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Providing hospitality to the homeless and to those in prison, through Christ's love.

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June 2002

The Call to Discipleship: *Marginalization as a Gift*

By Nate Mathews

Jerome Hardeman is one of our friends from the street who regularly volunteers on Wednesdays in our soup kitchen. He washes dishes and pots, cuts vegetables, and just generally helps with whatever needs doing. As the Wednesday morning house duty person I have an opportunity to interact with Jerome on a weekly basis. Usually this takes the form of a simple hello and some joking. But a month or two ago he told me a story that made my blood run cold. He had been sitting, drinking a beer, when a police officer pulled up next to him, got out and told him to freeze. Jerome got up to run, took ten steps, then stopped and put his hands up. Approaching Jerome, the police officer began to beat Jerome on his back and shoulders. After he had beaten Jerome to the ground, the officer wrote up a ticket and told Jerome he had to appear in court. When Jerome came to court for his date, the officer wasn't there. The case was rescheduled. But the officer didn't show up for the second date. Instead of throwing the case out, the court rescheduled it again. Jerome was telling me this story because he was looking for legal representation for his third court date. "He's done this to other people before," said Jerome, "and I'm afraid he'll do it to me again. They had to put me in the hospital!"

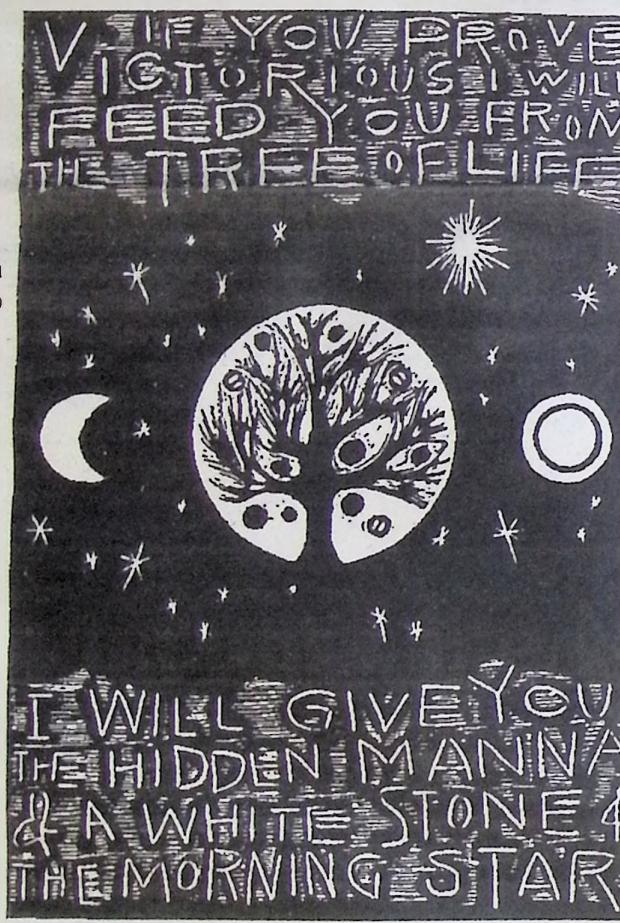
Jerome's story is concrete evidence of what marginalization is usually construed to mean in America today. By virtue of his economic status and skin color, Jerome is cut off from certain rights and privileges that others take for granted. Privileged white people who are working for racial and economic justice are used to using the word *marginalization* in an uncritically negative way. But

an important part of liberation, both for ourselves and the marginalized, is redefining the words that describe us. In doing so we open up new ways of viewing each other and ultimately of reclaiming our collective humanity. When we speak of marginalization as an unequivocally negative state of being, we are truncating a valuable source of resistance to the modern world. We are using the language of the Empire, the language of the center—the American Dream, the Good Life, "making the world safe for democracy." It is the language of the domination system, taking what it wants at the expense of those on the margins. It is war and imperialism. It is migrant labor and homelessness. The "Good Life" is a death sentence. And not only in the physical sense. For those who operate with unearned privilege in our society, the good life is a slow rot in a comfortable easy chair, a spiritual and moral vacuity. Accepting things "as they are" is tantamount to suicide for those who supposedly profit from it.

A critical distinction in this redefinition process is the distinction between marginalization as a conscious choice and marginalization as a fact of existence. In the American Empire, Jerome has been a

"disposable" person since the day he was born. He has had to contend with the absurdity of his existence in a society that hates him simply for his skin color and social location. For those of us who have never been marginalized in a significant way in America, it can become too easy to talk of the blessedness of marginalization. Let us not throw the word around too easily, lest we forget that the American Empire was built on a history of violent oppression of blacks, women, homosexuals, the poor, and various other groups who didn't assimilate with white, male, Western European culture. The definition of who is truly an American has

A Gift, continued on page 10



Coming Out and the Promises of Resurrection

By Will Smith

(Editor's note: Will Smith, who was a Resident Volunteer at the Open Door this year, delivered this sermon at worship on April 21, 2002.)

Picture this. You are Mary the Magdalene, going to the tomb of Jesus three days after his death. You discover that his body—the body of your teacher, your mentor, your loved one—is gone, removed from its tomb after a humiliating execution by the state.

What do you feel? You may feel hurt and angry; or sadness and confusion may overwhelm you. You see Simon Peter in a daze and an oddly peaceful man, whom we know only as the disciple whom Jesus loved, leave the tomb. You weep. You peer into the tomb and see two men sitting right where the body of Jesus had lain. Shocked by the sight of this, the way we would be at the sight of a desecrated grave site, you answer their question in distress and turn to see yet another man resembling a gardener asking the same questions: "Why are you crying? Who are you looking for?" You beg him to tell you where the body of your loved one is so that you can take it away.

The man calls your name—*Mary*—and your heart recognizes him and rejoices. You run to him (from John 20: 1-18).

Now picture this. You are Thomas. The man you followed for three years has just been assassinated by the powers that be. You are angry: at the power structures around you, at him for allowing himself to be put in a situation where he would be killed, at yourself for believing in what now seems to be nothing but lies. Now you doubt everything you ever believed as well as everything he ever taught you.

But, in shock, you see something before you that you desperately want to believe. It would mean that all you believed in is not a lie. *But I saw him die on the cross, you think. I saw them bring his dead body down.* Your heart believes, but your mind can't quite grasp it.

At this man's invitation, you reach out and touch his side. You rejoice (from John 20: 24-29). Now, had I been there at the reappearance of Jesus, had I been one of the disciples, male or female, had I just seen Jesus alive, after having believed him dead, I would have been overwhelmed. But loving him as I imagine they did, my

Coming Out, continued on page 8

Hospitality Propels Insight, Discovery, and Action

By Betty Jane Crandall

One never knows what one will discover when one reads *Hospitality*, or what the ripple effects of that discovery will be.

Here is what happened to me in April.

I found myself in the back room of a real estate office in the company of four other people who were strangers. I sat around a table with them and I was fed. I left feeling that my hungry heart was satisfied and my cup was indeed running over.

Where did it begin? How did I end up there?

This particular event happened after I read Charlie Warth's letter to the editor in the

February 2002 issue of *Hospitality* (vol. 21, no. 2). Charlie, who lives in Greenville, SC, wrote about the memorial service for Jim Gittings. Jim was a friend of the Open Door who encouraged Westminster Presbyterian Church in Greenville to begin a monthly trip, modeled after the Open Door's Hardwick trip, to transport families of prisoners from the Greenville area to visit their loved ones in prison in Columbia, SC. That letter hit me like a bolt of lightning. Ever since I finished my term as a Resident Volunteer at 910 at the end of June 1999, I have wanted to get involved in South Carolina in a 910 sort of way.

Hoping to get involved in Westminster's prison trips, I got Charlie's email address. That correspondence let me know I would be welcome to information and the schedule for the monthly trips to prisons in Columbia.

A week later, at a Peace and Justice Committee meeting, I discovered that Diane Hughes, another committee member, rents space from Charlie Warth for her art studio, and was returning to her studio after our meeting. So I just followed her over there and met Charlie face to face, at last. He invited me to the planning session for the next trip to Broad River Prison in Columbia. That's how I ended up being fed at the table in Charlie's back room.

Now I know four new neat folks with whom I will spend one Saturday a month. We will make more new friends and learn from each other, as we all

journey to and from Columbia together so that they may visit their loved ones in prison.

But this isn't the first time that something in *Hospitality* sent me down a new and unexpected path. Back in the summer of 1998, I read an article in *Hospitality* about the Festival of Shelters at the Open Door. I decided, with the encouragement of my pastor and some other friends, to go to Atlanta and take part in that journey of remembrance. That September, I walked for the first time down the hall at 910, and saw the poster on the bulletin board that said: *If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.*

DANIEL NICHOLS

I was scared and not scared at the same time. I felt that the universe was carrying me along, right to where I was created to be, and it was awesome. There was nothing I could do to stop it. And I had that same feeling when I sat around Charlie's table:

Another time I recognized the feeling was on a Monday in March of 1999, as I walked with seventeen others from the Open Door Community down the halls of Grady Hospital. There were armed security guards posted every three feet on both sides. We headed for the board room to confront the board's evil pricing increase to \$10 per prescription – an increase which would mean death for some people whose names I knew, and who knew my name, and who were no longer "me and them," but friends and brothers and sisters in my newfound beloved community.

Around Charlie Warth's round table in the back room of his real estate office, I welcomed the feeling like a familiar old friend! I no longer need wonder why I was called by God to spend time at 910 as a Resident Volunteer. I was called to the life abundant. And today everything in my yard rejoices with me: the birds, the oaks and hemlocks, the Carolina silver bell, the dogwood, the buckeye, the hostas and ferns and shamrocks, the tulips and wood hyacinths, the Solomon's seal, the creeping jenny, the parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme, the ants and beetles and earthworms all greeted me when I walked around drinking in all that abundance and beauty early

this morning.

You never know where reading *Hospitality* will lead you. This newspaper is not for sissies. It is an instrument of Yahweh-Elohim and should be read prayerfully and with great humility and courage.

Betty Jane Crandall was a Resident Volunteer at the Open Door in the spring of 1999.



Want to receive *Hospitality*?

If you have found *Hospitality* helpful and would like to know more about the Open Door Community, please fill out, clip, and send this form to:

The Open Door Community
910 Ponce de Leon Ave., NE
Atlanta, GA 30306-4212.

Please add me 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.

(or see www.opendoorcommunity.org for more info)

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HOSPITALITY

Hospitality is published 11 times a year by the Open Door Community (PCUS), 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 Community, please contact any of the following:

Phil Leonard: Volunteer Coordinator, Hardwick Prison Trip, Resident Volunteer Applications

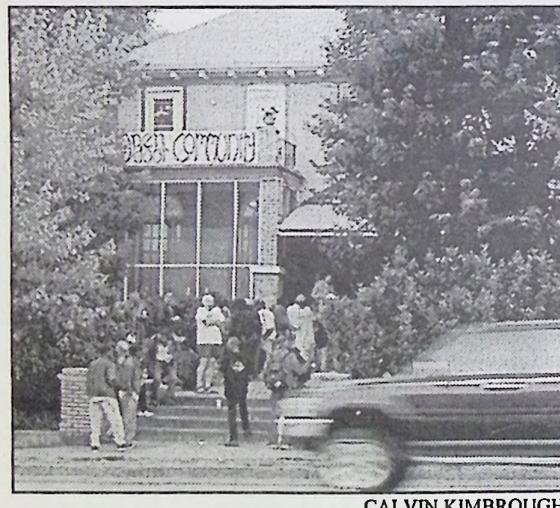
Tonnie King: Guest Ministry, Food Coordinator, and Hardwick Prison Trip

Gladys Rustay: Treasurer, Jackson Prison Trip, and Food Coordinator

Ed Loring: Correspondence, Resident Volunteer Coordinator

Murphy Davis: Southern Prison Ministry, Worship and Music Coordinator

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A Prayer of Heretical Adoration

By Suzanne Bassett

(Editor's note: Suzanne Bassett is a regular volunteer at the Open Door and a member of the worship community. She made the following reflection at worship on May 5, 2002.)

So, here's my take on it. I think you, Holy and wholly ONE, got a bad rap. I don't think Jesus' death on the cross was a sacrifice. I think Jesus knew exactly what he was doing. He wasn't dumb. He knew he was walking into the enemy's camp and he went anyhow, not as a passive victim, but as your Beloved, passionately devoted to You and the message You gave him about love and non-violence. He acted out his understanding of discipleship regardless of the cost and he believed so much in nonviolence that he refused to fight back even if it cost him his life. I think we as Christians need to really put the cross in the heart of our tradition and look squarely at the violence it represents. And I think we need to take Jesus' message about violence seriously.

Eternal Mother, Loving Father, Creator God—Maker and Sustainer of all life and all being,

Because you know my heart and all my thoughts, you know that Easter is a particularly hard season for me and quite frankly, I'm glad it's over. I must admit that I haven't checked the liturgical calendar, but I know it's over because the stuffed bunnies are on sale at Krogers. Piled in baskets along with garishly colored marshmallow Easter eggs, and a few forlorn packages of chocolate chickens, their vacuous stares turn heavenward.

I know it's over because the Easter lilies at K-Mart have been shoved aside and now wilt unnoticed, upstaged by the onslaught of gaily-colored geraniums, petunias, impatiens, and some pricey Gerber daisies.

Yes, I know Easter is over because the traffic on Sundays at cathedral point has returned to normal, and the crosses have been removed from well-manicured and over-fertilized church lawns throughout the city, and the colored eggs have migrated to the back of my refrigerator.

And, once again, the state-sanctioned violence of Jesus' death is met by the Church with deafening silence—unacknowledged and ignored. And that is what's hard—really hard for me.

I have to keep reminding myself that violence is big business in our culture. The US is the greatest manufacturer of weaponry the world has ever known and violence stimulates the economy. Never mind the fact that the number of people in this country, often very young people, who die in a year's time from handguns is greater than the population of many Georgia cities. Never mind that the Mideast is imploding and that desperate individuals bind explosives to their bodies in your name and kill the defenseless. Or that carnage of unacceptable proportions in Bethlehem surrounds the reputed birthplace of your child Jesus.

Of course, there's the violence of poverty, homelessness, homophobia, rape, and abuse, but they too go largely unacknowledged and inadequately addressed. Then there's environmental violence—often cloaked in the name of progress and healthy bottom lines and now national security—and we've been carefully indoctrinated that what's good for Enron is good for the country.

You see, we're somewhat inured to violence, especially state sanctioned violence. It keeps us safe, or so we are told by politicians who have trouble spelling the word *ethics*, much less incorporating the concept into their behavior. And we do feel a lot safer since we've humanely executed six of your children by lethal injection in Georgia, recently placing them cross-like on a gurney with arms outstretched so we can better inject the lethal fluid.

And that's what the Romans were doing, isn't it? Keeping their empire safe from insurrectionists like Jesus who threatened the status quo by advocating a new way of living based on loving one's neighbor as self. Of course, Jesus was a Galilean and those Galileans were always giving the Jewish

establishment and the Roman Empire trouble, and Jesus did make the mistake of interrupting business as usual in the temple during Passover when he messed with money changers. And then there were the crowds that had begun not only to follow him but, more dangerously, to listen to him.

But, of course, the theologians who shaped our tradition told us not to worry. That Jesus' death was necessary—*one perfect sacrifice for the sins of the whole world*, as the old liturgy goes. And that it was all orchestrated by You, which really puzzles me, because you're the very God who stayed Abraham's hand as it held the knife above his child Issac. The God who inspired the psalmist to write the life-affirming words: *The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want*. Interestingly, Jesus also described you as a shepherd—one that cared for her flock with such dedication and intensity that she went and sought out the lost sheep. Jesus told us you were a God who ran to meet and welcome us even when we arrived filthy and with swine dung under our nails. How odd—that such a loving and compassionate god would intentionally inflict the pain of the cross on her child.

And we are talking about pain here. Incredible pain. Ask Mary of Magdala. She witnessed the whole thing and at that moment I would be surprised if she interpreted what she saw on the cross as representative of your love. I imagine she totally missed seeing that etched in the agony of Jesus' face. Or that it even entered her mind that what she was really looking at was a "model for an interior psychological process of dying and rising" or that state sanctioned violence was necessary for her "spiritual edification" (Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Ann Parker, *Proverbs of Ashes: Violence, Redemptive Suffering and the Search for What Saves Us*). What she saw was a man who had been violently flogged, whose wounds were inches deep and oozed blood—a man who had nails driven through his hands and feet and was dying by suffocating—one of the most agonizing deaths ever devised.

But we have been taught that Jesus' executioners did what was historically necessary for salvation. Isn't that the same thing as saying that state terrorism is a good thing and that torture and murder are your will? Aren't we saying that those who loved

Jesus and didn't want him to die were wrong and that Jesus' enemies were the good guys? Aren't we saying that the Romans did the right thing and that we are grateful and glad that someone was tortured and killed for us? Doesn't the message that violence saves lives sanction state and personal violence? Isn't this just another way of saying that the ends justify the means?

I'm also deeply troubled because Jesus' life and teachings somehow seem to have gotten lost in a haze of *magical redemption*. Jesus said so much about loving and serving and so little about the concept of *personal salvation* and the necessity of worshiping him. He seemed to really believe that you should love your neighbor as yourself and do unto others as you would have them do unto you. He made strong statements about loving and forgiving your enemies and turning the other cheek in violent situations. And, ironically, he died living out this belief.

I struggle so with this. When I was a little girl I was taught the Bible verse, *God is love*. I cannot see the cross as an instrument of love no matter how we try to have the children pretty it up with flowers on Easter morning, or how much gold filigree we add to make it more of a fashion statement than a statement of faith.

If I'm a heretic, so be it. We know all events have layers of meaning and that no human or institution will have all the answers. I guess we'll be discussing the nature of the authentic message of Christianity for ever. Maybe that's the point. I know I'm going to struggle with Easter and the violence at the heart of the tradition as long as I live. I do wonder, however, if the Christian tradition had been as focused on addressing the violence represented by the cross as it has been on *pie in the sky bye and bye*, that the world could possibly be a better and more loving place.

Whatever our beliefs, however, we come this night having faith that You, most gracious and generous God, are our shepherd and *we shall not want*. *That You make us to lie down in green pastures, that You lead us beside the still waters, that You restore our souls and that You lead us in the paths of righteousness for Your name's sake, and though we walk through the valley of shadow of death, we will fear no evil.*

And so it is with all confidence, we can say without hesitation or reservation:

Our Beloved Friend

who is outside the system,
May your Holy Name be honored
by the way we live our lives.

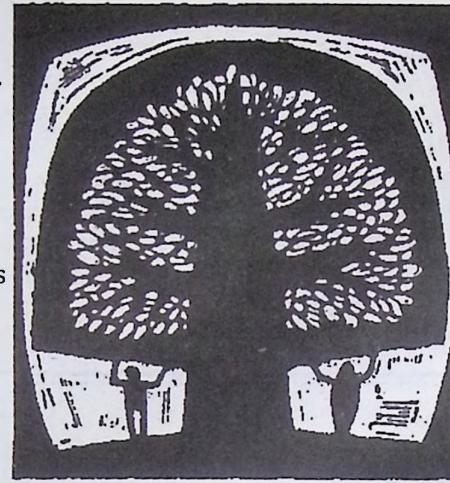
Your Beloved Community come,
Your way be done

inside the system
as it is outside the system.

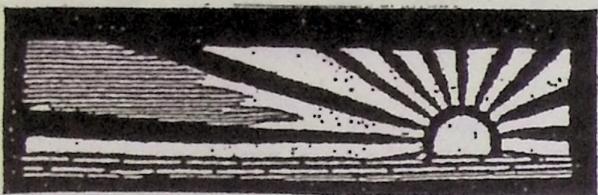
Give us this day everything we need,
Forgive us our wrongs

as we forgive those who have
wronged us.

Do not bring us to hard testing,
but keep us safe from the Evil One
For thine is the Beloved Community
the power and the glory forever and
ever. Amen.



MEINRAD CRAIGHEAD



By Tonnie King

Allow me to introduce Philip Webb, a graduate student at Emory University pursuing a Ph.D in Cultural Theory, and a regular Thursday volunteer at the Open Door.

With our soup kitchen and showers ministry, Thursdays are often our busiest day of the week. Philip is right there with us, working in the busy sorting room. He assists our homeless friends in acquiring much-needed items such as clean clothing and personal hygiene items. He also makes sure a telephone is available for use, and makes sure that our friends from the street receive the mail that has arrived for them at 910.

For Philip, who is also a graduate of Harvard Divinity School, this work is related to his own personal spiritual journey, and reflects the life we attempt to live out on a daily basis in the community. We are grateful that Philip has chosen to be a part of our lives. Even more importantly, we are thankful for his expression of love for the homeless of Atlanta. Thank you, Philip, for being a part of our family!

Tonnie King is a Partner at the Open Door Community.



TONNIE KING

Welcome to the Spotlight: Philip Webb

Do you have a
pickup truck to donate?

We need a reliable pickup truck
for the work of the community.

Can you help us?

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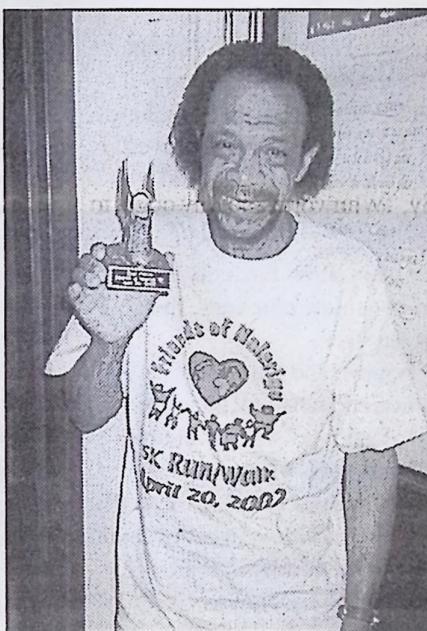
PLEASE CALL Tonnie King at (404) 874-9652
or Phil Leonard at (404) 874-4906.

VOLUNTEER NEEDS

- Groups to make sandwiches for Soup Kitchen
- People to cook or bring supper for the Community on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, or Thursdays
- People to answer the phone and door various mornings or afternoons during the week (9 a.m.-noon, 2-6 p.m., training provided)

For more information, call Phil Leonard
at 404-874-4906
or e-mail him at pleon2000@mindspring.com

Open Door Partner Ira Terrell Wins Trophy in 5K Race



GLADYS RUSTAY

Open Door Partner Ira Terrell gets a whole lot done before sunrise. After making the morning coffee at 3 a.m., Ira heads out for a training run at dawn through the streets of Atlanta. His persistence paid off. On April 20, Ira won second place in his age division at the Friends of Nalerigu 5K Run.

Fourth Of July Celebration

Every year, the Open Door
welcomes several hundred friends
for a Fourth of July picnic.
Can you help us?

We need chickens for our barbecue
and watermelons!

Georgia Parole Board Comes Under Scrutiny and Fire

By Mike Casey

Recent news articles have reported allegations about Georgia's Board of Pardons and Paroles that prisoners, their families, and advocates have believed for years. A series of articles printed in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* during the first weeks of April 2002 outline how Parole Board members may be giving jobs to members of their own families, accepting bribes for parole recommendations, and pressuring legislators to pass favorably viewed bills. The Board's chair, Walter Ray, and the man who allegedly controls the Board's actions, Bobby Whitworth, are currently under investigation by Georgia's Bureau of Investigation and the state Attorney General's office for criminal wrongdoing. Board member Gene Walker, furthermore, is charged with sexual misconduct.

The *AJC* reported that nepotism within state government is not uncommon; many state officials have family members employed by the Parole Board. Bobby Whitworth's son, Kenny, for whom it seems hiring guidelines were changed to enable a promotion within the parole department, now earns almost twice as much as some parole officers.

Regarding the hiring of family members, prominent local attorney Emmet Bondurant told the *AJC*, "It's a conflict of interest, pure and simple... The public can never have confidence that contracts or jobs are being awarded on merit if they're going out to friends and relatives of those in the position to influence the decision-making process." Cynthia Tucker, columnist for the *AJC*, wrote simply, "Whitworth and Ray ought to resign."

The *AJC* reported that Board members not only find jobs for their family members, but also for legislators and other political cronies. Even former corrections Commissioner and former chair of the Board Wayne Garner, who is still held responsible for abuses throughout the prison system under his tenure, is getting a \$48,000 piece of the pardons pie, for consulting.

To many *Hospitality* readers, seeing these names and allegations should come as no surprise. Not unlike the more recent scandals involving Wayne Garner, Whitworth was removed as the Commissioner of Georgia's Department of Corrections under then-Governor Zell Miller nearly 10 years ago, during a sexual abuse scandal at Georgia's prison for women in Hardwick. *Hospitality* reported extensively on these developments; its January 1993 issue detailed some of the allegations, including rape (some 200 potential counts against one employee), physical and sexual abuse, lack of medical care, promises of favorable parole reviews for sex, and staff members profiting from forced prostitution. As a "resolution" to these charges of rampant corruption, Governor Miller moved Bobby Whitworth from the post of Department of Corrections Commissioner to the Board of Pardon and Paroles, thus linking imprisonment and post-incarceration supervision under the same man's vision.

The *AJC* articles of April 7, 8, and 9, 2002, report on allegations that Whitworth and Ray took bribe money from a former deputy commissioner of the Department of Corrections, Lanson Newsome, who himself earned \$8 million when his electronic monitoring company was sold. Even former associate James Morris (ex-chair of the Board) is clear about his feelings on the matter. He said, "The doggone thing [the parole board] needs to be cleaned up or abolished." The two board members could face up to five years in prison if

they are convicted of accepting money to influence passage of a law favoring Newsome's company.

The Board, comprised of five people appointed by the governor, determines which prisoners are ready to be released to live and be supervised from home. In addition, this group oversees clemency decisions, wherein individuals sentenced to death can have their execution set aside, as in the recent case of Alexander Williams, who was a minor during the commission of his crime and is mentally ill.

The Board is thus a powerful group of people, with whom prisoners and friends struggle for relief.

Stories like the one recounted by Elizabeth Dede below are the norm, rather than the exception. It is in the political interest of the Board to keep people in prison and in the financial interest of the Board to keep prisoners on parole. In a \$50 million governmental body, control should be forced away from "good ol' boys" like Whitworth and Ray. And, more importantly, decisions about life and freedom should not be made by those who evade the calls to public accountability, fairness, and integrity.

Mike Casey is a Resident Volunteer at the Open Door.

A Parole Farce

By Elizabeth Dede

(Editor's note: Elizabeth Dede, a non-residential Partner at the Open Door, works with the Prison and Jail Project in Americus, GA. The following is reprinted from her monthly column in the Americus Sumter Observer.)

In a recent letter to the Prison & Jail Project, a prisoner whom I will call Bill Robinson asked me to involve the media in his case, which mirrors the situation of thousands of other prisoners in the state of Georgia. The *Americus Sumter Observer* is my access to the media, so I will report from Bill's letter on the practice of the Parole Board.

Bill is a non-violent offender who has now served more than six years in prison. His offenses are burglary, theft, obstruction, and attempting to flee/elude. According to the parole board's guidelines, Bill should have to serve a little more than two years. These guidelines take into account, among other pertinent information, the nature of the offense and the age and previous record of the offender.

However, in Bill's case, the Parole Board is requiring that he serve more than ten years. During the six years that he has been locked up, Bill has made every effort to improve himself by taking advantage of the available self-help programs. He has studied a vocational trade, "Commercial Cleaning," and has completed the Substance Abuse Treatment Program, Substance Abuse 101, Victim Impact, Family Violence, Confronting Self, and Anger Management. According to Bill, some of these programs are designed to equal inpatient treatment in a private facility such as "Charter by the Sea."

While Bill has sent to the Board certificates of his successful completion of these programs, the Board does not acknowledge these courses, or give them any value or merit towards a parole reconsideration. In fact, at his first parole review, Bill was automatically set off for eight years.

Bill has other characteristics that should count toward his parole consideration. He came into the prison system at close security. During the six years he's been in, Bill has worked his way up to minimum security because his record is so good: one disciplinary report in the last four years. On the outside, Bill has support as well. An employer has promised him a good job starting at \$10/hour. He has a safe place to call home that is not in the county where he got into trouble. Bill is willing and able to wear an electronic monitor. As Bill says, "I meet the kind of criteria which would call for an early

release, not an eight-year set off."

Why is someone like Bill locked away when he shows such promise for a reformed life? The answer in part has to do with political expediency. The people of Georgia have said that they want get-tough-on-crime policies. In response, the Parole Board has developed its 90% rule—a prisoner will serve 90% of their sentence, which explains the frequency of eight-year set offs.

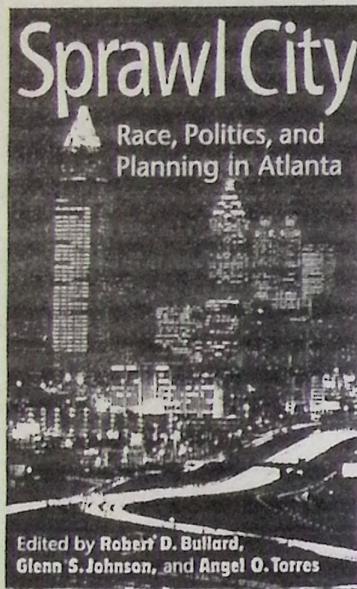
However, Bill's letter to the Prison & Jail Project points to an additional reason for long sentences: money. The state collects taxpayers' money for all of the programs that it has in effect. The total budget for the Georgia Department of Corrections is \$954 million. Large sums of money from the state budget and from federal grants provide for this vocational training and for the self-help programs. Bill asks why the taxpayers continue to fund these programs when the Parole Board refuses to acknowledge a prisoner's successful completion of the courses.

The Prison & Jail Project is glad for the few self-help programs that remain in the prison system. Many educational opportunities are no longer available to prisoners because of punitive lawmakers who think that a prison sentence isn't punishment enough. With increasingly long sentences, long parole set-offs, and fewer prison programs, we are creating a prison population of hopeless people. Despair can lead to desperate acts. And what will happen to someone like Bill when he is finally released after ten years with little preparation for life in the free world, and much reason to be hurt and bitter?

The Parole Board should abandon its eight-year set-off practice. When prisoners work hard to better themselves through programs and good behavior, this work should be acknowledged. If a positive situation awaits a prisoner, the Board should consider this in a positive light. If the Board is not willing to actually review the individual cases of prisoners, then perhaps it is time to abolish the Board. As the Prison & Jail Project whittles away at injustice, we want the prison system to be reformed so that people like Bill can have hope for their futures, even when they have made mistakes in their past. Hope comes through prison sentences that fit the severity of the crime, which means that many non-violent offenders would be in alternative programs to prison. Hope is found in the real possibility of parole when prisoners show that they have worked toward reform. Hope is there when a good situation on the outside awaits a prisoner's release. Let us all work to keep this hope alive.

City Planning As A Matter of Social Justice

Book Review



Sprawl City:
Race, Politics,
and Planning in
Atlanta. Edited by
Robert D. Bullard,
Glenn S. Johnson,
and Angel O.
Torres. 236 pp.
Island Press.

By Alan Jenkins

If you are poor in Atlanta, your death is unlikely to cause stir or notice among the privileged. A homeless man is hit

by a car; a child dies of asthma complications in smog-filled urban Atlanta; a poor man fishing for the family dinner in the creek on the south side of town dies of cancer from toxic fish. The monumental book *Sprawl City: Race, Politics, and Planning* opens our eyes to the root causes of such unnoticed tragedy. Editors Robert Bullard, Glenn Johnson and Angel Torres concretely show the far reaching effects of urban sprawl on all Atlantans, regardless of race, class, or age. Reckless urban development hurts all of us and God's creation upon which we depend. We all long for fresh air, short commutes to work, clean water, and green space. Yet these sociologists from the Environmental Justice Resource Center at Clark Atlanta University show that it is poor, Black, and Hispanic Atlantans who suffer most intensely from urban sprawl. This multi-disciplinary yet accessible book also resonates strongly with the Open Door's experience with the homeless.

In order to understand today's urban sprawl phenomenon, it is helpful to draw upon geological and ecological history. About 300 million years ago, Georgia and all of North America began to break off from Africa. As the two continents made way for the Atlantic Ocean, earthquakes and the folding and shifting of tectonic plates in Eastern North America began creating what is now believed to be the oldest chain of mountains in the whole world. For about the last 150 million years, God has been at play (and rest!) here in the Appalachian mountains and her foothills in Atlanta, keeping glaciers and the rising of oceans at bay.

Protected from such interruption, God has created more diversity of life here than any other place in the world outside of rainforests. From the Southern Red Oak to the Red-tailed hawk and black bear, from a family of curious river otters to the intense black panther, and the highly coveted ten-pound channel catfish (the favorite of Open Door residents Syc Pressley and Ira Terrell), God looked around and saw that it was *good*. This area has been teeming with God's colorful, abundant, and playful community of interconnectedness. Yet, as the authors of *Sprawl City* spell out, the actions of one

particular animal has, in more recent years, made her very sad.

Between 1988 and 1998 alone, human beings have "developed" (bulldozed) five hundred acres of green space, farmland, and forests *each week* (188). Bullard, Johnson, and Torres, and our homeless friends at The Open Door, reveal to us that such so-called "progress" is leading to the untimely death of all creatures, including humans.

With the loss of over 60% of tree cover since 1972, we have lost clean air and cooler summer temperatures. The Atlanta area has been covered with roads, parking lots, and buildings that inevitably retain heat; hence, summer temperatures can be up to ten to twelve degrees hotter than in the surrounding countryside. Combined with increasing car pollution, air quality in the urban context becomes an increasing health risk (188).

Each year during Holy Week our community members rotate taking twelve-hour tours of the city streets. Mary Byrne (*Hospitality*'s Layout Editor) recalls how sore her throat felt throughout that early spring day in 2001, despite constantly drinking water. What must this be like for our brothers and sisters who not only walk daily on the streets, but who also live on the streets? Unlike the many commuters coming to the downtown area five days a week, they cannot jump in their car and speed off to the spacious suburbs. *Sprawl City* notes that the respiratory health of these drivers, the majority of whom are white, is also affected, albeit for shorter times. Nonetheless, the authors make all too clear that the costs of sprawl are unequally placed on those in the urban context, mostly people of African descent and those receiving little or no income.

Nationally, mortality rates from asthma are 100% higher for those not of European descent (199). After a summer day smog alert in Atlanta, studies show that the number of children that check into Grady Memorial Hospital for asthma (majority Black and Hispanic) increases by over thirty percent. Yet air pollution is just one of the many negative effects of our car-dependent city. As commuters frantically rush to and from work, they collectively make Atlanta

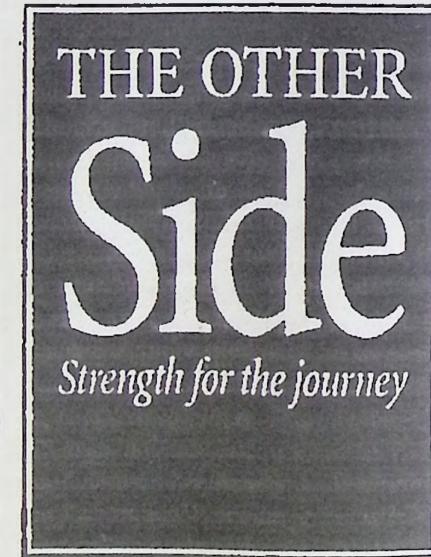
the third most dangerous city in the United States for pedestrians, the majority of whom are people of color. For the car-less in this car-dependent town, this is the same transportation apartheid Rosa Parks protested a half-century ago, only in a new form.

Writing from a Black, social justice perspective, the editors spend a full chapter each on transportation apartheid, the widening education gap, barriers to fair housing, residential segregation, legal reform and urban sprawl, and energy use. Although not stated directly, all of these areas point to causal relations of homelessness. These are familiar themes to us at the Open Door; stories from our friends on the street link directly back to *Sprawl City*'s portrait of urban growth run amok.

The way we relate to one another and the earth, through the infrastructure of the city of Atlanta, is a sin against our Mother God. We further know that we are hurting ourselves, too. As the Genesis creation story reminds us, we come from the soil. We are a part of the earth. Damage done to the natural world is damage done to our human brothers and sisters, and all generations to come after us, unfortunately. With this in mind, we have our homework cut out for us.

First, we need to re-read the biblical interrelationship between salvation, healing, redemption and the rest of creation. Second, if we are serious about tangible social change for the coming of God's reign among us, we must educate ourselves, our congregations, and communities about unjust and unhealthy development. We must empower our communities for public and political involvement to bring about alternatives. As unorthodox as it may seem for those of us in the church, we must study ecology and urban sociology in addition to the Bible and theology. *Sprawl City* is an excellent start, laying out critical issues and pointing us in the direction of community education and activism.

Alan Jenkins is a Resident Volunteer at the Open Door. For current info on environmental racism and related issues and activities, visit www.eirc.cau.edu.



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Coming Out, from page 1
first inclination would have been to run to him and embrace him, and to hold on for dear life. As if everything in me depended upon his being there: *alive!* But the wording in this gospel would have us believe that Jesus restrained the disciples from doing so. Why would he do such a thing? I hope he wouldn't.

Mary recognizes Jesus and runs to him. Instead of stopping her, he smiles and opens his arms to welcome her, embracing her lovingly. What he says to her next is amazing. "Do not hold on to me," as if for dear life. "You no longer have to. I am ascending to our God soon. Now you and the others must continue that good work we've started." Jesus is saying here that in his life and ministry, and on the cross, he has empowered us to move forward, and that dependency, or reliance on religious structures, is no longer needed. Because of him, we have access to God. Because of his death on the cross and his rising to the Mother, we can pray and have faith.

Let us consider Thomas again. Frightened, he places his hand at Jesus' side, feeling the wound there, and falls weak-kneed, perhaps crying, saying gratefully, "Is it you, my Lord and my God?" Perhaps he embraces Jesus who embraces him in return. What Jesus says here too, is amazing. "Have you believed only because you have seen me? No, Thomas, you did believe. You touched me because you knew in your heart it was me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

Jesus, I feel, did not single out Thomas here to embarrass him. He knows Thomas as he knows us. He knew that he, probably like many of us here, would be caught in a struggle between his head and his heart, between what he saw, and yet what he felt to be true.

I believe that Jesus did not reject Mary or Thomas because of their need for proof. Jesus understands the reasons behind our inability to trust and yet helps us to do so, just as he did with Mary and Thomas. Jesus validated Thomas's need to touch and Mary's need to embrace him by allowing them to do so. He is not telling us that he must be in heaven to become attainable, but that, even though he must ascend, he is still with us and will always be, every day of our lives.

In a sense, Jesus is making a statement of pastoral care here. He is gently telling Mary and Thomas that the struggles between mind and soul need no longer bind them. He tells them—he is telling us—that growth

and authenticity can begin in our lives. In dying on the cross, and being freed from the tomb, he has helped us to begin that process: the process of untying the bands of cloth that bind us and keep us from embracing what we know to be real, whether those bindings are the powers and principalities that exist in our lives, or family dysfunctions, disease, addictions, whatever.

Those same bindings bound Lazarus. Let us look closely at Lazarus.

In this gospel story (John 11: 28-44), we are given a metaphor for both life and death; we are invited to see that we need not be bound by compliance to the structures around us. We don't have to give in, or give up, or live in denial, or believe the stuff heaped on us by billboards, TV, movies, newspapers, corporate deals, our own families, or the church. We have been given the tools we need to be freed from those constrictions, and empowered to begin moving toward

selves as Mary and as Thomas, and perhaps some of you have stepped into the shoes of Lazarus as well. We spend a good deal of time here at the Open Door attempting to look at life from the perspective of those who are homeless or in prisons, because that is our focus. Now, I'd like to ask you to consider walking with me, or someone else you know who may be gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered. Ask yourselves what binds us? What bands of cloth so tightly bind us, that we are hindered in our journey toward wholeness?

You see, our resurrection, just as with Lazarus, is not complete without the support of the entire community. As Christ empowers us to leave our tombs, and as we continue to do the work of coming out, of telling the truth, whether that truth be about heterosexism, racism, classism, homelessness or any other *ism*, we

need others to help unbind the bands of cloth about us to set us free. Those bands of cloth have restricted our own lives, as well as those about the straight community: bands of fear and hatred, of denial and self-loathing, of slander and defamation.

"Coming out" of our tombs is not merely resurrection, it is a resurrection challenge to live and show ourselves with integrity. To be who we are. It's the same for everyone, gay or

straight, black or white, female or male. It's personal as well as communal. And now here's the kicker: it takes a lifetime of work.

Yet, as Peter, Mary, and the disciple whom Jesus loved (who did believe without seeing) witnessed in the tomb, Jesus' wrappings were neatly folded and placed where he had lain. Jesus was somehow able to remove these bindings himself. Or perhaps the two angels Mary saw did the unbinding. We don't know. The point is: his unbinding is complete. And because of that fact, we can have faith that one day, even though we may not yet see, the Beloved Community will become the reality of the world we live in. The Good News is that the resurrection of Jesus is complete. If it were not so, why are we even here?

When Jesus calls our name as he did Mary's, we recognize him and we recognize ourselves. We believe without seeing. We believe because we have felt Jesus resurrected in our

own lives.

For me, I know that Jesus came out of that tomb as the risen Lord, empowering us to grow into wholeness, because I have been, and still am, in many ways, Lazarus. I have died and been resurrected, empowered to move into that wholeness, into my own ability to continue rising, walking, and journeying in this life, knowing that the bliss of Resurrection is meant to be lived on earth, as it is in heaven. Inside the system as it is outside the system.

My tomb was that I was raised to embrace the heterosexist, white male privilege. When I discovered that I was different, I prayed for years, ceaselessly, to be made straight. I pretended as if I were. I tried to become something I wasn't, denying myself and God. The tomb, the closet, is not merely a hidden secret; it is a place of non-being, a living death, a denial of God's good creation. It is an inability to move toward wholeness and authenticity; it is an inability to rise, as Jesus did, as he called Lazarus to do. As he calls us to do. In the tomb, we are bound and gagged and prevented from being who we are and who God created us to become. I died to this in my own life and was resurrected into new life, just as all of us here have been. And perhaps, because we have felt this, we can believe. Because Jesus came to me, and shared his wounds with me, just as he did Thomas, and held me, just as I believe he did Mary, I can believe.

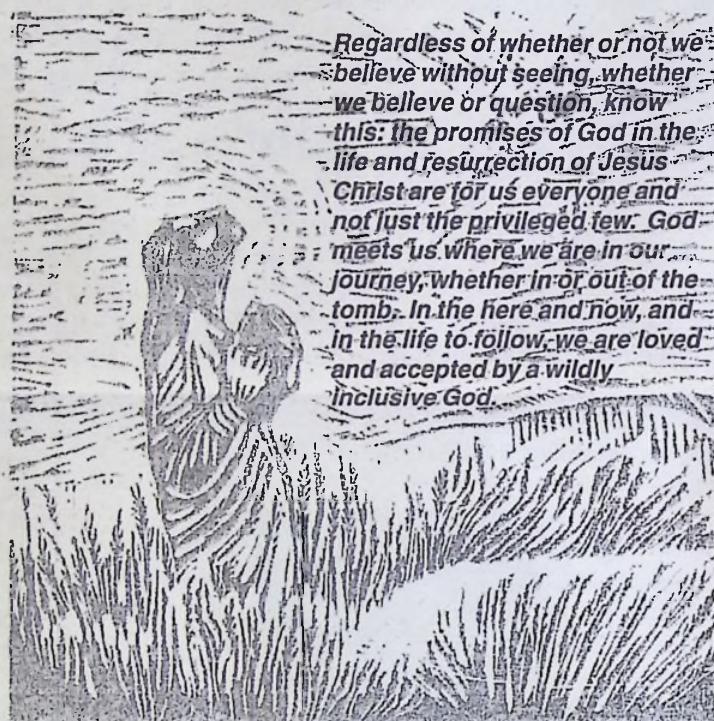
Regardless of whether or not we believe without seeing, whether we believe or question, know this: the promises of God in the life and resurrection of Jesus Christ are for us—everyone—and not just the privileged few. God meets us where we are in our journey, whether in or out of the tomb. In the here and now, and in the life to follow, we are loved and accepted by a wildly inclusive God.

I tell you this today because, as a gay man and as a gay man wounded by the church, I see the lesbian and gay community intentionally beset by exclusion by the same principles and goals that executed Jesus, that still execute him today in our prisons, and that ignore him when he sleeps on the streets. These same powers tell the lesbian and gay community that God does not love us and that the promises of Easter are not for us.

Yet, when I look at that particular community of which I am a part, or when I look at those who live on the streets or those waiting for death in prisons, you know what? We all, despite everything, rise.

If any other community of loving people had been told for most of their lives that they were an abomination, had been beaten down, struggling to find a voice, can you blame them for having

continued on next page



GRAPHIC BY SUSAN MACMURDY

authenticity as communities of faith and as ourselves.

Jesus showed us that this is possible by bringing Lazarus from the tomb, literally a dead man, from death back into life. Lazarus did not emerge from his tomb as the perfect picture of emotional and physical health. When Lazarus emerged, he was still bound and a bit gamy, I'm sure, and needed the community's help to remove the cloth tightly wrapped about his body. Now here's the reason behind the metaphor. Because we too are continually emerging from our own tombs, bound as tightly, we need each other as well. Think about this. What are the cloths that tightly bind us? What stuff is there about each of us that hinders us from embracing our full potential as human beings? What stuff is there about our communities, such as the Open Door, that keep us from embracing the radical theology of Jesus? What issues do you and I have that keep us in our tombs? That keep us dead?

I've asked you to picture your-

doubts of God's love? Can you blame them for asking for proof, just as Thomas did? There is no shame in this; reproach is not what this gospel is about.

Well, guess what else? The fact is there are and have been many such communities of good and loving people that have been struggling and beaten down. The lesbian and gay community is but one among many in a long line of oppressed peoples, oppressed by a church and society that just doesn't get it. There are many Christians today, both gay and straight, that would not believe Jesus if he came to them today. They, we, would not believe, because of the garbage heaped upon us by that same church and society, garbage that we have internalized, which binds us. We're told, "You are not worthy of God's love because . . ." Let's fill in the blank. Because you are a woman. Because you are black; because you are too young; because you are in a wheelchair; because you're homeless; because you murdered someone. Because I am a homosexual.

But still ... we rise.

Rosa Parks rose when she refused to get up out of that bus seat. Murphy Davis rose when she began our worship service tonight after a six-month absence. Martin Luther King Jr. rose when he wrote that letter from a Birmingham jail on a roll of toilet paper. And you know when Sye Pressley cooks biscuits that they're gonna rise.

And Matthew Shepherd rose when he was murdered because he was gay and left nailed to a barbed wire fence in Wyoming in the manner of a crucifix.

Many of us in this room, right now, need to touch the wound in Jesus' side, the holes in his hands and feet. We need to embrace him, and perhaps more importantly, we need to be embraced by him.

What I want each of us to know, whether we are homeless, imprisoned, rich or poor, old or young, whatever state we live in, what I want us to believe, is that the promises of the Resurrection are for you and for me. I want us to know that the hope and the love and the life in the resurrection of Jesus Christ is for all.

Look around this Christ Room. We are not second-class citizens; God loves us. We are not abominations; God loves us. We do not live in the obscurity of the tomb, but we are invited, we are called *out*; God loves us. We are no longer bound, but we are a community of faith; God loves us. We are moving and we are rising toward the promise of resurrection life, right now, in the present.

We rise, we rise, we rise; God loves us. Happy Easter! Hallelujah! And Amen!

Join us as a Resident Volunteer!



CALVIN KIMBROUGH

Albert Wingate, an Open Door Resident Volunteer in 2001, sets the table for breakfast.

- Live in a residential Christian community.
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Ex-Student Returns To 910

By Jay Shippen

The experiences that I have had at the Open Door Community in Atlanta have been the most educational of my college career and the most transformative of my life. They have shown me that the Third World does not only exist in other countries. Through these experiences I have learned that I want to work as a poverty lawyer and theologian.

I have been transformed by serving meals, providing showers and clothing, and cleaning the public bathroom. I have also been transformed by taking families without transportation, to see their loved ones in prison, and writing to and visiting people in prison, particularly those on death row.

I have found from my experience at the Open Door Community that it is not enough to treat the symptoms of poverty. We must also speak out against the conditions that create such a large homeless and imprisoned population through various forms of activism.

Although I grew up in Atlanta, I had never heard of the Open Door Community until I took the Third World Experience and Seminar in my second year of college at Presbyterian College. The Honduras Course, as it is called by students because of a trip that the class takes to Honduras each year during its Spring Break, was an eye-opening experience for me primarily because of four days my class spent at the Open Door Community. In Honduras, my class met with rural farming communities, Chiquita Banana and sweatshop workers, feminist organizations, and labor union organizers, all of whom were struggling to survive and establish human rights. At the Open Door, however, I learned that in America, the land of abundance, people were in the same way struggling for survival and for human rights. It was incredible to me that the Third World existed in my home city.

In the summer of 2000 I decided to do an internship at the Open Door Community. I lived in the community that summer like everyone else, doing the same jobs with the same responsibilities and expectations. As an intern I also learned about and attempted to understand the experience of homelessness, imprisonment, and community life. Part of this education consisted of getting to know the homeless people we served and writing to and visiting a man on death row, who has since become a wonderful friend. It also consisted of going to many of the common places the homeless go and experiencing the intentional unwelcome and violence that the city offers to those with nothing. At the main shelter for men in downtown Atlanta, where five hundred people stay every night, I saw the men lying on the floors of large factory rooms with no room between them, and with bright lights shining on them all night. Along with a group from the Open Door, I spent the night in the middle of a parking lot with fifty homeless people and learned what it is like to have to go to the bathroom in a city with no public bathrooms. I went to the soup kitchens and labor pools that treated people like farm animals, and to the courthouse, where the homeless often finish the day for no reason except that they are vulnerable.

It was from experiences such as these that I began to concretely discern that my vocation is to work with and on behalf of the homeless and people in prison. I also wanted to know and work with the Word of God through scripture, conscience, and tradition. I began to hear then, as I do today, a call to be a lawyer-theologian for the poor.

Jay Shippen will join the Open Door this summer as a Resident Volunteer and work at the Georgia Resource Center, an organization which provides legal representation to people on Georgia's death row.

A Gift, continued from page 1

expanded over the course of almost two hundred fifty years, but Americans are still defined by the language of the center.

As a colonized people within a strange land, black folks have existed on the margins since they were forcibly taken from Africa 400 years ago. They were lynched, burned, raped, imprisoned—at every turn, the center attempted to violently exterminate them. They were, according to the sacred documents of our Republic, only three-fifths of a person.

But these devalued and terrorized people used their colonizers' religion, along with the remnants of their old cultural traditions, to forge a completely new identity on foreign soil. When the mere existence of their community was an act of rebellion and subversion, they defiantly held on to their oral tradition, molding it into spirituals, blues, and jazz: the first original American art forms. They redefined the Christianity they inherited from their slave masters into a potent form of resistance and liberation, a call to accountability from their place on the margins. Voices like Nat Turner, Harriet Tubman, and Frederick Douglass practiced a liberating gospel that conflicted sharply with white Christianity's idolatrous practice of slavery.

Black humanity collectively served as one of the most important American prophetic voices of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in part because of their marginalization. They were not as apt to believe the slick optimistic messages America sold its citizens. Their reality bespoke otherwise.

It is common today to hear that the civil rights movement was about creating a color-blind society and realizing the dream of liberal equality. This is an excessively watered down version of the movement's goals, and a cheapening of its resistance. One of the movement's prophetic tasks was to ask hard questions about our society, questions which would never be asked at the center, whether liberal or conservative. To quote Bob Moses, a community organizer with SNCC in the 1960s, "the liberals getting upset at us was inevitable. We are raising fundamental questions about how the poor sharecropper can achieve the Good Life, questions that liberalism is incapable of answering."

But the American Empire mythologizes equality under the law, and since civil rights organizers, especially the SCLC and Martin Luther King Jr., often couched their goals in terms of that myth, it became easy for the center to co-opt the popularity of the movement and avoid any fundamental challenge to its power. Come to the center, it told black folks. Sure, you can eat with us, shop at our stores, and ride on our buses! Come to think of it, your demographic has a lot of unused market potential! We can make clothes and cars and houses and cleansers especially for you! You are equal to us, and just as human as us and so can participate in all the ridiculous consumption that we participate in. By defining black folks as human on white folks's terms, the center was able to neutralize the tradition of prophetic African-American resistance.

One of the ways The Open Door Community resists the center's co-optation of the Movement is simply sitting down to eat with a diverse group of folks. As a privileged white male who freely chose to come to the Open Door, I am going to the margins not to "help" marginalized people become unmarginalized, but to reclaim my own humanity by eating and working together. Each time someone from the street shows kindness to me, they are redefining me on their terms. They are inviting me into a space that is theirs. Together we affirm each other's humanity.

Many people still have trouble with the idea of privileged folks making a commitment to live and die on the margins. Again and again in community the question comes up as to why we will never move to the center. Shouldn't we try and reach more people with our message if we are trying to build a better community and society? Couldn't we serve more people if we expanded our programs or compromised our radical stance? Does our prophetic vocation create irreconcilable differences between "what is" and "what should be"? These are difficult questions, but as we look hard at them we scratch the surface of a certain fundamentalism of the center.

Three of the center's most deadly and effective myths in our modern world are equal opportunity, absolute tolerance, and redemptive violence. As we have seen earlier, the experience of Africans in America makes us think long and hard about the existence of any so called equality in the United States of America. As for the value of tolerance, it is fundamentally incompatible with a theology of solidarity with the poor and oppressed. "Tolerance," wrote British social critic G.K. Chesterton "is the attitude of those who do not believe in anything." Instead of rooting their understanding of a "good life" in the needs of the community, America has given itself the freedom to believe in nothing, and thereby not be held accountable for structures that deliberately accrue privilege to a chosen few.

Many activists hold to the belief that it is possible, indeed imperative, to build a better society using coercive methods. Their philosophy and theology is one of redemptive violence. It is on this point that communities of marginalization and prophetic outcry such as the Open Door are faced with the most difficulty. For by choosing to be nonviolent and thus marginalized, are we not conceding the fight for justice to those who are willing to use coercion? The central problem of this position is nicely summarized by Reinhold Neibhur: "If social cohesion [or justice for all] is impossible without coercion, and coercion is impossible without the creation of social injustice, and the destruction of injustice is impossible without the use of further coercion, are we not in an endless cycle of social conflict?"

It is an issue that we should wrestle with as we dream of justice. But we also should ask those who are willing to use coercion how many people they are willing to expend to achieve their ends. Our nonviolence and marginalization are rooted in the witness of the early Christians, who chose to live out the message of Jesus—a voluntary forsaking of Imperial power and a rootedness in servanthood. They deliberately went to the "least of these", the marginalized. They realized the difficult nature of Jesus' witness, but believed that only a voluntary change in people's hearts would bring about meaningful social change. And before other people's hearts could change, theirs had to. Their understanding of Jesus' witness as a call to the power of love instead of violence is central to the understanding of marginalization in our modern world.

Marginalization understood as a gift, then, is the affirmation of life and a coming into its fullness in the enormous shadow of society's wrecked Babel towers. The center denies the humanity of certain individuals who make their life on the margins, and as privileged folks live in solidarity with those people, we reclaim our humanity together.

Nate Mathews is a Resident Volunteer at the Open Door.

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your excellent *Hospitality*—the March issue, with the leading article about Lent by Murphy Davis ("Walk Humbly: A Lenten Journey," vol. 21, no. 3), was outstanding. And thank you for your excellent hospitality to the poor in your area.

Like so many other people you will never even know about, I am praying for Murphy Davis's speedy recovery, and for every blessing on you all.

Sincerely,
Kris Deweese
Port Townsend, WA

Dear Murphy and friends,

Hope all is well with you and the Community. Please tell everyone I said hello and send my best wishes to all.

I received the 2002 Open Door Calendar and I wanted to make sure to let you know my new address so I'll receive my copies of the Open Door *Hospitality* publication. You can't really call it a newsletter anymore.

Yesterday I sat here reflecting about the years that have passed on by us. I thought about the early years on death row at Reidsville, and you, Ed, Rob, Carolyn, David, and Karen, Diane Wood, Patsy and John Morris and so many others no longer with us, except in memories. There was no Hannah Loring-Davis then, but when she came along, she sure grew up to be a beautiful, intelligent young lady in a hurry. I know you and Ed are very proud of her as well as all of us who have watched her grow up over the years.

Do you remember when you first started the Open Door Community over at the house on Connecticut Avenue and you used to do the newsletter on a typewriter and mimeograph machine?

We have all grown and we have all changed through the years, but alas, the state is still putting our friends and brothers to death. My prayer is that we will learn to care more for each other, love one another, and have peace throughout the world.

Take care, my friend, and thanks for allowing me to reminisce a little bit with you. God bless you all.

Love,
A friend in prison
Forsyth, GA

Dear Open Door Community,

Every time I visit with you at the Open Door I come away refreshed and empowered in Christ. I draw upon your strength and example as the Body of Christ and so being in communion with you is a real source of life.

I was honored to participate with all of you in Ronald Williams' service of commitment to the community ("Making Peace a Way of Life," vol. 21, no. 4, April 2002). It was a powerful evening that I will remember and draw upon for many years to come.

My prayers are for the continued well-being of each of you, and for the joyous (and difficult) work of hospitality you offer to people on the streets and in prison. I see you sharing in the words of Paul to describe the work of God in Christ: "He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:13). Thank you for this great work and thank you for your many gifts to me.

May Murphy sleep well
And awaken feeling swell!
May this treatment in the final round
Make her healthy and sound.
May all the prayers and hopes be met
And then all can celebrate at a fine banquet.

I'm no Ed Potts when it comes to poetry, but at least it rhymes.

In Christ's peace,
Peter R. Gathje
Memphis, TN

Dear Ed and Murphy,

I have been receiving *Hospitality* for about a year and I must say the March copy (vol. 21, no. 3) has been the best to date. I believe that every article spoke to me this time.

The "Seeker Finds Wholeness In Community" said so much about the community and what it has done for one person. I am accustomed to some communities of this type and how they can help, but the real article was "Walk Humbly: A Lenten Journey." This article really speaks to me. I believe that this is the most insightful article I have read in the recent past and hit the nail on the head. The point that Ms. Davis made about the taxing and the bombing is so clear that everyone in the country should receive a copy of this article.

All I can say is keep up the good work. I feel that this paper should go to all Catholic parishes in the country.

God Bless,
Robert Bucholtz
Mt. Pleasant, MI

Dear Friends of the Open Door,

I appreciate each issue of *Hospitality* and hope Murphy's health has been restored.

I am writing this during Holy Week and as I read the article "Walk Humbly: A Lenten Journey" (vol. 21, no. 3, March 2002), I recall a Holy Week a number of years ago when my husband Clyde and I participated in a Holy Week vigil walk with Open Door participants. We had not thought to bring lunch, and as I remember it Murphy shared hers with us. I still recall her gracious hospitality. This March issue of *Hospitality* has enriched my Lenten journey, and has inspired me to be more vigilant in supporting and working with those involved in similar work here.

Shalom,
Jean Miller
Lee's Summit, MO

Dear Beloved Community,

The April issue of *Hospitality* (vol. 21, no. 4) seemed especially powerful and inspiring. Every article was heart-rending, like Hector Black's "What About the Victims?" which reminded me, in such a gentle way, that forgiveness is not the opposite of justice, but the opposite of revenge. Alan Jenkins' book review of Biblical Jubilee was especially appropriate to the Palestinian-Israeli tragic conflict. And what amazing writers Will Smith and Miyk Qadar. So much creative heart and soul. And what a good crop of Resident Volunteers you have.

Peter Gathje's and Ed Loring's penetrating essays were a confirmation of the sign I saw recently at Human Kindness Foundation: "May the Peace of Christ Profoundly Disturb You."

One thing I've noticed with increasing sadness since the war on terrorism and my increased sensitivity is that there is too much emphasis on trying to divide that which is indivisible into "them" and "us."

My prayers each day are with you all, for Murphy's healing.

All love surround,
Pat Tompkins
Bakersville, NC

Hello Open Door Community,

I have been reading the *Hospitality* paper. It really blesses my soul. Hey, I go up for parole in 2002. I have a life sentence but God is able!

God Bless,
A friend in prison
Hawkinsville, GA

Greetings Mr. Loring,

I've still had no words from you. My faith is still strong that all is well with you and Murphy. A lot of the time, I think how nice it would be to have someone. As I do understand you must work on having good understandings with loved ones. My circumstances are the same – still alive here at Fulton County. I thank God. Material things I have not. Acquaintance with the word of God gets stronger daily. Some frustration, but we need not speak of that. Conclusively all is good.

Ed, check this out. Daily, inmates are being beaten and robbed of their personal belongings. What is so ironic and bizarre is that these things happen while inmates are being taken to court. The deputies know what's happening and do nothing. Sir, I've never seen this type of behavior permitted. In some ways, Fulton County Deputies are benefiting.

Well, Ed, I just wanted to let you all know I still love you all and I am still in need of your prayers.

A friend in jail
Atlanta, GA

Dear Ed,

I am writing in response to a letter from "A friend in prison," published in *Hospitality* in the April issue (vol. 21, no. 4), concerning "another tuberculosis outbreak." I have been a public health physician during part of my medical career. In my retirement, I still volunteer in the Tuberculosis Clinic at our county health department. In Florida, state law grants authority to the health department to go into jails and prisons to monitor the care provided to persons with tuberculosis.

I wonder if Georgia law contains such a provision. If so, does the state health department even know of the situation in this particular prison? I would think that, with legal assistance, pressure could be brought to bear on the health and prison systems to address this problem in a timely manner. There is no excuse for a "tuberculosis outbreak" in the US, what with the availability of anti-TB drugs and the medical expertise to use them. How ironic that this situation occurs in the state that houses the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention! It smacks of prison conditions in Russia, where multi-drug resistant tuberculosis is ravaging many men.

Once again, let me express my gratitude to you and Murphy and all your associates who care for and about homeless and imprisoned persons.

Shalom,
Tom Washburn
Bradenton, FL

Ed,

I wanted to take this chance to thank you for the "Making Room" book. This liberation theology book was much more enlightening than what I had previously read in Gustavo Guierrez's books on liberation theology. I hope to take some of the practical lessons and apply them in my life. One quote I found extremely thought provoking was from Wendell Berry on page 107. The last two words summed up for me what the Open Door is all about: *practicing resurrection*, the action of seeking life and its affirmation even when everyone else around has resigned themselves to the illusion of death, the dark physicality of the grave. The Open Door seeks the resurrection, and strives to proclaim life to all those who pass through its door and those who sit on death row. So I wanted to say thank you for your and everyone else's commitment to speak "truth in the midst of Babel," as Stringfellow would say. Thank you for all of the love and warmth shown to me. May God continue to bless the Open Door.

Sincerely,
Joshua Wilkerson
Memphis, TN

Dear Ed and Murphy,

I look forward to your monthly newspaper. I enjoy all of your articles that you have in the paper.

I just wanted to comment on an article that was printed in the Sunday *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* about the Parole Board.

How can these people that make up the Parole Board sit in judgment of those that are in prison like myself, when they themselves are not better? Do they think that they are immune to laws?

For the last month or so I have seen where this member or that member is caught doing something wrong. I think it is time for Georgia to wake up, including the Governor, and see what's going on at the Parole Board.

Maybe some of us in prison would get to have a second chance of rebuilding our lives. As for me, I am ready, I've done almost 14 years have been denied three times and was not given a reason for the denials.

Corrupt officials should not be allowed to decide whether we have changed or not. Although the Board never even came and talked to us to

see what or if we have changed. This is wrong. It is time for Mr. Barnes to make a change, or the federal government to step in and make a change. Anyway it is costing the taxpayer more for the people that are doing wrong. And sitting in an office getting a free check.

Thank you and keep up the good work and I hope one day to get to come to Atlanta and meet all of you. And help any way I can. God bless you all.

Love,
A friend in prison

Dear Murphy,

I guess I am one more stranger, writing to let you know that you are very much in the thoughts and prayers of my wife, Florence, and myself. In reading your words and seeing your picture in the February issue of *Hospitality* ("A Note from Murphy Davis, vol. 21, no. 2), I was very moved by your courage and graciousness, and was moved to write.

Florence and I have known about The Open Door for many decades, primarily through our old neighbors and still close friends, Dick and Gladys Rustay. But even before meeting them, when I was Executive Director of the Pennsylvanian Prison Society, I remember reading an unforgettable remark of yours. You were asked whether you evangelize the persons on death row whom you visit. I probably cannot repeat the exact words, but it was roughly, "I read that in the Bible that when I visit a prisoner, I visit Jesus Christ. And when that happens, it is I who am evangelized." In my years in the prison business, in Indiana and Pennsylvania, I was always asked the same question, and then I always quoted you. I am still asked in my volunteer work in victim-offender mediation.

Another contact with The Open Door came in 1989 when Florence met Humberto Rodas at the Atlanta Airport. He was an undocumented Salvadoran whom we met at Southside church, during the winter, while we were teaching English to the refugees. He was being sent to live with us in Asheville, NC. The plane was delayed too late to drive to Asheville, so Florence called Dick Rustay and arranged to spend the night at The Open Door. We were very grateful. Humbert eventually got Temporary Protected Status and continued to live in Asheville, even after we moved to make Tucson our full time home in 1992. But he returned to Salvador after the peace accord.

So we are already friends, in a way, and we do think of you, pray for you, and continue to admire the great work of The Open Door.

Sincerely yours,
Rendell A. Davis
Tucson, AZ

Open Door Community Ministries

Soup Kitchen: Wednesday and Thursday, 11 a.m.– noon

Weekday Breakfast: Monday and Tuesday, 6:45 a.m.

Showers: Wednesday and Thursday, 8 a.m.

Use of Phone: Monday – Tuesday, 6:45 a.m. – 7:45 a.m.,

Wednesday – Thursday, 9 a.m. – noon

Harriet Tubman Free Medical Clinic and Soul Foot Care

Clinic: Thursdays, 7:00 p.m.

Clarification Meetings: Selected Tuesdays, 7:30 – 9 p.m.

Weekend Retreats: Four times each year (for our household, volunteers and supporters); Next retreat is July 12-15.

Prison Ministry: Monthly trip to prisons in Hardwick, GA, in partnership with First Presbyterian Church of Milledgeville; The Jackson (Death Row) Trip

We are open...

Monday through Saturday: We answer telephones from 9:00 a.m. until noon, and from 2:00 until 6:00 p.m. The building is open from 9:00 a.m. until 8:30 p.m. Monday through Saturday. (We do not answer phone and door 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 invite you to worship with us at 5 p.m. and join us, following worship, for a delicious supper.

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

Join Us in Worship!

Every Sunday in June, we will gather for worship and Eucharist at 5 p.m., followed by supper together.

Because our worship space is limited, if you are considering bringing a group to worship, please contact Phil Leonard at pleon2000@mindspring.com or 404-874-4906.

June 2	Connie Bonner preaching
June 9	Nate Mathews preaching
June 16	Elizabeth Dede preaching
June 23	Alan Jenkins preaching
June 30	Worship at 910



Clarification Meetings at the Open Door

Plan to join us on selected Tuesday evenings for presentations and discussions of topics relevant to the justice struggle. Call us at (404) 874-9652 for dates and times.

Medical Supplies

(for our Thursday Evening Harriet Tubman Free Medical Clinic)

Can you help with the medicine cabinet?

aspirin	cold medicine (alcohol free)
Tylenol	cough drops
antibiotic cream or ointment	medicated foot powder
Ibuprofen	
antifungal cream	

Open Door Community Needs

JEANS

T-Shirts

Men's Work Shirts

MARTA Tokens

Postage Stamps

Underwear for Men

Alarm Clocks

BLANKETS

Eye Glasses

Men's Belts

Washcloths

Ham and Turkey for our Soup Kitchen

Sandwiches

Blender

Quick Grits

Cheese

Coffee

Multi-Vitamins

Disposable Razors

Women's Underwear

Toothbrushes

Deodorant

LOTION

Vaseline

Towels

Socks

Shampoo

Men's Shoes (all sizes)

Combs

From 11am 'til 1:30pm, Wednesday and Thursday, 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!