other. Strangers walk up. The circle widens. I hear their names. I hear their stories. It's my turn and I hear myself saying, "I don't know why I'm out here. I'm tired of lies and politics and most of all I'm hoping against hope to find something out here to shatter my cynicism." Nobody says anything. They just look at me. I wonder what they think.

By ten we are hungry. We have to beg to get enough money to eat. Some do it easily, others don't do it all. I do it but I will not humble myself. I walk up to two yuppie white men and tell them, "I'm a pastor at Covenant Presbyterian Church and my friends and I are out on the streets for 24 hours in solidarity with the homeless. For us to eat we have to panhandle. Could you help us out?" They come up with three dollars. We start talking about God. It turns out they are fundamentalist. They say they will pray for us and for street people. A street person wanders up and panhandles us. I give him half of what I just got. He starts talking about God. I leave the three of them in theological conversation about the power of prayer and the Holy Spirit.

We've begged only thirteen dollars. Two in our group go up to a carry-out food service and ask for food. They come back with a heavenly banquet. It was freely given. We sit down, spread out our feast and say grace.

Late in the night a crack addict wanders up to the one in our group who is the most ambivalent about God and asks for a prayer. After praying for the addict, he wonders why he was the one chosen.

Later, we try to sleep at a church near Grady Hospital. The noise never stops. Sirens and traffic shatter the night and the birds keep singing because the street lights make them think it's still day. Buffered only by cardboard the concrete

closes in, colder and harder by the minute. After some time we wander up past the Capitol to a church parking lot. It looks like a morgue. The perimeter of the lot is littered with blanket-covered bodies. It smells like urine. My bones ache and my head hurts. I fondle my Power Bar. A man walks up, curiously wondering what we are doing. We explain that we are out in solidarity with the homeless. He shows us his home in an alley under some boxes. We wander over to a street lamp for a devotional. The man joins us. Somebody reads scripture. We talk about God. The homeless man tells us what we already know. He says, "You can't come out here for one night and know what being homeless is like. I'm out here because my mother died and I had no place to go. I work during the day bussing tables but I don't have enough yet to get a place to stay. Tomorrow you will all go back home to a warm bed and plenty of food. I've got to live under a box. You can't understand." We talk about God some more and after a while some of us lie down to sleep. He leaves for a moment then comes back with three wool blankets that he spreads over the lump of us before going back into his box.

Early in the morning, at early dawn, inside myself I hear something crack. It is a dry brittle sound like kiln dried pottery. Something spills out. My cynicism rolls away like mercury. I can't get my hands on it ... I'm an empty vessel.

But I want to stay empty. I know, we can fix it. No we can't fix it. I'm frustrated that we can't fix it. I ask Ed what we can do. Ed says, "I learned from Dorothy Day that we don't have to fix it, we just have to love them." Ed is half right. The other half is that we have to come to see that they love us.

Things happen on the streets. Grace abounds to the chief of sinners. Tender mercies break through the most cynical hearts. The resurrected Christ appears in all sorts of strangers. I still have my Power Bar. ♦

Choosing Our Ancestors

by Murphy Davis

My name is Martha Murphy Davis, called since I was somewhere around 8 years old, Murphy. I'm a minister, ordained in 1976 in the Presbyterian Church—what was then the Southern Presbyterian Church. I am also the daughter, granddaughter, niece and wife of Presbyterian ministers. Murphy is my Christian name, given to me at my baptism. I was baptized in 1948 in the Presbyterian Church of the Covenant in Greensboro, North Carolina, by two Presbyterian ministers, also named Murphy. One was my grandfather—R. Murphy Williams. The other was my uncle—R. Murphy Williams, Jr., known as Murph.

My grandfather, R. Murphy, for whom my uncle and my cousin Robin and I are all named, represents for me my Presbyterian roots that are very deep and very strong. My grandfather's license to preach, which was issued to him by Wilmington Presbytery in the Chinquapin, North Carolina Presbyterian Church, in 1898, hangs over my desk.

"Daddy Bob," is what we called my grandfather. His mother was Louisa Eliza Murphy, born and raised on the Cuwhiffle Plantation, adjacent to Cuwhiffle Creek in Duplin County, North Carolina.

Daddy Bob's grandfather was Patrick Murphy II, who built Cuwhiffle, and in whose home Wilmington Presbytery was formed and organized. His parents were Mary Bailey and Robert Murphy, who built the Oak Plain Presbyterian Church. This was one devout group of straight-laced, Scotch Presbyterians—these Murphys, whose name I carry.

But going back to my grandfather, R. Murphy, as they called him. He was an interesting character. He was shaped and formed and was a follower of what is called the Social Gospel, articulated primarily by Walter Rauschenbush, a theologian of the late 19th and early 20th Centuries. The Presbyterian Church of the Covenant, which was founded and pastored by my grandfather for 35 years, became with his leadership quite a force in the small city of Greensboro, where my daughter Hannah is now a college student.

Daddy Bob was a progressive for his day. He believed that the church should address the needs of the community of people of every race and class—not a whole lot of people were saying that in the 1920's, '30's, '40's, and '50's in towns in North Carolina. He employed a church nurse to attend to the health needs of the community after the influenza outbreak in the 1920's. He constructed a playground at the church and organized afterschool programs for the children in the community, church and unchurched. Then he stumped the state of North

Carolina in the late 1940's to raise money for the first church-sponsored home for the elderly. Nobody had ever heard of such a thing, but it became the Presbyterian Home of High Point, North Carolina. That is where my father lives today.

Daddy Bob also loved practical jokes. He was a very serious man with his grandchildren. But more generally, he loved a good prank. The one that I

property human beings—men, women, and children of African descent. With the exception of conversations with my mother, I have never once heard a frank discussion in that part of my family about slavery, and the participation of our family in its practice. There are other branches of my family—the Davises, the Williamses, the Baileys, the Querys, and probably others—who owned

blood on those wide planks on the floor. I wonder if those dark-skinned people, some of them surely blood relatives of mine, bore the lash. Did they have the harsh, Christian whip on their backs as they cut, sawed, and planed the lumber, and measured the lengths, drove the nails, and set each piece in its place for the Glory of God?

Of course, I have no reason to believe that my forebears wielded the lash themselves. Presbyterian gentlemen of the South, and certainly their fine ladies, did not usually themselves beat their slaves. We leave, as we have left, the harsh, personal violence to other people.

The slave-drivers were rarely upper-class church people, rarely Presbyterians. I would guess they were rough and rowdy lower-class people, ones we told could be proud that they, at least, weren't n—gg—s. We paid them minimum wage to beat our slaves, and we pretended not to know what they did.

It's kind of bloody business, and pretty distasteful in polite company. I noticed for the first time this year as we read the Passion Story in Luke that when Jesus was arrested and taken to the courtyard in the home of the High Priest, apparently the Scribes and the Pharisees and the Priests went to bed. Because what the story says is that all night long soldiers beat and mocked Jesus. The religious authorities were not present. I wonder when they got up in the morning if they noticed that he was bloody and bruised. I wonder if they knew that the soldiers had beaten Jesus all night, or if like Zell Miller, when confronted with the horrors of the treatment of children in prison in Georgia, simply said, "It doesn't exist." Not only do upper-class people rarely carry out that kind of violence, we arrange our lives so that we don't see it, and then we can say with true conviction, "It did not happen. It does not happen. Such horrors do not exist. Not on my plantation. Not in my city. Not in my prison."

Probably it is safe to assume that my forebears didn't beat up on their slaves. But I don't know any reason to think that they didn't employ the people who did, and pay them a paltry wage. The violence that is a crucial underpinning of the institution that yields even my generation wealth, privilege, and power, is the same today. The judges who render judgment and the district attorneys who put away the "criminal" poor are generally active members of nice churches. But rarely are the prison guards, or the executioners, sitting in the pews of upper-class white churches. If some of them crack the heads of captives, and bloody the walls of their cages, well we don't really have to let anybody know that we know that. And if anybody says that it happens, we can say that it is probably an exaggeration.



MURPHY DAVIS
Some of the Open Door folks gathered in Savannah's First African Baptist Church as we learn the history of the Church as part of the Negro Heritage Trail.

remember the best was a book. When you walked into the house where he and my grandmother lived through their retirement in Greensboro, way over to the left was a bookcase by the fireplace. On that bookcase he kept this blue book. He loved to get it out and show it to visitors. It had about 300 pages, and on the spine of the book read the title: *What Men Know About Women*. He would give this to his visitor, and wait for the reaction. You would look at this large book, then open it up, to find that every page of the book was blank. He thought this was very funny. And even as I tell you this story, I can hear his deep laughter when his guest began to realize that there was nothing in the book entitled *What Men Know About Women*.

You may be wondering why this tacky, sexist joke is something that I'm passing along to you. This memory from my very early childhood (he died when I was in the first grade) has become something of a symbol for me of the understanding of a necessary phenomenon of the way social structures operate.

My grandfather's parents on both sides, and the Murphys as far back as I can trace, were very Presbyterian. They were devout Christian people who prayed, preached, sang the songs of the Church, built churches, and did everything that anyone could possibly do to qualify as devoted church members and those committed to the Christian faith.

They also owned slaves. They purchased and held as their personal

slaves. But I know less about those other branches of the family.

With as much documentation about these ancestors, what they did, who they were, where they came from, what their service to the church consisted of, I have never heard a discussion, or seen a written document, that reflected on their identity as slaveholders, as people who owned other human beings.

I think if such a conversation were to go on, it would probably be assumed by most of my relatives that none of my forebears were those types of slave-owners who were cruel or violent to their slaves. But I'm afraid that there's probably not any reason for me to believe that their treatment of their African slaves was any better, or any worse, than anybody else's treatment of their slaves.

The fact of their participation in, and their justification of, the institution of chattel slavery is the particular act of violence and dehumanization for which they are responsible, and to which I, as their descendant, even to this third and fourth generation, am accountable. The part of my lineage that includes the Baileys, Murphys, Williamses, and the Boneys is the part of my pedigree that is most carefully documented. They weren't ashamed to tell of my great, great grandfather Patrick Murphy II, who with the forced labor of his slaves, built the Oak Plain Presbyterian Church in eastern North Carolina.

Twenty-eight years ago, I sat in the pews in that little church but I didn't think to look down to see if there was

The corporate heads who present the glowing reports of rapidly multiplying profits are generally pillars of churches, major donors, supporters, members of church boards and foundations. But of course, they neither socialize, nor commune, with the Labor Pool dispatchers who broker the labor of the poor with a violence of tongue and practice for the poor wretches working their second or third job just to keep a little food on the table and their families off the mean streets.

But back to my grandfather and his book, *What Men Know About Women*. There was nothing on the pages. The joke is the implication that men are ignorant of the lives of women. They neither know, nor understand. In fact, men are incapable of understanding women, right? That's funny, a joke, right? Well...it's the humor of oppression. This is a type of humor that is necessary in a system of domination.

The oppressor must always make the point not to know or understand the lives of the oppressed. My grandfather's humor was not intended to hurt anyone. But it expressed this linchpin of oppression: men, to preserve the structures and privilege of sexism, must remain ignorant of the lives of women and our history, must devalue our literature and our music, discount our feelings and thoughts, and dismiss our presence as inconsequential, or even nonexistent.

White people, to quietly preserve the structures and systems of racism, must remain ignorant of the lives of people of color. In the South we must turn a blind eye and a deaf ear to the history of African slaves, free Blacks in the Jim Crow South, and African Americans in the life of our culture today. If we know the sufferings and the triumphs, nothing is required of us to change in our own lives, or to make reparations.

Recently there was a news report that Cynthia McKinney went to a meeting at the White House along with a 23-year-old white aide who works in her office. When met by the White House staff at the door, the staff spoke to her 23-year-old white aide and ignored this United States Congresswoman. She didn't exist. She just wasn't there. Her presence was not acknowledged. That staff member did not mean to be cruel, or racist, it's just one more unconscious act of white racism. The only thing remarkable is that it made the news. White people believe that it's all right not to know, understand, or acknowledge the life and experience of people of color, and sometimes even to ignore their presence.

Our annual African-American History Pilgrimage has become a really important tradition and annual excursion for the life of the Open Door Community. It is necessary for us to be people of the movement for justice to look beyond mainline historical pictures and analysis, to seek out, to get

ourselves out of our normal context, to go out and to find the history of African-American people and the Black freedom struggle on this continent.

Chuks Okeke said two months ago, "All the time you're asking those of us who are African American to talk about our lives, to talk about our experience. We need to hear from those of you in the community who are white about why you're in this work. Why are you in this movement? What are you doing with this agenda to dismantle racism? How did you get here and what keeps you here?"

This is part of my story. I know more than I need to know sometimes about my devoted Presbyterian forebears, who all believed themselves to be loving and good Christian people. They loved me into life, prayed for me, and how ungrateful I sound to turn on them and tell the down and dirty details of their lives. But their story is my story. And every day of my life I have to make a choice because I live as a person privileged by virtue of my white skin in this racist society. I have to make a choice.

These people are my bloodline: these proper upright Scotch Presbyterians, my forbears. But to be a free person I need some other ancestors.

These folks are my bloodline. But Harriet Tubman is my mother in the faith. Harriet Tubman, that scrappy, iron-willed, little bit of African woman, who carried a pistol in her belt. She was willing though I think she never did; she was willing

and ready to use that pistol on my great-grandparents if they stood in the way of bare Black feet running toward freedom.

It's a beautiful word: Freedom. But it is never an abstraction. It is never something that we remove from the context of history, the context of lives lived out by particular human beings. Freedom is always informed by concrete reality and the detail of real life. That's what is so messy about incarnation, and why it always means a cross.

Harriet Tubman's Freedom Train, which she defended with a pistol if she had to, actually meant freedom from

Mary Bailey Murphy, from Robert Murphy, freedom from Patrick Murphy, even if he was building a church. Harriet's freedom was freedom from my great, great, great-grandparents, and I have to choose. Mary Bailey and Robert Murphy are my bloodline. Harriet Tubman is my ancestor.

This cannot be a cheap and easy choice. Every step of this journey must be focused and intentional and understood. But the alternative is to simply be the white Presbyterian great-granddaughter of my forbears: to enjoy the privilege and power and wealth of my place, and to be quiet and still.

To be quiet about the blood on the floor planks of the church. To sit still in the pew when the daughters and sons of the slaves of my forbears are imprisoned and executed and left out of access to all that nurtures and sustains body and soul. Worst of all, to be quiet and still when these descendants of chattel slaves are held solely responsible for the unraveling of our sick society.

These Presbyterians are my people, and I love them. But I cannot be their daughter and do what the Lord

requires of me. I cannot simply be their child and ride on the Freedom Train when Harriet Tubman is the conductor. I can't walk their way, and at the same time, be on the jagged justice journey. I have to find new ancestors and a new identity.

There is an African-American Spiritual that says, "I told Jesus it would be all right if he changed my name." In some way we've all got to be ready to

have our name changed to be new people. To be white in this society and not fight against racism is to base our life on a lie—the lie of white supremacy. If we base our life on a lie, then we're dead folks. The only way to stop being dead folks is to struggle. A primary question for white people in these days is, "Are you alive, or are you dead?" Unfortunately, a whole lot of white people are not alive because the struggle is missing, because there is the acceptance of all the privilege and power that is given by the simple presence of white skin. To not struggle against that is to be dead.

One of the really hard things is

getting white people to acknowledge our power and the power of racism in our lives, and to acknowledge our own racism. We want to think that we've given up prejudice, or we're not acting that way anymore, or we don't believe what we were taught, that we're done with racism. The People's Institute for Survival and Beyond defines racism as prejudice *plus* power. Racism is not just believing that people of color are inferior. It is prejudice *WITH* power, prejudice built into the systems of power and privilege. None of us who are white can rightly deny that we have access to power and to privilege that comes to us simply because we have white skin. We have certain privilege, safety, protection, comfort, and convenience. We have to learn to recognize and acknowledge the benefits we receive because we're white in a society that is based on white supremacy. This is difficult because we generally go through life without even seeing the many large and small ways we benefit from white skin. We white folks cannot be free of racism. But we can struggle against it. We have always before us the opportunity to be part of the movement to dismantle racism and its structures of power and oppression.

John the Baptist tells us what we have to do to show that we've turned from our sins. He describes in the sermon we hear at the edge of the Jordan River an ethic of radical sharing, of curbing our greed and selfishness, and leaving our ancestors behind to build the Beloved Community. This is the choice that we're called to, and in that context, John the hairy prophet says, "The time is now to make that choice. Don't claim your good ancestry and think that's going to save you. Don't pull out your bloodline and your genealogy and tell me your folks were good and faithful! Because if God wants to, God can take these stones, these rocks on the ground, and make descendants to be God's family: Sarah and Abraham, Harriet Tubman and W.E.B. Dubois, the people of faith."

My favorite bread to use on our Communion table is a beautiful marbled rye: black and white dough woven together into one loaf. This is a great symbol of the Beloved Community, as a symbol of the companionship of God's people on the discipleship journey—in the struggle: the new heaven and the new earth, that comes as a gift from God's Spirit. The Black bread and the white bread are not homogenized to one color. They are woven together. They are intertwined. They are all One bread and One body. This is our promise: that through the blood, sweat, and tears of the justice journey we will be one people receiving the abundance of life and hope that is ours to share because of the goodness of God's Spirit.

Murphy Davis is a Partner at the Open Door Community.



GLADYS RUSTAY
At our last stop on the Negro Heritage Trail in Savannah, we viewed a collection of works by Ulysses Davis—African-American folk artist and barber. Open Door Partner Willie London shared how Davis had cut his hair when he attended Savannah State University.

David Cargill

by Ed Weir

(Editor's note: Ed Weir with his wife Mary Ruth, are founders of New Hope House, and are long-time friends of the Open Door Community and people on death row. On June 11, after David Cargill was executed by the state of Georgia, David's family and friends gathered to remember him. The following are some of the remembrances Ed Weir shared.)

I am proud to have known David. His life and even his death give me hope. David Cargill changed his way of living, his way of relating to other people while on Georgia's death row. For anyone to change while in prison is a miracle. But David allowed that miracle to happen in his life.

David and I first met in 1991. I noted that David seemed to be drowning in guilt, and I hardly knew what to say or do. But somewhere in all of this I reminded David that he was still valuable to God, that God still loved

him, that I was sure God had forgiven him, and that I kind of liked him.

In 1992 David began to get some help from medication. Dramatically he became more positive about himself and about life. Significantly David started sleeping at night and could communicate his thoughts more clearly.

By the middle of 1993 David looked physically healthy and seemed to be growing mentally and spiritually. At one point he talked about Tom Stevens who had been executed. David said he was not upset about the execution because Tom had been there 16 years and that this was a good release for Tom. David said that he and Tom exchanged books and food. It was the first time I heard David claim anyone as a friend.

In 1994 David began to talk constantly about his family. He talked hopefully of his brother. In 1995 he had an important visit with his father. The death of his sister Marsha was a loss he mourned. David spoke of his mother, Martha, at almost every visit,

hoping she was somehow doing well, worrying about her health, glad when she could come see him.

In 1998 David of course became concerned about his legal case. Mostly he was concerned about the effect it would have on his family. In March he had severe back pains and was transported to a hospital. The doctor wanted to know if he had any severe stress. "Sure thing" said David. His sense of humor was always warm and sustaining.

But mostly David said, "I'm ready. I know I have met Jesus, God has forgiven me, and all is OK." I was shaken by David's execution date. But as we had time together David helped me become a little stronger. David had grown into a person of strong Christian faith. Strong enough to believe in his own salvation and a trip to heaven. All this doesn't mean David was perfect. He realized he was a sinner just like you and me. But he accepted the gift of Jesus taking in all sinners.

On the night of his execution, we

heard a recording of a bit of David's final statements. In his first statement David said, in two different ways, he was sorry for the pain he had caused the victim's family. Then David said, "I am opposed to the death penalty. It is wrong." In his last statement David said, "I thank my family and friends who stuck by me through this." Not only was I impressed by the words, it was amazing how clear and unwavering David's voice was. It was a voice not fearing death but a voice confident in God's love for him.

I believe he is right in that. It hit me the other day that all this effort in executing David has been a waste. I suspect that because David was executed, people automatically believe he will go to eternal damnation. In fact I heard that very sentiment on a talk show as we waited to hear word about David's fate. But right now I think Jesus and David are having a closer walk and a closer talk in Heaven.

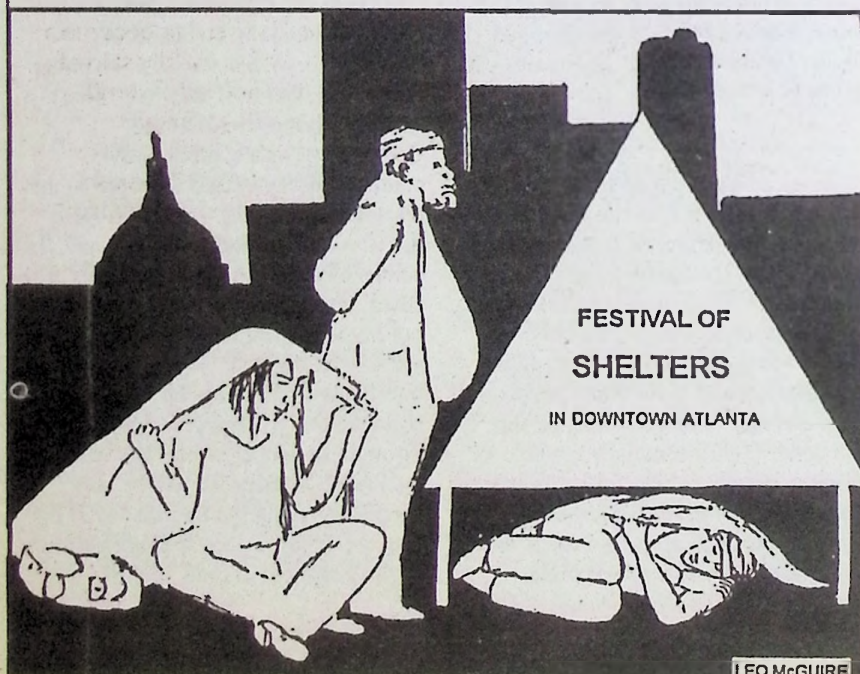
David Cargill has given me hope for this life and the courage to continue this work to abolish the death penalty.

Join Us for the Festival of Shelters

(We will keep a presence in Downtown Atlanta, September 13-15.)

The **Festival of Shelters** is a celebration from ancient Israel, which commemorates God's instruction to Moses and the Israelites. It is a joyful harvest festival and a time of remembrance. After the Exodus from Egypt, God commanded the people: "You shall live in booths seven days; all citizens of the land shall live in booths. . ." (Leviticus 23:42). The Festival is meant to remind all of God's people, especially those who celebrate a prosperous harvest, that we were once homeless wanderers. God provided for us in our thirst and hunger, and as we remember, we are led to share of our bounty with the poor and homeless of our day.

So the people got branches and built shelters on the flat roofs of their houses, in their yards, in the Temple courtyard, and in the public squares. . . All the people who had come back from captivity built shelters and lived in them. . . And everybody was excited and happy (Nehemiah 8).



David's Death and Wiley's Life

by Ed Loring

Hard News

David Cargill is dead. He was killed by electrocution according to the state laws of Georgia and the Constitution of the USA between 9:40 and 9:50 p.m. on Tuesday June 9th. David was helped and encouraged by letters, prayers, the anti-death penalty work, and the commitments that many of us share. In fact, in his last statement after asking for forgiveness and hoping for healing among the victims' families, he thanked his friends for the support they had given him.

On Sunday night, June 7th, at 10 p.m. Hannah Loring-Davis and Susan Loring met me and Murphy Davis at the airport when we returned from a wonderful trip to the Los Angeles Catholic Worker. We got up early the next morning, Monday, and went to the prison in Jackson where men under the sentence of death live, and where the electric chair waits like a hungry tiger crouched and ready to do the dirty bidding of the state and its minions who just do their jobs. That is, they feed the hungry chair with the lives and flesh of our friends.

We spent the day in the prison with David, his mother, Martha, his sister, Virginia, and his niece, Sharon. Randy Loney and Ed Weir were there and together we had a significant and loving time. We left the

prison at 4 p.m. and went to New Hope House where Mary Ruth Weir had prepared a delicious supper for us. Joanne Lingle, a Resident Volunteer at the Open Door Community who has recently returned from one of the Christian Peacemaking Teams in Hebron, Israel, was at New Hope House too. She had come to know and love David while she served as a paralegal and Resident Volunteer at New Hope House.

Tuesday, June 9th, was a long and difficult day. We met Ed Weir and Randy along with David's good lawyer Steve Baylis and his legal support team at the Butts County Courthouse at 9:30 a.m. Steve was filing a brief with several legal points that we prayed would find merit in Judge Arch McGarrity's courtroom. After an hour of listening to the state tell the judge why David should be exterminated and Steve petitioning the court for time to develop the legal issues on behalf of David's life, the judge recessed court for 20 minutes to think things over. Reassembled and almost before we could take our seats, Judge McGarrity announced that none of Steve's points had merit and there would "absolutely not" be a stay of execution.

During the court session David sat calmly beside Steve Baylis. He had chains around his ankles and clanked as he walked in the state-issued bedroom slippers that a

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prisoner under "death watch" is required to wear. Around his waist and across his left arm was a large black stun-belt. A guard sat 12 feet away with a remote control in his hand. If David tried to run, the guard would knock him down with the electricity in the battery pack in the belt. Rather high-tech inside this old red brick court room with unpadded pews and worn carpeted floors. As we entered the courthouse, we walked past a Confederate statue who keeps watch over the town with an unhappy grimace frozen on his face.

In the meantime Elizabeth Dede and Joanne Lingle had taken the family to Atlanta for the Pardon and Parole clemency meeting—two of the board members slept. The family wept and begged for David's life. The Pardon and Parole Board said, "No."

It was afternoon by the time we were all back at the prison. David spent most of the afternoon with his family as Ed, Randy, Murphy and I waited just outside the room where David sat. A little after 3 p.m. we entered the visiting area where several black-suited men from the Tactical Squad kept watch. We cried and hugged and told David good-bye. Ed wept and repeated to David how much he would miss him. At 3:30 the guards made us leave.

That night Ed and I stayed at New Hope House. We read Psalm 16 and thanked God for the verse that says God takes the power of death from us. We knew David would die soon, but death had lost its power in his life. Murphy had used this Psalm with David and his family the day before. The words were particularly fitting. I read W.H. Auden's *Musee Des Beaux Arts*: "About suffering they were never wrong, / The Old Masters:...." Murphy and Mary Ruth joined six or seven folk at the prison to keep vigil. Only one press person was outside covering the event, although several from across the state were in the execution chamber to watch it happen.

Elizabeth helped organize a vigil at the State Capitol. Friends from Jubilee Partners, the Interdenominational Theological Center, the Open Door Community, Kingsport Presbyterian Church in Tennessee, Amnesty International, Pax Christi, and several concerned citizens stood in a witness for life. Adolphus Victrum noted the next day at worship that there were fewer gestures of contempt and less cursing thrown at us than usual.

Maybe it was due to the lead story on the evening news. Three men in Texas had chained a Black man to the back of a pick-up truck and dragged him three miles. His body had come to pieces and little was left. The sheriff admitted from the get-go that the murder was racial. Or maybe there were fewer gestures of contempt because Helen Prejean, author of the important book *Dead Man Walking*, had given a major speech less than a week before in Atlanta against the death penalty. Or maybe it was because most of the people passing that way at that time of the evening were on the way to the Braves' game and, frankly my dear, didn't give a damn.

David was dead by 9:50 p.m. The Supreme Court delayed the 7 p.m. execution after David was in the chair. By 9 o'clock they agreed with our local judge that there was nothing there to merit life.

We are living in days when the death penalty is a necessary part of political and social life in America. Even most Christians are in favor of the death penalty. So I ask you: please put your love into action. Write a letter to the editor of your paper whenever there is an execution anywhere in the USA. Please wear an anti-death penalty button and put a bumper sticker on your car. The little light that we can let shine is to keep and create some small bits of space for an alternative to mainline American values and institutions.

Good News

WILEY DOBBS got the word on Tuesday June 9th, the day of David's death, that the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals upheld his case being overturned by a lower court!!! This means that Wiley will get a new trial. We are praying for the latter. Wiley has been on death row longer than anyone in Georgia, and only a few folk in the country have been under death sentence longer than he. When Murphy and I began our prison work 22 years ago, Wiley was one of the first persons we got to know. He has visited with our daughter Hannah, my son and daughter Neely and Susan.

Please drop him a note of hope and happiness:

Wiley Dobbs, D-028788
G-House
Box 3877
Jackson, GA 30233

Ed Loring is a Partner at the Open Door Community.

Argentina's Response to the Death Penalty

by Carlos Schroeder

(Editor's note: This article is reprinted from a paper to the Society for Romance Languages, Cincinnati, May 1998. Carlos Schroeder is an Argentine Poet and Comparative Literature Lecturer at University of Maryland. Our friend Elise Witt shared this piece with us.)

On September 11, 1991, the President of Argentina, Carlos Saúl Menem, sent a project for a new law to Congress. In it, he asked for a plebiscite to approve legislation in support of the installment of the death penalty in Argentina. Governmentally conducted polls had proved without a shadow of a doubt that most of the population opposed this proposal—over 70% of the respondents did not approve. Nevertheless, President Menem insisted on going forward with the idea. Despite overwhelming opposition from every sector of society—except the armed forces, and the hierarchy of the Catholic Church—nothing seemed enough to change the president's will.

On September 12, 1991, the day after President Menem's announcement, María Elena Walsh—perhaps the most famous Argentinean contemporary poet—submitted to the *Clarín* newspaper, as well as to radio and TV stations, a poem in which she presented her reasons for opposing the death penalty. The poem was published, marking the first time that a piece written for the cultural supplement of the paper appeared on the front page. The edition of the newspaper sold out. On pages two and three, usually dedicated to "politics," the text was discussed: references were made to the number of times the text was read on the radio and TV and the numerous calls the newspaper got from its readers stating their opposition to the death penalty.

On September 13, 1991, President Menem publicly acknowledged the withdrawal of the proposal. He

admitted that María Elena Walsh had influenced this change of opinion. "I advise the population to forget about the death penalty until 1993," he said, barely 48 hours after he had first presented the proposal.

"Death Penalty"

I was stoned to death for being adulterous, my husband, who had mistresses at home and outside, threw the first stone, authorized by the doctors of law, and in front of my children.

I was thrown to the lions for professing a different religion than the one held by the state.

I was condemned to the fire, guilty of deals with the devil, incarnated in my poor black cat, guilty of a mole on my back, a demonic stigma.

I was torn to pieces for rebelling against colonial authority.

I was condemned to hang until death for starting a rebellion of hungry slaves. My master was the arm of justice.

I was burnt alive because I held heretic theories, thanks to a Catholic-Protestant contubernal agreement.

I was sent to the guillotine because my revolutionary comrades considered abhorrent my proposal to include the Rights of Women along with the Rights of Men.

I was shot in the middle of the pampas, as a consequence of internal disagreements in the unitarian party.

I was shot while pregnant, with my priest lover, as a consequence of internal disagreement in the federal party.

I was forced to commit suicide for writing bourgeois and decadent poems.

I was sent to the electric chair when I was twenty years old, without time to repent or become a good citizen, as it is usually said of embryos in the motherly womb.

I was herded into the gas chamber for belonging to a different people than the executioners.

I was condemned *de facto* for printing subversive libels, and thrown half-dead into an unmarked mass grave.

All throughout history, educated or brutal men knew with certainty which crime deserved capital punishment. They always knew with certainty that I, not anybody else, was guilty. They never doubted the punishment was exemplary. Every time this punishment is mentioned, Humanity reverts to all fours.

- María Elena Walsh



A New Heaven and a New Earth

(continued from page 2)

his anti-slavery heart and his Abolitionist mind in Massachusetts and become a Princeton-certified-pro-slavery-Presbyterian preacher, he was out. He was a pariah, a leper, a tax-collector. He was no better than those lazy, trifling, cheating slaves he wanted to save and set free. He must say the Gospel of Jesus Christ is not about liberation, not about new life on earth. It's about pie in the sky by and by.

I'm ashamed to say this is my history. I listen to the subversive memory and voices of my Black ancestors. Because Rev. Jones said OK, he gave away what he believed in to have what he wanted. General Robert E. Lee did too. He gave away what he believed in to have what he wanted. The rewards are great. Sell out! You think capitalism can't buy you? You think the Republican and Democratic Parties aren't hungry for another one? The rewards are fine! Part of the temptation and the hell of living in such an affluent, rich, racist society are the rewards are there. Just like Judas. He gave away what he believed in to have what he wanted. Jones was pastor at First Presbyterian Church in Savannah, Georgia. He was professor of Church History at Columbia Theological Seminary, and his major work was a 500-page book on Biblical history, which sought to prove God wills, ordains, and blesses the slavery of Africans.

He became the leader throughout the South for the oral instruction of the

Negroes. He conformed to all the Nat Turner Black Codes. He worked so we could deny the right of the Black church to read—a basic principle of the Protestant Reformation. Martin Luther was willing to die for the right of the laity to read. Luther and the Reformation said that the power of the

able to claim the vision of Nat Turner that moved her, and changed the heart of this 13-year-old girl. She had to leave her brothers. "Come on, brothers!" she said, and the brothers wouldn't go. "Come on, brother. I don't want to leave my brother. Come on, neighbor! Come on, sister! Come

on, child! Come on, mama!" She had to run all night and hide all day. She left her mama and she left her daddy. And she kept on running. She prayed all the time, "Lord, give me courage! Give me freedom! I won't stop 'till I get my freedom! Give me love." She kept on running. She ran all night and she hid all day. She was 20 years old on the first run. She made it to

returned South. It wasn't just a better life for her or her children she was looking for. It was Jesus, justice, integrity, truth, character. Yes, the mighty power of Isaiah and Jesus in the midst of history. She risked freedom, and she led more than 300 slaves to the North. She did not, like General Robert E. Lee, or Charles C. Jones, give up what she believed in for what she wanted. She wanted what she believed in! And she kept on running! She wanted what she believed in, and she kept on running. She'd run all night and hide all day.

She is known today as the Moses for America. She is, not was. I'm not talking about some historical figure back there. Because those voices are alive and real today. I must have this heart of stone taken out and get me a heart of flesh. I have to get this white male mind that's kind of moldy taken out so that I can more faithfully witness the image of God and God's intention for all creation.

She was hated in the South. She disrupted the plantation more than Nat Turner. Ms. Harriet Tubman teaches us what Biblical freedom is for, what African-American History is for all of us, Black and white together. God gives us freedom so we can risk it, not put it on the shelf and hold it and get an alarm system or a bigger dog or a gated community. No! So we can risk it, and join the liberation journey to the oppressed. That's Ms. Tubman's gift to us today. That is the call of Jesus Christ to you and me. Have we got the courage? Have we got the guts? Are we on fire for the Holy Ghost? God's love for us is for love and justice with one another. We call up subversive memory, and memory sends us into the battle. Like Harriet Tubman, God gives us gifts to give away. God gives us a house so we can house the homeless. God gives us food so we can feed the hungry. God gives us life so we can stop the death penalty. God gives us money so we can end poverty in America as we know it. God gives us freedom so we can bring liberty to prisoners and rehabilitation to the injured in our system. God gives us salvation so we can preach and testify to the lost and the lonely and those outside the church. God gives us the vote so we can change the system and honor the widow, the orphan, and the stranger within our gates. God gives us Black and white together so we can practice the love Jesus gave us that sent him on to the cross but out of the tomb. God gives us the church, the Body of Jesus Christ, universal and particular so we can run with Harriet Tubman all night long into the city where a new Jerusalem is breaking forth now. ♦



GLADYS RUSTAY

Rev. Lewis Logan sharing Sunday dinner with the Open Door Community. Rev. Logan is Pastor of St. Phillip Monumental AME Church whose congregation hosted the Community for three days during our African-American History Tour.

Holy Ghost comes because the laity can read the Scripture, and that is basic to the Protestant movement. Jones turned his back on it. He wrote a catechism. He wrote books. He taught slaves to obey their masters in all things. He taught masters that they could have Jesus and slaves. Some people say today that you can have Jesus and lots of wealth, even though there are homeless and hungry and underpaid people who can't get food or foodstamps. That kind of preaching goes on today. Heard any?

Jones, like Robert Edward Lee, died a defeated, lonely, and sad man. The war came. The slaves left. The land lay in ruins, and white folks' theology and political structures lay exposed as white bones blasted by the sun after vultures have picked the meat and muscles and deserted it. Like Shiloh, like Gettysburg. Like when Dr. Martin Luther King exposed the war in Vietnam and its racist violent roots. Like when Malcolm X stood forth and exposed the character of white racism in a way that we still must listen to today. Lord have mercy!

II. Black Woman Running

It was in the year 1849, she began to run. She ran all night and she hid all day. It was in the year 1840, she was

the first house where there was a white Quaker. She made it in the daytime, and the Quaker woman opened the door and gave her a broom and said, "Start sweeping the front yard. We cannot allow people to see thee come in the house." She swept that front yard till the sun went down. She went inside, and she boarded the Underground Railroad. She kept on running. Lord have mercy. She would run all night and hide all day. She made it to Philadelphia.

And then she kept running, but she didn't go to Canada. She didn't go to Boston. She didn't go to Liberia, or anywhere in Africa. But she kept on running. She'd run all night and hide all day. She kept on running. Won't you run with her? She kept on running. She followed a different tune. She marched to a different drum. She bore a different cross. She led a different kind of life—a life that is available for all of us today. She's still running. She runs all night and she hides all day. She gave herself away to free men and women and boys and girls, who were back down South in slavery-land. She cried for justice. "Let my people go!" She moaned for freedom. "Give us freedom, oh Holy Spirit!" All creation groans until thy liberation fills the land. She lived for liberty, even down toward Liberty County. Nineteen times she

Atlanta to Train its Police in Dealing with Homeless

ATLANTA—The city agreed to train police on how to deal with the homeless and will pay \$3,000 each to five homeless people who sued the city for alleged harassment. Under a settlement announced this week, veteran officers as well as new recruits will receive the training, and the Task Force for the Homeless will monitor arrests of the homeless and allegations of abuse by police. "The monitoring that's required now gives us an authentic and entitled role in terms of noticing the treatment of homeless people on the streets," task force co-director Anita Beaty said.

Reprinted from
The Orlando Sentinel,
May 21, 1998

Dear Elizabeth:

After reading your wonderful story about the life and times of Carrie Echols in the March 1998 edition of *Hospitality*, tears were streaming down my cheeks. The story of her life was not too far from times I can remember growing up.

We have been friends and supporters of the Open Door for many years.

Continue to provide the unselfish devotion to those who come to your door.

Love in Christ!

Carl and Johnnie Forgay
Lithonia, GA

We Must Carry the Burden of Pain for All Prisoners

Yes, it's 1998, and your country is second only to Russia in record levels of imprisonment, and is far ahead of all other industrialized nations.

It doesn't take much "getting out of line" in this country, for a citizen to find himself or herself behind bars. You read and hear about it every day. In some states correction departments expenditures dwarf all other state budgets.

And to exacerbate the high cost of penal systems, parole boards are being curtailed or in some cases, done away with altogether. The thousands entering into prisons across the country will be held for longer periods of time without being afforded parole, which will require more prison construction to keep up with the rising demand for space.

Prison construction has skyrocketed over recent years and there is no end in sight.

People outside of the justice and penal systems do not understand what is happening, and allow political rhetoric to

deafen and blind them to the truth.

While justice and penal systems bleed the taxpayers, the "lock 'em up and throw away the key" attitude continues to siphon millions of dollars from other areas of state budgets in order to meet escalating corrections budgets.

Politicians tout "prison deters crime" or "incarceration slows the crime rate."

In reality, prisons are breeding grounds for crime, and the prison atmosphere of torment and abuse embitters many prisoners so when they leave prison they are worse off than ever.

There must be education, rehabilitation, reconciliation and some brotherly and sisterly forgiveness to truly deter crime.

There are many who have a relative imprisoned or know someone who is incarcerated. And for them, to carry the burden of pain for a loved one in confinement is a punishment in itself.

Right now, as the levels of prison populations continue to multiply, make a resolution not to forget the forgotten who languish in prisons across this country, and their families who long for a more kind country where their imprisoned husbands, wives, children, and friends can be reconciled, forgiven, and welcomed back into the arms of a caring people.

Dan Reeves
Hardwick, GA

Dear Friends,

I love receiving *Hospitality*! May God strengthen you in your service and continually enlighten you on your spiritual journey. We remember you at Mass at St.

Bernadette's every day. The churches here in Cedartown operate the Samaritan House/ Casa del Buen Samaritano to help those down on their luck, as all of us could be, really, at any time.

Half the members of our church community of St. Bernadette are from Mexico and Guatemala, and newcomers arrive weekly—victims of political and economic oppression—after an incredibly hard journey on foot and in the backs of trucks, exhausted and disoriented by a strange language and new and often crazy rules and regulations. We at St. Bernadette's are blessed by the help of two missionary sisters from Mexico, a seminarian from Colombia, and a deacon who comes out from Atlanta every weekend. Like you, we try with God's grace to live the spirituality of the Open Door and have dedicated our lives to the service of the and marginalized, that they find the peace and freedom of the children of God that we have found.

We have as our guide and teacher, Bernadette of Lourdes, the patron saint of the humble and of the sick. As we all learn, often the hard way, that without humility we are useless—nothing works!

May God bless y'all at 910 Ponce and all of us as we carry the message to the stranger, the alien, the abused, the lonely, the frightened, the depressed, the needy, those trapped by addictions, the confused—all of these!

Love in Christ.

Father Richard Young
Cedartown, GA

Grace and Peaces of Mail

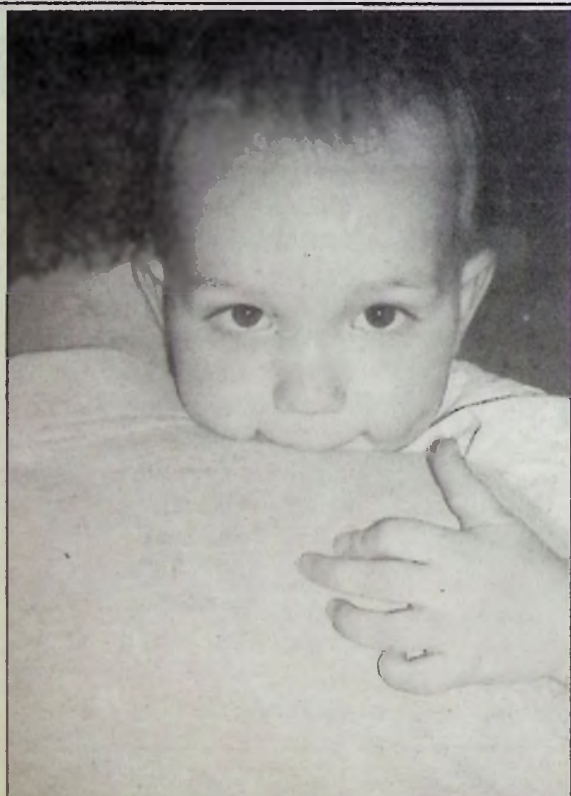
Four Questions

from Ed Loring

for Followers of
Jesus
the Liberator
a Dialogue with
Our Readers

1. How can we have the USA flag, or any flag, in our churches or homes? Is there a conflict between the pledge of allegiance (which God are we under, anyway?) and the Apostles' Creed? If so, what? And how does this relate to our ethical foundations for foreign policy? To the Boy and Girl Scout programs?
2. Are Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny a part of your church life? How? Why? How are the manger and the cross related to church growth? Why is Jesus so harmless in America?
3. Do you play golf? Do the members of your church? What is the relationship, if any, between the number of hours spent on the golf course and the lack of Christians jailed for actions on behalf of human rights, civil rights, resistance to the state, and justice?
4. How does an individual and a group receive the power of Jesus Christ which is the power to resist evil and death? Please list three concrete examples and their consequences for redemption and justice.

Please send your responses
to us at *Hospitality*.
Thank you!!



MURPHY DAVIS

Carson Paul Smith-Saunders, son of Brenda Smith, Open Door Volunteer Coordinator, and Stan Saunders.

Carson Wants You!

To spend 6 to 12 months as a
Resident Volunteer

- Live in a residential Christian community.
- Serve Jesus Christ and the hungry, homeless and prisoners.
- Bible study and theological reflections from the Baso.
- Street actions and peaceful demonstrations.
- Regular retreats and meditation time at Dayspring Farm.

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

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 those 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 910, 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 Summer retreat, July 10 - 12.

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

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 St Zip +

Phone

Open Door Community Worship

*We gather for worship and Eucharist on Sunday evenings
followed by supper together.
Please join us!*

June 28	5 p.m. Worship at 910; Nibs Stroupe, preaching
July 5	5 p.m. Worship at 910; Hattie Hill, preaching
July 12	5 p.m. Summer Retreat at Dayspring Farm <i>No Worship at 910</i>
July 19	5 p.m. Death Penalty Abolition Sunday Worship at 910; Murphy Davis, preaching
July 26	5 p.m. Worship at 910

Are 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!



Open Door Community Needs

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

Meat for the soup in
our Soup Kitchen
Sandwiches
Table and Floor Lamps
Soup Kitchen Volunteers*
Butler St. Breakfast Volunteers*

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

* 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!**