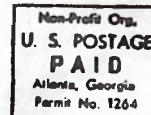


HOSPITALITY

Volume 8 No. 5

June 1989



Address
Correction
Requested

Providing hospitality to the homeless & to those in prison, through Christ's love.
910 Ponce de Leon Ave. N.E. Atlanta GA 30306-4212 (404) 874-9652

Dollars & Sense

by Murphy Davis

In the past two months the state of Georgia has released, with a flurry of publicity, some 3,000 prisoners. Each was given a clean set of clothes, \$25 and a bus ticket to somewhere, or to nowhere. Nobody wanted to release them, but the Governor agreed to do it to avoid a suit because of serious overcrowding in the prisons.

In a recent two week period the Fulton County Jail released more than 1,000 prisoners. Each was given \$2 and a bus token. The releases were ordered by a Federal judge because of the dangerously overcrowded condition of the jail.

The Georgia legislature met again this year. They didn't have much money to go around, bless their hearts, so they couldn't give any significant raises in Aid to Families with Dependent Children, or fund the Indigent Defense system, or help the homeless.

But miraculously, at the very end of the session the Governor found \$100 million to set aside with a promise to build new prisons. This was, of course, over and above the millions already appropriated for the Department of Corrections budget for the coming year.

Nine economically depressed rural Georgia counties have recently landed commitments from the state to build new prisons in their communities. In Hancock County where 40% of the residents live below the poverty line, the \$21 million, 750-bed prison will bring an estimated 350 jobs! (To imprison two people creates one job. What if we could marshal such resources for education or health care or home-building?) There has been no opposition in Hancock County to building the prison. As the Governor's executive assistant said, "People are beginning to realize it's a good clean industry."

Everybody has something to say about prisons these days. And most of what's said is that we just need more of them. "Surely. . . if we could just build a few more. . . . If we could just keep more people in for a little longer. . . ."

So every time lawmakers convene, stiffer criminal sentences are the order of the day. And the most popular way to campaign for public office is to promise to throw more of "them" in jail and throw away the key if not throw the switch on them.

Where are the leaders who can admit that we will never build our way out of the problems we've created?

The rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer. With increasing numbers of desperately poor people the issue of social control becomes more critical to those in power. So we use prisons.

If we wanted to address the deepening problems of the poor we would. Instead, we, as a society, are making the choice to try to control the poor so that the middle and upper classes will be as little disturbed as possible.

We will spend our money on what is most important to us. If it were really important to us to house the homeless we would begin to do it. But we haven't the political will. I heard Parke Renshaw say recently: "We cannot build affordable housing, but we can afford buildable jails."

We--as a people--like jails. We want more jails. And we want to put more and more people in them. So we build them.

When we want housing we will build housing. When we want decent health care, we will provide it. When we want education in the schools we will get it.

In Atlanta, we would rather spend our money to arrest, jail, process through court and then imprison a person for 20-40 days for urinating in public than to provide one single public toilet in the city. For the amount we have spent punishing people for this "crime" in the past five years we could have built a hundred public toilets to make the crime unnecessary.

But we buy what we want. And what we want is to put poor people in cages. So we do.

Yes. We do have a problem with crime. And it will get worse. We have in our society a deadly combination of extreme wealth and extreme poverty, drug and alcohol abuse in every social strata, and a proliferation of weapons.

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As long as we maintain a narrow-focused law-enforcement approach it will get worse and worse--everything from petty crime to serious violence. Former Atlanta Public Safety Commissioner Brown once said, "Too many people just want the police to be janitors--to come along and clean up the mess we've made as a society that nobody else wants to touch."

We must demand a more serious look at the whole. We need to demand leaders who will stop playing games with us with their tough talk. Surely we can come up with a "good clean industry" that is not totally dependent on human bondage.

We will not find peace in our land until we narrow the gap between the rich and the poor. We will not have a "safe" society until people have houses to live in, food to eat, health care when they're sick, and decent work.

"Why?" cries the prophet. "Why spend money on what does not satisfy? Why spend your wages and still be hungry?"

How long will we pretend that the problems among us are because of some bad people who need to be put away? At points of desperation any one of us could be capable of crime--stealing, selling drugs or even murder. Our task, as Dorothy Day often reminded us, is to build a world in which it's easier to be good.

Of the ever-increasing numbers of people being sent to prison, most will eventually be released. To what? And with what hope?

Some will return to homes, families, and caring communities who will help them toward a restoration of life.

But many, if not most, will come out with nowhere to go, nobody to meet them when they get there, and nothing to do--which is probably a large part of the reason they ended up in prison or jail in the first place. Some will turn to violence. Prisons only exacerbate the problem of violence.

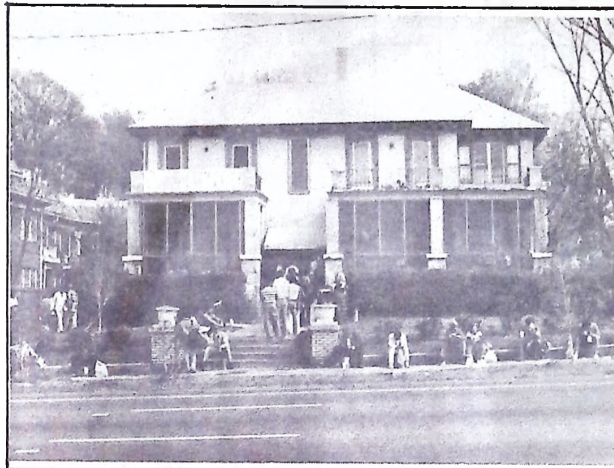
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When Jesus began his ministry he read from the prophet Isaiah:

"God has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind."

Prisons and jails stand as monuments to our refusal to live the good news. Until we open ourselves to the healing word of God's justice we will choose harsh judgement and a deepening violence, rather than a compassionate response to victims and healing for those who hurt or offend.

We are captives to our blindness, but the good news is that the blind can recover their sight. And when we claim the healing that God has promised us, then the captives can be liberated.



HOSPITALITY is published 10 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 and about others involved in ministry to Atlanta's homeless, please contact any of the following:

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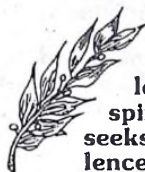
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The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy...Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.

Martin Luther King, Jr.
Nobel Peace Prize 1964

In Our Kitchen...

Text and photos by Joanne Solomon

In upcoming issues of Hospitality we will be spotlighting our regular volunteers here at The Open Door. We are most grateful for their faithful support!

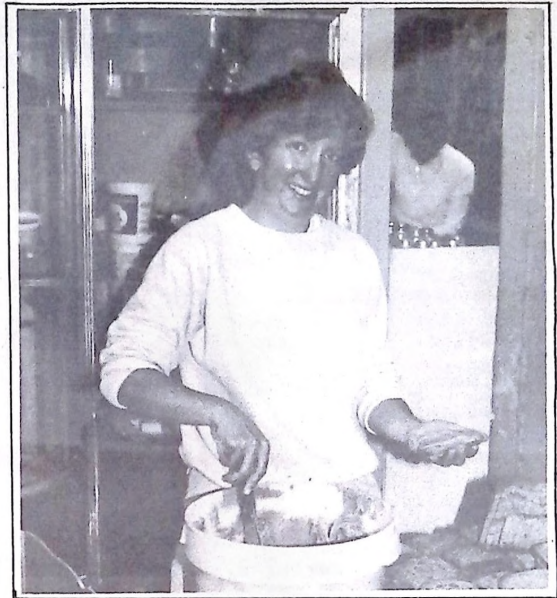


POLLY OADES

Polly has been volunteering for several years on the second and fourth Monday of each month. She is a practicing registered nurse and a member of the Sandy Springs Christian Church.



PEGGY VAN DEUSEN



TINA LANINGHAM

Tina is a student from Mercer University in Atlanta and has been a volunteer here for the past ten weeks. She will soon be making a move to California and we will miss her!



BARB GUSTAFSON AND GERRY FRYER

Peggy, Barb, and Gerry volunteer in our Soup Kitchen on the first and third Monday of every month. They are active members of Peachtree Presbyterian Church in Atlanta, and all have grown children and grandchildren. Barb and Gerry are both long-time volunteers with us, and Peggy has been coming as a volunteer since we first opened our doors.



The Dismal History of the Bible

by Ed Loring

Recently the local newspaper published a story about Robert Funk and his cohorts who converge every so often at the University of Montana to vote on the authenticity of the sayings of Jesus. These Biblical scholars are producing a "colored Bible" (no offense to those of us who are African-Americans: the colored Bible stands in opposition to the Black liberation struggle in North America). The colors represent the possible and plausible accuracy of the sayings of Jesus.

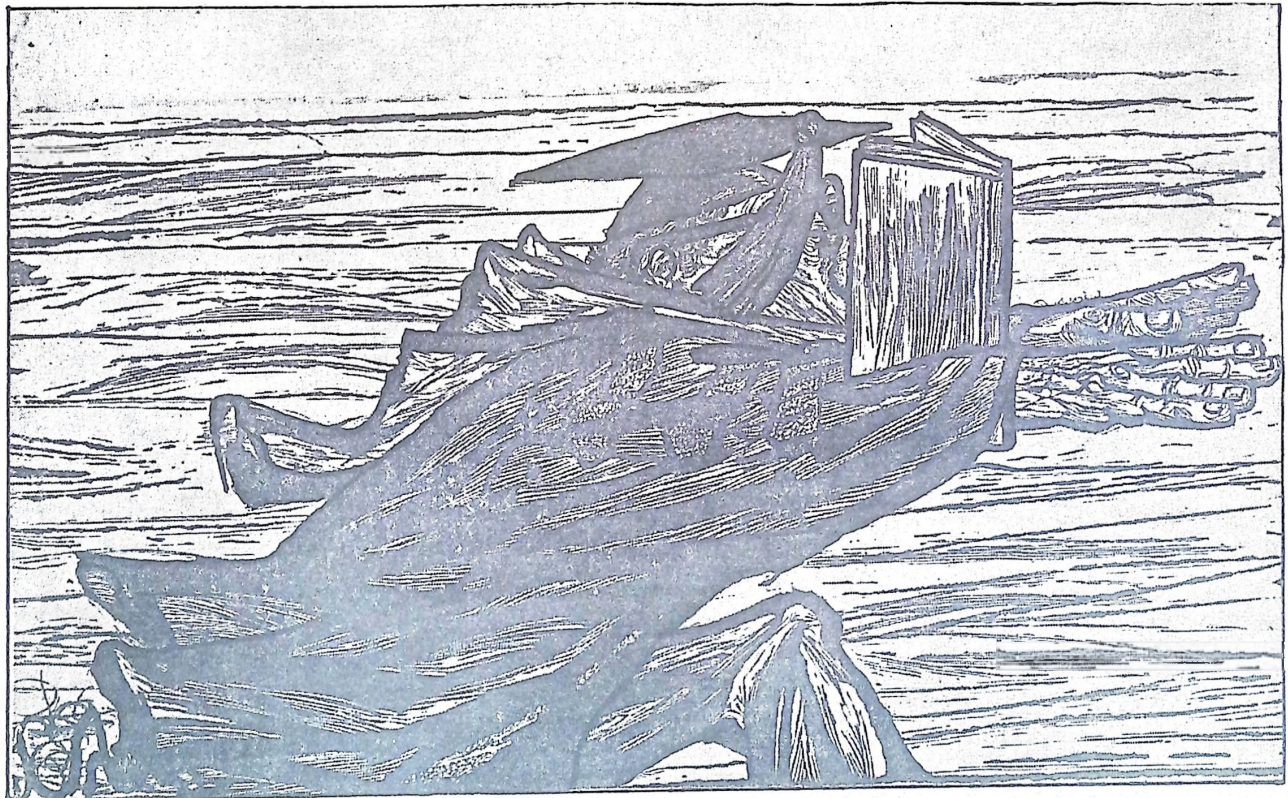
Thus, green might represent 85% of these grown folks' opinion that Jesus really, really, really said it; while yellow might represent that he possibly might have and maybe could have said it. In either case Dr. Funk, whom I knew during my graduate student days at Vanderbilt University, and friends are wasting their time and our newspapers' copy space. The only way to "know" the Bible and to test the authenticity of its contents is to live it. The streets, not the university, are the place to discover the word of God.

At the other end of the spectrum of "positions" on the Bible are our brothers and sisters in the Southern Baptist Convention. They believe the whole thing is greener than

green! Every word is fully inspired and is as authoritative for science as for doctrine!! Yet, the Baptists do not take a stand against charging interest on loans to the poor--a precept which fills the pages of the Old Testament. Also, Southern Baptists support the death penalty for homicide (as do the majority of North American Christians), but they do not stone to death rebellious sons and adultery-committing wives. In fact for the majority of Southern Baptists the "completely inspired word of God without fault or error" basically means they are safe members of the Republican Party. It is really the white middle class American way of life that is the standard bearer. Dr. Robert Funk and the Southern Baptists actually end up at about the same place: defenders of the status-quo in a sea of injustice. What about the Bible? What about this word of God?

The Bible is among the most radical documents of human history. It is the story of liberation from oppression and slavery in the Old Testament; in the New Testament the same story is told in terms of life conquering death. Liberation and life are understood as personal and political struggles. No book is more intimately personal; no book is more concretely political than the Bible. Its

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Robert Hodgell

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politics are revolutionary; its economics are radical; and its message of personal wholeness and health is empowering. The Bible is good news to the poor and liberty to the captives. If you read the Bible in the streets, you can clearly hear the ideology of the white Southern Baptist-flag-waving-theologians just as you grasp the impossibility of the faithfulness of Dr. Robert Funk and academic Christians.

Yet, the song I sing is not a new song nor is this a strange land. The Bible is the most oppressed book in the history of Western Civilization. Even the A.C.L.U. has not been able to help!! When we read today that the right wing of the right wing Party Likud is using scripture to justify killing Palestinian children we are hearing an old, old story (Dr. Funk, is that green or yellow?).

Not too many years after Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension, the Roman Empire accepted Christianity as the religion of the state and the powerful. Since that historical period, the majority opinion has been in favor of power, oppression, and the status-quo. That is, while the purpose of the Bible is to structure liberation in society, its actual function has been to justify oppression. God is the God of liberation and the God of life, love, and wholeness. Why has scripture been so abused and molested?

The Bible in the South was the primary document used to justify not only slavery, but most concretely, African-American slavery. Most non-slave-holding Christians in the North agreed. Why?

The Bible in the South of the U.S.A. and in South Africa today is a primary source to "prove" among believers that Black folk are inferior to white and are destined by God to be the servants of white. How odd--the radicality of scripture is precisely in turning power upsidedown and saying that liberation is rooted in servanthood. How can such twisted use of the Bible happen? Can't the believers of the Bible read it??

God wills women to be free from slavery and sexism. Yet, every day we hear the voices of death and the rulers of darkness quoting the Bible to justify the inferior pay and the oppression of women. When I teach my daughter the Bible stories every night, I often wonder what she will think the first time she hears the Biblical argument for the inferiority of women.

The justification of wealth and the imperialism of our nation proceed with the blessings and baptism from pulpit and pew. The most life-giving source of water in our world has become a cess pool of pollution--the waters of death.

So I plead with you today. As we fight homelessness and the criminal control system; as we work for justice in the marketplace and mercy in our personal relationships: Let the word of God be the word of God. . . . Then, oh then, "Justice will flow like a mighty stream and righteousness like a river that never goes dry."

RUN FOR SHALOM 1989 PORTLAND TO BOSTON

by Mike Stoltzfus and Jon Peachey

Editor's note: Mike Stoltzfus, a former resident volunteer at the Open Door, and his friend Jon Peachey are running from Lincoln City, Oregon to the Boston Harbor to raise money for the Open Door and the Mennonite Central Committee. From time to time, we will publish an update on the Run for Shalom. During June, Mike and Jon will be running through the Northwest U.S.

As we stood on the shore of the Pacific, we felt its power and serenity and anticipated our run. The clouds slowly rose over the Cascade Mountains and revealed the awesome beauty of the Columbia River Gorge. Yes, indeed, the Run for Shalom has begun! Meeting new and diverse people, sore muscles, sunburn, beauty in nature, being welcomed into homes and churches--these give the run its flavor of rich newness and intrigue.

The Run for Shalom officially began on Monday, April 24, when we left Lincoln City, Oregon and travelled northeast along Highway 14 towards Portland. On Wednesday, May 3, we headed out through the Columbia River Gorge on Interstate 84. The scenery was fantastic, and we had a good two days working our way to Viento State Park near Hood river. Thus far we have enjoyed 250 miles--only about another 3100 to go until Boston!

In a whirlwind tour of Portland, we were able to visit a shelter for the homeless and a halfway house for women convicts. The soup line stretched for nearly a city block. Men, women, children and infants waited their turn for a simple helping of biscuits and gravy. The ugliness and abandonment of homelessness was bitterly revealed as we visited Baloney Joe's--the largest shelter for the homeless in Portland. An all male shelter, it offers 150 cots for nighttime use. While there, we shared a meal and fellowship with the volunteers.

From the Pacific Ocean to Portland, we travelled over the coastal mountains, ran through the Van Duzer Corridor, enjoyed the scent of towering pines and surprised three young does drinking from a mountain stream.

Thank you to all of you who read this newsletter. You are all part of the Run for Shalom.

If you would like more information on the Run for Shalom, please send your name and address to:

Run for Shalom
c/o Janelle Nofziger
Goshen College
Goshen, IN 46526

When Did We See You ?

by Elizabeth Dede

The question of seeing comes up often in the New Testament because it seems that a big part of Jesus' ministry was to help people to see. Some of that seeing was an actual physical sight that Jesus restored. We know many accounts of Jesus' healing blind people. The New Testament is also full of plenty of spiritual eye-opening experiences, in which people who were blind to the truth suddenly recognize it. Perhaps the most famous of these is the Easter story of the walk to Emmaus, when two of Jesus' followers walked with the risen Lord, speaking of all the events of the past week, yet not recognizing Jesus until he broke bread with them. Then, the story goes, "their eyes were opened, and they recognized him." So the question, "Lord, when did we see you?" is a question that is central to our faith because seeing, recognizing, and understanding are acts of faith as we live in the post-Ascension world. Jesus has left this earth, and we can see him now only with the eyes of faith.



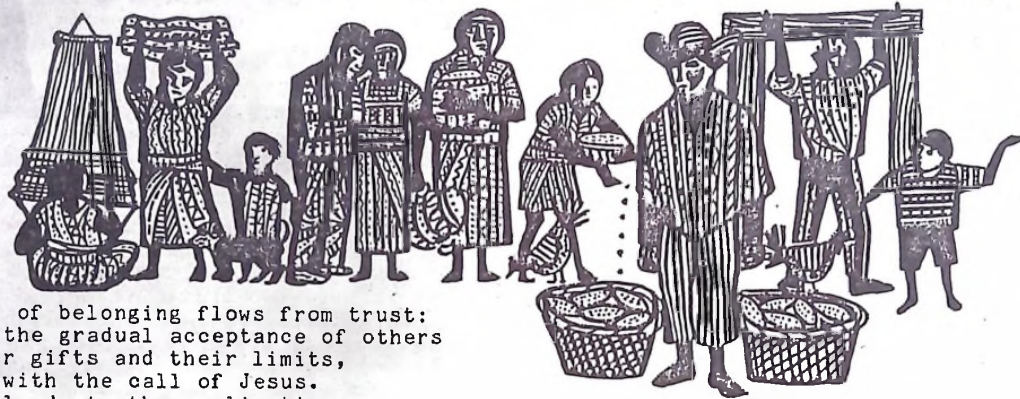
Often at the Open Door we read Matthew 25 and ask the question, "Lord, when did we see you?". In the answer to that question--"Whenever you did this for one of the least important of these sisters and brothers of mine, you did it for me!"--we find a clear explanation of our calling and work: to be faithful to the risen Christ we must feed the hungry, give a drink to the thirsty, receive strangers in our home, give clothes to the naked, take care of the sick, and visit the prisoner.

On Sunday, April 30, 1989, I had the privilege of reading Matthew 25 during our worship. It was a special Sunday because we were celebrating the partnership of Jay Frazier, Carl Calford Barker, Willie London, Willie Dee Wimberly, Ralph Dukes, and Robert Barrett. All of these members of the Open Door Community have been committed to our life together and to the work of the Kingdom for many years, so it was clearly a faithful act of seeing, recognizing, and acknowledging their partnership when the Leadership Team decided to invite them into a more full relationship as they signed the covenant of the Open Door Community. Yet, as I read that scripture my eyes were not completely open.

The words of Matthew 25 spoke to me of our vocation--of the work that we do together--and I was blind to the words about seeing. A few nights after this celebration of partnership I had a strange dream. I dreamed that a new person moved into our community. He was blind, and everybody tried to introduce him to me. But I couldn't see him. Pat Fons would lead him to me and say, "Elizabeth, I want you to meet this new member of our community." And I would try hard to see him, but he was invisible to me. I was blind to his presence. When I woke up from that dream, the words "Lord, when did we see you?" were running through my head, and I began to think about Sunday's worship when I had read those words from Matthew 25.

Suddenly, more of the significance of that scripture for our celebration of partnership struck me. I had lived and worked with Jay, Carl, Willie, Willie Dee, Ralph, and Robert for three years, yet I hadn't recognized fully their partnership with me; I hadn't seen completely how they were my family. Acknowledging their partnership publicly was my first step towards sight, and now I know that I had been blinded by the things that make me different from these new partners: my education, the color of my skin, my comfortable existence, and the privilege to choose to come to the Open Door. But with the eyes of faith, given to us by our brother Jesus, we can see Jesus in everyone, and so recognize our partnership together.

I wonder where our other blind spots are. When do we not see our brothers and sisters? When do we not see the Lord? I'm sure my brother takes a shower at 910. Jesus eats at the Butler Street breakfast, and maybe even is imprisoned in an office building downtown. I think my sister is in prison. I just haven't seen, yet. Perhaps it will be revealed to me in a dream.



The sense of belonging flows from trust:
trust is the gradual acceptance of others
with their gifts and their limits,
each one with the call of Jesus.
And this leads to the realization
that the body of community is not perfectly whole
and cannot be,
that this is our human condition.

And it is all right for us
to be less than perfect.

We must not weep over our imperfections.

We are not judged for being defective.

Our God knows that in so many ways
we are lame and half-blind.

We will never win the olympics of humanity,
racing for perfection,

but we can walk together in hope,

celebrating that we are loved in our brokenness,

helping each other,

growing in trust,

living in thanksgiving,

learning to forgive,

opening up to others,

welcoming them,

and striving to bring peace and hope to our world.

So it is that we come to put down roots in community--

not because it is perfect and wonderful,

but because we believe that Jesus has called us together.

It is where we belong

and are called to grow and to serve. □

from

The Broken Body

--Jean Vanier

The not-so-Comic Strip



First Arrest

by William Neal Moore

Editor's note: William Neal Moore is a friend on death row in Jackson, Georgia.

In the 1961 school year, I was nine-years-old and attending Fulton Street Elementary School. In the fourth grade my teacher was Mrs. Ballard.

She was very old at that time, and her main thing in class was the plastic flute, which everyone had to learn how to play.

It really wasn't a difficult thing to learn, but she placed great importance on our ability to learn how to read music and play the flute. We had to learn at least 30 songs during the school year.

We played as a group, but each child was required to play all of these songs solo, otherwise that student did not pass the fourth grade. There wasn't much time for anything else; the whole class really wasn't taught anything but music.

There always was at least one person who failed her class because they could not meet her standards of playing the flute. She would use that one person to be her example to the new class, and that student would have to play all the songs and answer all the questions about reading music notes.

* * * * *

My first encounter with the law came about in this fashion: the police arrested and charged me with breaking out the elementary school windows.

The city had condemned all of the homes in our neighborhood so that they could buy all the land and put in highway I-70 across the state of Ohio. At this time all of the houses on Fulton Street and the alley behind had been torn down. There was a large hole--a construction site dug in the ground where the actual highway would be.

A small walk bridge had been constructed about three blocks down the street so that the school children on the south side could walk across the construction site without getting into the mud and dirt.

One day after school I got permission from my mother to visit one of my classmates who lived three blocks behind the school. While going to my friend's house, I chose to take the short-cut and go through the construction site, rather than walking down to the bridge.

Most of the children and adults took this short-cut after work hours. I crossed the site to the other side, going through the playground and out the back gate, over to my friend's house.

While crossing the schoolyard, I noticed that there was a lot of glass on the ground because I walked through it. It was just below our classroom, but I just kept going, and really thought nothing of it. Once I reached my friend's house, I knocked on the front door, and his mother said that he was not home, and she didn't know where he was, or when he'd return.

So I turned around and started home, retracing the same route. By this time it was dusk.

I crossed the schoolyard, went down into the freeway site, and by the time I had reached the bottom of the construction site, it was dark. All of a sudden this bright shinging light hit me! It followed me for a few steps, then disappeared. I didn't see where it came from, but I got scared and began to quicken my pace to get out of the hole.

I had no idea where the light came from, nor did I see anyone. As I climbed up out of the deep hole, a policeman grabbed me!

There were two white officers. I thought they were going to get on me because I was down in the site after dark. One of the officers had me all jacked up by the back of my pants and arm. He put me into the back seat of the police car; then he turned on the overhead light.

The other one asked me what I was doing down on the construction site after dark? I told the policeman that I was returning from my friend's house and he could ask my friend's mother. I was taking the short-cut home.

But the mean-acting officer said that I was lying because he saw me in the hole when he shined his light on me; I just came off the school ground, he said, and was the one who had broke the school windows.

I told him, no sir, I didn't do it. All I did was to cross the schoolyard, and the glass was already on the ground when I crossed the yard the first time.

Then he said, boy, what is your name? Where do you live? Who are your parents? I told him my name and pointed to my house because it could be seen from the car where we were parked.

However, the mean cop told me that if I did not tell them the truth, assuming I was lying to them, and confess that I broke the windows, then they would take me to jail because he said that he knew that I was the one who had done it.

I kept telling him that I did not do it. So they took me downtown to the police station. My mother and school teachers had always told me that if you had not done anything wrong, then you had no reason to be afraid of the police. But I found out that was not true at all.

Yes, I was scared because the mean cop kept saying that he was going to beat my ass if I kept on lying to him.

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Once we got to the police station, the mean policeman took me out of the car, into the station, down this long hall, and into a small room that had a large desk with one chair behind it and three in front of it. He locked me in the room by myself for about 20-30 minutes.



The mean cop returned and said, boy, you better tell me the truth now, or I'll take you upstairs to the jail where all the men are.

I said once more that I was telling him the truth. He grabbed my left hand and began to squeeze my fingers in his hand real hard to make me confess and cry. Then he said to me that he was going to break my fingers if I did not tell him that I was the one who had broken the windows.

I didn't say a word to him, but the tears were rolling down my cheeks. Then he took both of his hands and pulled my fingers apart and bent my fingers backwards until I was not able to take the pain anymore; I said, yes, I was the one; please stop; I broke the windows!

I knew that the only way I was going to get him to stop hurting me was to say just what he wanted me to say. It hurt so bad. I would have said anything he told me to say just to make him stop bending and spreading my fingers apart. He told me to tell the nice officer that I had lied to him, and that I was the one who had broken out the school windows. Otherwise I would get more of the same. Also I could not tell the other policeman that the mean cop had hurt my fingers.

So when his partner returned, I told him just what I was told to say: I lied to you because I did break the windows. Then he filled out a lot of forms and called my mother and told her where I was. It was near 11:00pm by the time they took me home and released me into the custody of my mother. I guess they told Mama that I confessed to breaking out the school windows.

When Mama came in the house, she was mad. I could see how tight her jaws and lips were. She asked me why did I throw rocks through the windows? She had gotten her belt and was ready to beat the daylights out of me. But I told her the whole story of what happened and showed her my hand--how tender and swollen my fingers were from how the police bent them to make me confess.

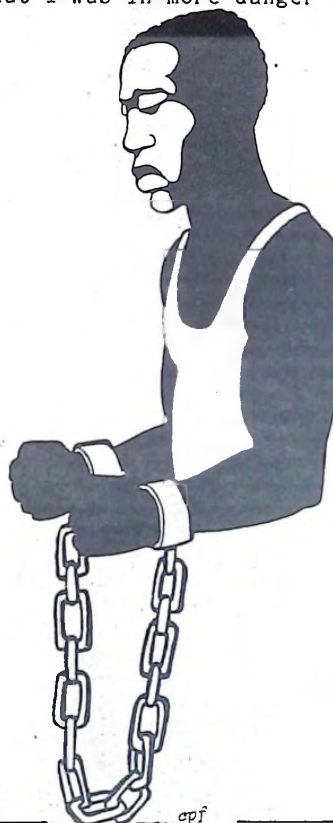
She believed me and put her belt up and did not whip me. She told me that I could not be out after dark anymore.

The very next day in school I was dragged downstairs to the principal's office. He and Mrs. Ballard were extremely upset and mad at me because they had learned from the police report that I was the one who had broken out the windows.

I tried to explain to them, but they would have nothing to do with what I had to say. The police report was the truth, and I only made matters worse by lying to them. Mrs. Ballard was really hurt by this because she sort of liked me 'cause I was one of the best flute players she had.

For the rest of the school year, my stay in her class was pure hell! She would always pick on me, and if I did not know the answers in class, she made bad remarks about how dumb I was.

It's a wonder that I wasn't really hurt! With all of the violence and prejudice in the South, the Civil Rights movement with the marches: little did I know then. Now I realize that I was in more danger than I thought.



Oscar Wilde and the Forgiving Christ

by Brother John Albert, O.C.S.O.

Editor's note: Brother John Albert is a friend of the Open Door Community and a monk who lives at the Holy Spirit Abbey in Conyers, Georgia. We are grateful for his contribution to Hospitality.

Christ is the bond which unites us all, each attempting, in our varied ways, to follow Him. And Christ often stands in our midst as one we do not recognize (John 1:26). Life, at least the Christian life, is one long process of coming to recognize Christ present in ourselves and in each person we encounter. The great difficulty here is Christ's all-inclusive love. Christ was killed because he told us about our failure to love all others.

In the spring of 1895, Oscar Wilde (1854-1900) was sentenced to two years hard labor in prison for "corrupting the morals" of young men with whom he had been associated sexually. Oscar Wilde's identification with Christ in sorrow and forgiveness can teach us something about growth toward a more inclusive love. Good by nature, made holier by what he suffered, Wilde saw deeply into the human struggle and summed up all our lives for us.

Oscar Wilde well knew Christian doctrine and the injunctions of sacred scripture. We need only recall his own words in Lady Windermere's Fan: "Misfortunes one can endure--they come from outside, they are accidents. But to suffer for one's own fault--ah!--there is the sting of life." Wilde even admitted he was not accused of some of the immoral things he had actually done. But Wilde had no use for those who judge others. The torments he endured the last years of his life solidified Wilde's contention that many consciously "religious" people are merely retailing their own moral prejudices and spiritual fears. These people attempt to reform others because they know themselves so little. The intention is control, not leading others to true conversion in Christ. Wilde once said: "As one reads history one is absolutely sickened, not by the crimes that the wicked have committed, but by the punishments that the good have inflicted; and a community is infinitely more brutalized by the habitual employment of punishment, than it is by the occasional occurrence of crime." In a height of sarcasm he gave these lines to Gwendolen Fairfax in The Importance of Being Earnest: "It requires merely physical courage to sacrifice oneself. To sacrifice others moral courage is necessary. And moral courage is the higher and rarer of the two." American writer Leonard Charles Van Noppen attended Wilde's funeral in Paris, where Oscar had died in exile. Van Noppen later wrote this of Wilde: "Red, blood-red, was the color of his sins; but this, at least, may be said of him: he was no whited sepulchre."

George Bernard Shaw once said of Oscar Wilde: "If ever there was a writer whose

prayer to posterity might well have been, 'Read my works and let my life alone' it was Oscar." Rupert Croft-Cooke described Wilde's post-prison letters as "most entertaining and revealing" and called the end period of Oscar's life the "frivolous last years." Yet anyone who has examined Wilde's life and art from our perspective in history can challenge the cynicism of Shaw and Croft-Cooke with our new awareness of Wilde's human sensitivity. That Wilde became even more promiscuous after his release from prison testifies to the failure of any enforced "correctional" system. His incarceration only shattered Wilde's willpower and self-respect.

Following the public disclosure of his sins, an international assault was created against Wilde by the press. In An Ideal Husband he had already written: "In old days men had the rack. Now they have the press." Thousands of men were guilty of the acts performed by Wilde and were never prosecuted. In his case, malevolence seems to have been the Crown's motive in punishing Oscar. Solicitor General Sir Frank Lockwood conducted himself with unrestrained ferocity. It was reported in the periodical Today that he "fought like a tiger." Wilde's creditors obtained judgment against him and he was declared bankrupt. An execution was put into his house and a sale there turned into an opportunity for plunderers to steal personal belongings and unpublished manuscripts as law enforcement officers looked in the other direction. By decree of the court, Wilde was legally alienated from his wife Constance and sons Cyril and Vyvyan who were required to assume another surname.



Oscar Wilde was a prisoner of Bow Street Gaol, Holloway, Newgate, Pentonville and Wandsworth prisons. He lived most of his term as a prisoner of Reading Gaol. In prison Wilde was spared none of the cruelties and indignities which vindictive and petty people inflict upon those under their power: the slop-bucket, the treadmill, oakum (rope) picking, enforced silence, coarse food and clothing, dirty baths. Wilde appealed several times to the Prison Commission for commutation of his sentence. This was denied on the grounds that Wilde was sane and strong. Upon the arrival of Major Nelson as new Governor of Reading, Oscar was allowed books befitting his genius and writing materials. But in truth, Wilde was crushed physically and mentally by his prison experience.

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In a letter to Home Secretary Sir Matthew White of July 2, 1896, Oscar described prison as "this tomb for those not yet dead." To his friend More Adey, he wrote on September 25, 1896: "But pity seems to beat in vain at the doors of officialism; and power, no less than punishment, kills what else were good and gentle in a man: the man without knowing it loses his natural kindness, or grows afraid of its exercise."

Two other comments to Adey underscore any prisoner's desire for truth and consolation. On May 1, 1897, Wilde wrote: "The thing I want is to know everything quite clearly as it really is. That is what one wants to know in prison. What kills one is uncertainty, with its accompanying anxiety and distress." And on May 12, 1897, shortly before leaving Reading Gaol, Wilde told Adey: "People think that because one is in prison they can treat one as they choose. They should try to realise that where there is sorrow there is holy ground. They should know that sorrow is the most sensitive of all created things."

In prison, Oscar Wilde rose above his humiliations through an identification with other inmates in their sorrow. He learned to converse with his fellow convicts without moving his lips; punishment for interaction among prisoners was extreme. He made efforts, through friends who visited him, to assist prisoners upon their release and those with families in need.

Though England's most famous prisoner, Wilde never placed himself above his fellow prisoners. When asked if he minded cleaning his cell, he replied: "Not in the least. I consider no one too good to do his own work." Another convict reported saying to Wilde: "I am sorry for you; it is harder for the likes of you than it is for the likes of us." Oscar answered him: "No, my friend, we all suffer alike."

Three children were in Reading Gaol for poaching rabbits. Wilde paid their fine and told his friend Warder Martin: "Please, dear friend, do this for me. I must get them out. Think what a thing for me it would be to be able to help three children. If I can do this by paying the fine tell the children that they are to be released tomorrow by a friend and ask them to be happy and not to tell anyone." Wilde surely must have been thinking of his own sons whose loss he always lamented.

In his prison writings, Oscar Wilde personified through Christ the person he wanted to be but could not. Oscar Wilde's Christ is Oscar Wilde's idealized best self and more. Wilde's Christ is the symbol of all crucified humanity. Above that, He is the healing and forgiving One.

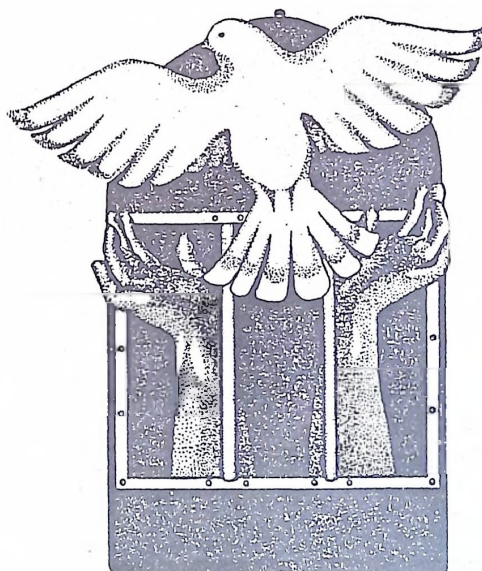
Writing as an outcast of Victorian religious and secular society, Wilde said this in *De Profundis*: "The prison-system is absolutely and entirely wrong. I would give anything to be able to alter it when I get out. I intend to try. But there is nothing in the world so wrong but the spirit of Humanity, which is the spirit of Love, the spirit of Christ who is not in Churches, may

make it, if not right, at least possible to be borne without too much bitterness of heart."

At the time he was writing *De Profundis*, Oscar told his friend Warder Martin: "I hope to write about prison life and to try and change it for others, but it is too terrible and ugly to make a work of art of. I have suffered too much in it to write plays about it." Several warders and convicts crossed the Channel to visit Wilde in France and kept an active correspondence with him. Wilde did write two long letters to editors pleading for prison reform and these eventually had their good effect. But it was a poem that proved Oscar's last literary work and secured his immortality as an artist.

In *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*, Oscar Wilde compressed every bit of his life into beautiful stark verses about pain seen through the eyes of faith. Faith in what? Faith in what is beyond pain? No. Nothing was beyond pain for Wilde. Rather, faith in Christ within the pain, that pain that was meaningful because of Christ and in Him. Whoever He may be when measured against our traditional theology, this Christ of Oscar Wilde is a transcendent, forgiving Lord in identification with all outcasts and sinners:

And every human heart that breaks,
In prison-cell or yard,
Is as that broken box that gave
Its treasure to the Lord,
And filled the unclean leper's house
With the scent of costliest nard.
Ah! happy they whose hearts can break
And peace of pardon win!
How else may man make straight his plan
And cleanse his soul from Sin?
How else but through a broken heart
May Lord Christ enter in? □



Grace and peaces of mail

Dear Friends,

Thank you for keeping in contact with us through the "Hospitality" newsletter. Enclosed is a gift from a special offering collected for your ministry. We pray that God will continue to bless you and the ministry you have to the homeless.

Love in Christ,

Kris Decker
Deacon, Christ's Community
Grand Rapids, MI



Dear Ed and Murphy,

I was asked by Audrey Thomas to fill you in on our vigil with the homeless. Because Easter was so early this year we decided to delay our vigil, so instead of Holy Week we vigiled April 16-23. There were 14 of us who participated by staying a day and night out on the streets, eating in soup kitchens, and staying in shelters or out on the streets. Another two dozen friends joined us in one of the prayer services we held at the end of each 24-hour period at different sites around the city. Not only was the experience good for us to be in solidarity with our homeless friends to some degree, but also it was a community builder among those of us who work in shelters or houses of hospitality. Hope you are all well in Atlanta.

Yours in Christ and Francis,

David Buer
Chicago, IL

Editor's note: From November 1988 through April 1989, David Buer coordinated an overflow shelter for the homeless in Chicago. He wrote to us, "Because of the overflow shelter, we only had to turn guests away two nights during the whole winter because of lack of space. We averaged about 40 guests a night at the overflow." □

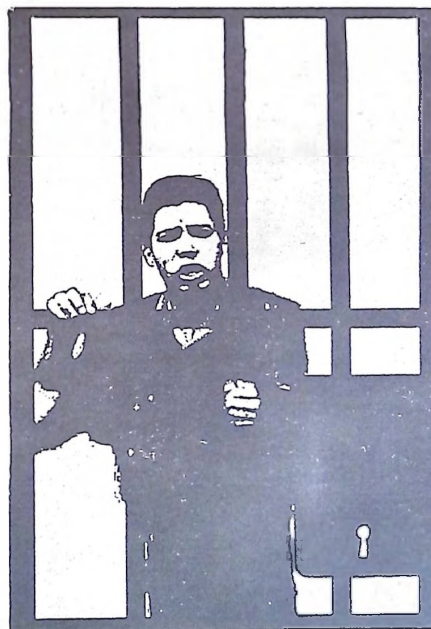
LETTER FROM A BROTHER IN PRISON

The following excerpts are from a letter written by one of our friends in prison. It was not written for publication, therefore we are withholding the name.

. . . I'm very sorry for taking so long to write you. This place drains me of my strength to do anything. I make myself act; I make myself think a lot; I make myself believe there's hope of me someday being free of this place.

There's no other place in the world like prison. This place has a way of making people what it wants them to be. It makes some strong and some weak, but it makes everyone sick. I must confess that prison has made me wish for death more than once. After I couldn't kill myself, I knew that I was strong enough to endure this place, but I also knew in my heart that I would never be the same person again. I don't mean that I'm crazy, or something; my mind's just worn into a frenzy; all I want is some peace and to be alone with myself.

Hoping and dreaming has a way of marring a person's soul, and it breaks a person's heart. I've known and slept with these pains for years, and they've left me half a man. At the present I'm only what I'm willing myself to be. This is what life means to me and what it's been for me. . . . □



LET'S BUILD A NEW PARK

To replace our loss of Plaza Park

THE AL SMITH PARK

A HOMELESS BROTHER



AL SMITH DIED OCTOBER 17, 1986

FIVE POINTS

1. A new park in the downtown area
2. A memorial for Atlanta's Homeless
3. A place for all who share Atlanta's streets
4. Water fountains
5. Public toilets

SAY YES!

PLEASE CALL AND WRITE TODAY:

AARON TURPEAU DEPT. OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES - 260 CENTRAL AVE., S.W. - ATLANTA, GA 30335 (658-7800)
ANDREW YOUNG CITY HALL - 68 MITCHELL ST., S.W. - ATLANTA, GA 30335 (527-7015)
MARVIN ARRINGTON 300 CITY HALL - 68 MITCHELL ST., S.W. - ATLANTA, GA 30335 (658-6300)

ATLANTA ADVOCATES FOR THE HOMELESS
876-6977



March for Peace and the Environment
Hiroshima Day

August 6, 1989, Oak Ridge, Tennessee



Make checks payable to:

Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance
P.O. Box 1101, Knoxville, TN 37901
(615) 573-2322

It will make organizing easier for us if you pre-register before July 15, and it will ensure that you have maps and the latest information, but registration is not required-- so come anyway.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ ST _____

ZIP _____ PHONE _____

ORGANIZATION _____

- () Please send me an ORGANIZING PACKET for \$3.00.
() Please send me information about motels in Knoxville/Oak Ridge.
() Please send me information about the PEACE CAMP.
() I need floor space to sleep on () Saturday, () Sunday.
() I would like someone from OREPA to speak to our organization.
() I would like to make a donation to help pay the cost of the event.
() I am bringing a () carload, () busload of people with me. I will be there () Saturday, () Sunday.
() Please send me information about the PEACE CARAVAN.
Questions, comments, suggestions _____

Please Help!

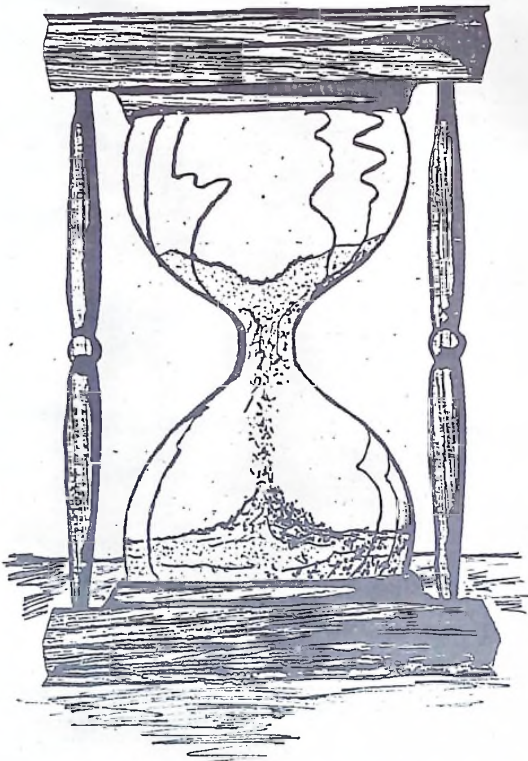
Time is Running Out!

THE WEST HUNTER STREET SHELTER IS TO CLOSE ON JUNE 20, 1989

LET'S WORK TOGETHER TO KEEP IT OPEN!!

PLEASE WRITE AND CALL:

- | | |
|--|----------|
| 1. ANDREW YOUNG
CITY HALL
68 MITCHELL STREET, S.W.
ATLANTA, GA 30335 | 330-6100 |
| 2. MICHAEL LOMAX, CHAIRMAN
FULTON COUNTY COMMISSION
165 CENTRAL AVE. - ROOM 208
ATLANTA, GA 30303 | 681-7260 |
| 3. PERRY GINN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
CHRISTIAN COUNCIL OF METRO ATLANTA
465 BOULEVARD AVE., S.E.
ATLANTA, GA 30312 | 622-2235 |



HOUSING NOW!**New Exodus March**

from
Roanoke, Virginia to Washington, D.C.

A CALL TO ACTION

As a prelude to the massive HOUSING NOW! Rally in Washington, D.C. on October 7th, folks from all across the South will come to Roanoke, Virginia in mid-September to march en masse to Washington, D.C. to demand an end to homelessness and the creation of decent, affordable housing for all people.

Meaningful change always comes from the periphery. It always has and it always will. Therefore, we invite you to join us as we march from the periphery to the center of power and demand HOUSING NOW! It is a NEW EXODUS...people in search of a home.

The NEW EXODUS march will leave Roanoke, Virginia on September 15th and arrive on the outskirts of Washington, D.C. on October 5th. On October 7th, the NEW EXODUS marchers will march into Washington, D.C. and participate in the massive HOUSING NOW! Rally at the U.S. Capitol.

Make history! Join us for the NEW EXODUS march.

NEW EXODUS • 720 1ST STREET SW • ROANOKE, VIRGINIA 24016 • (703) 343-3691

YOUR TELEPHONE TAX PAYS FOR WAR!

P.O. BOX 85810 • SEATTLE, WA 98145 • (206) 522-4377

For more information on telephone tax resistance or other forms of war tax resistance, contact:

The National War Tax Resistance Coordinating Committee

a coalition of local, regional, and national groups supportive of war tax resistance. NWTRCC provides resources, publicity, and coordination for the war tax resistance movement.

EMMAUS HOUSE offers rides to the prison in Reidsville Georgia, one Saturday per month. Reservations are \$2.00, and are required in advance. For more information, please call:

(404) 525-5948

WALK TO RESIST TRIDENT: RECLAIM THE EARTH

Sept. 16 - Oct. 8, 1989

Join us as we call for an end to the Trident nuclear missile program

As Gandhi walked to the sea to make salt, a substance for life, we walk to the sea to reclaim the Earth for life. The Trident missile system, with its first-strike capability, threatens to destroy life itself and divert money from critical human needs.

Our 200-mile walk begins at Cape Canaveral where missiles are tested and continues to Kings Bay, Georgia where the submarines are stationed. Every step we take is an act of resistance to evil — every step we take is a statement of hope.

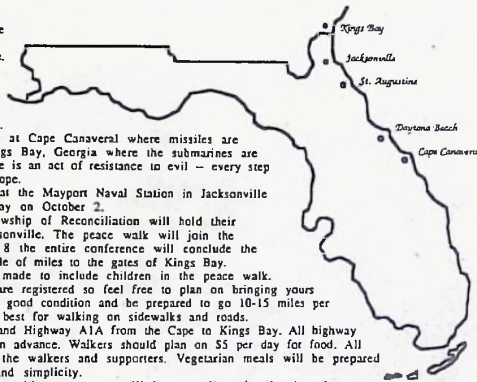
We will stop for a vigil at the Mayport Naval Station in Jacksonville to celebrate Gandhi's birthday on October 2.

On October 6-8 the Fellowship of Reconciliation will hold their national conference in Jacksonville. The peace walk will join the conference and on October 8 the entire conference will conclude the walk by going the last couple of miles to the gates of Kings Bay.

A special effort is being made to include children in the peace walk. Already a number of kids are registered so feel free to plan on bringing yours along. Walkers should be in good condition and be prepared to go 10-15 miles per day. Good tennis shoes are best for walking on sidewalks and roads.

Our route will be U.S. 1 and Highway A1A from the Cape to Kings Bay. All highway authorities will be notified in advance. Walkers should plan on \$5 per day for food. All meals will be prepared by the walkers and supporters. Vegetarian meals will be prepared to maximize on nutrition and simplicity.

As we pass through major cities supporters will house walkers in churches, homes, etc. Camping in remote areas will also be arranged (camping fees will be required in some areas). While in the urban centers supporters will join the walk as it passes through their communities.



Sign me up! I want to help.

- ☐ Yes, I'll walk. Send me the Walker's Sign-Up Form.
☐ I'd like to help with logistics. Send me more information.
☐ I can't walk but here is some money to help cover expenses.

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone () _____

Florida Coalition for Peace & Justice • P. O. Box 2486 • Orlando FL 32802 • (407) 422-3479

THE UNDERGROUND OPENS JUNE 15. WHY IS THERE STILL HUNGER IN ATLANTA?



Those who truly live "underground" will not be allowed in Atlanta's new "Underground" when it opens - it is a new playground for the rich.



In Memory of Henry Lee Willis, III

Without "Cool Breeze,"
There is a stillness in the air.
For us, a time of quiet grief.
For "Cool," a time of loving grace.
Free at last. Free at last.

OUR BROTHER, HENRY LEE WILLIS, III,
WAS KILLED BY THE STATE OF GEORGIA
ON MAY 18, 1989.

FOR

FELLOWSHIP OF
RECONCILIATION



FROM TRIDENT TO LIFE
CAMPAIGN

INVITE YOU TO

"STRATEGIZING IN A GANDHIAN WAY"

A two-day conference to explore the power of "Truth Force" to respond to the arms race, the first-strike Trident missile system, the economic and environmental consequences of militarism and its effect on the poor.

SPEAKERS:

ARUN GANDHI

Journalist and grandson of Mahatma Gandhi

ANNE BRADEN

Southern Organizing Committee for Economic and Social Justice

ADM. GENE CARROLL

Center for Defense Information

REV. TIMOTHY MCDONALD

Southern Christian Leadership Conference

October 6-7, 1989

Jacksonville, Florida

October 8, 1989

Action at Kings Bay Trident Submarine Base,
St. Marys, Georgia in commemoration of
Gandhi's 120th birthday.

Endorsed by Florida Coalition for Peace and Justice.

For information, contact:

Fellowship of Reconciliation

Box 271, Nyack, NY 10960, 914/358-4601

or

Melania Community

1702 Hwy. 40 East, St. Marys, GA 31558, 912/882-4820

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Open Door Schedule

WE ARE OPEN. . .

Monday through Saturday, telephones are answered from 9:00am until noon, from 1:30 until 6:00pm, and from 7:30 until 8:30pm. The building is open from 9:00am until 8:30pm those days. (Both phone & door are not answered during our lunch break from noon until 1:30.) Please call in advance if you need to arrange to come at other times. On Sunday we are closed until 1:00pm. Please do not make unscheduled drop-offs of clothing, food, etc. on Sunday mornings. Sunday afternoon our phones and door are answered from 1:00 until 5:00pm.

OUR MINISTRY. . .

SOUP KITCHEN--Monday-Saturday, 11am-12 noon; Sunday 2-4pm

BUTLER ST. CME BREAKFAST--Monday-Friday, 7:15am

SHOWERS & CHANGE OF CLOTHES--Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, 9-11am
(Be sure to call; schedule varies)

USE OF PHONE--Monday-Saturday, 9am-noon, 1:30pm-5pm.

SHELTER REQUESTS--Monday-Saturday, 9am-noon.

BIBLE STUDY--Alternate Tuesdays, 7:30-9pm.

WEEKEND RETREATS--Four times each year (for our household & volunteers/supporters)--
July 21, 22, 23.

Open Door Community Worship

*We gather for worship and Eucharist at
5:00pm on Sunday evenings
followed by supper together.*

Child care available.

Join us!



June 4 Worship at 910

June 11 Worship at 910

June 18 Worship at 910

June 25 Worship at 910

July 2 Worship at 910

July 9 Worship at 910

July 16 Worship at 910

July 21-23 Retreat at Dayspring Farm

July 30 Worship at 910

Every sixth Sunday the Community has a weekend retreat outside the city.
This replaces our evening worship at 910 Ponce de Leon Ave.

NEEDS

DRIVERS WITH CARS, VANS, OR STATION WAGONS
FOR THE HARDWICK PRISON TRIP.

COFFEE

CHEESE

DEODORANT

MAYONNAISE

HAMS AND TURKEYS

VITAMIN C

FOOT POWDER

MARTA TOKENS

POSTAL MONEY ORDERS—POSTAGE STAMPS

CAR ←

MEN'S LARGE SHOES (12-14)

VOLUNTEERS FOR THE 3RD AND 4TH WEDNESDAYS OF
EACH MONTH, FROM 9AM TO 12:30.

*From 11am - 1pm Monday- 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
11:00 or after 1:00, it would be helpful.
Thanks.*

Newspaper Requests - If you or a friend would like
to receive **HOSPITALITY**, please fill in this form
and return to Willie London at the Open Door
Community, 910 Ponce de Leon Ave. NE, Atlanta,
Georgia 30306-4212.

Name _____

Street _____

City, State, Zip _____