

HOSPITALITY

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

Preaching And Practicing Homemaking

by Ed Loring

Charles Thomas lives, along with three other men, on my back porch. I step over him every night, and leave him there because "there is no room in the inn." "Sorry. We are full," I silently shout. Charles eats in our soup kitchen, bathes in our baths, dresses from our clothes closet, and often is given leftovers from our supper table. Luke is four years old and not our youngest member. Luke keeps on asking, "Why? Why is Charles outside? Why is Charles not coming in for dinner? Why is. . . ?" The peculiar power named homelessness in America has not yet tamed Luke. I often wonder: Is Charles Lazarus? Am I Dives? (Luke 16:19-31)

We are living in an exciting period of history! As Christendom cracks apart, new light and sound make their way through the holes in the walls. Never before have main-line European American Christians had such an opportunity to hear Jesus speak as we do now. The raggedy poor are in our midst; the cry of Christ is in our ears, the marginalized are at the center of our dreams and imaginations. Rather than purchase another gun or a house, just a wee bit further outside the perimeter, why not look to see who is coming to dinner?

Of course, there are problems. With the realization that housing is more of a justice struggle than a charity program, many people lost interest in the homeless--the undeserving poor.

The growth of Habitat for Humanity and Jimmy Carter's Atlanta Project are examples of the search for hopeful products. Some folk are going so far as to build fences and employ security guards to keep their homes and churches from the likes of Lazarus. But this is the exciting part. *No longer can we address the gospel of Jesus Christ concerning the poor without acknowledging our poverty.* The old problem of the relevancy of proclamation is answered. The crumbling of Christendom and the hardness of heart toward the homeless is the fertile soil for planting gospel seeds. Some will yield, it has been said, thirty-fold, some sixty, others ninety!

Let me begin with my conclusion. *The Church of Jesus Christ is not called to build houses. We are mandated to make homes.* Within the various vocations of the Christian life only martyrdom is more noble and exacting than homemaking. The message from the pulpit, the policy from the Elders, the action by the people of God are very simple, concrete, and direct. Please listen to our friend Isaiah:

"Share your food with the hungry and open your homes to the homeless poor." (58:7a)

And from Paul:

"Share your belongings with your needy fellow Christians, and

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HOSPITALITY



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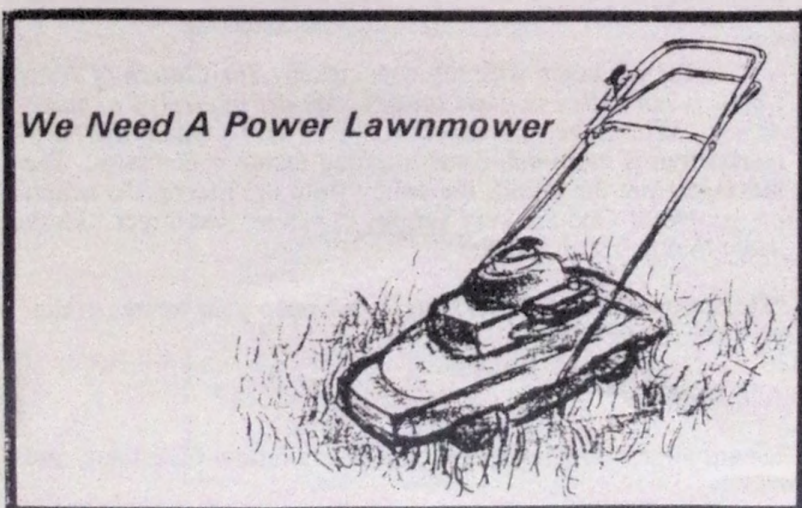
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open your homes to strangers." (Romans 12:13)

When preaching the gospel concerning homeless men and women, boys and girls, Christians need only to be called to hospitality and welcome. Open our homes or a small room in our church to those on the outside. That is biblical love. From the shared task of homemaking emerges the justice agenda: housing is a human right. But that is for the next century. Today let us just live together as the body of Jesus Christ.

Charles Thomas is missing several teeth. He has a warrior's grin. The streets are like prisons--hell holes for the biblical love ethic. Agape and non-violence are simply suburban syrup without covenantal promises, baptismal vows, and a community of mutual accountability. Please never evangelize a homeless person without making home with them. They could easily get killed. Charles worships with us most Sunday afternoons. He grabs a handful of Jesus' breadly body and he gulps the bloody grape juice. About 8:30pm he goes back outside to our porch. There is no room for him in the inn.

Christendom is breaking up and God is, once again, at work among white middle-class folk. Filled with blessings and hope Yahweh refuses to let us go. The time is at hand for us to overcome two tremendous liabilities which have crippled us for centuries. Both must be addressed as we preach to people who live in houses about making home with those who live on the streets.

First, we are finally at the time when we can admit that Martin Luther was absolutely wrong to call James "a right strawy epistle." James is as essential for faith and practice as is Paul. Justification by faith alone in the European American families of faith has undergirded slavery, racism, capitalism, sexism, war, the tobacco lobby, the growth of suburbia, and psychological substitutes for biblical revelation. Justification by grace is clearly biblical. Alone it is an ideological tool for the defense of power and abuse.

James is correct. This book must be preached and practiced as a corrective to the one-sidedness of Luther's fateful doctrine. Listen:

"My sisters and brothers, what good is it for someone to say that they have faith if their actions do not prove it? Can that faith save her? Suppose there are brothers or sisters who need clothes and don't have enough to eat. What good is there in your saying to them, 'God bless you! Keep warm and eat well!'--if you don't give them the necessities of life? So it is with faith: if it is alone and includes no actions, then it is dead." (James 2:14-17)

We need more than balance, more than a dialectic between faith and works. We need to preach and practice faith and works lifting James up and settling Luther down. A new theology of works as essential to justification by faith will enable us to become homemakers with the homeless.

A second Lutheran legacy which continues to weaken the European American mainline Christian witness, and is a cause of homelessness among baptized believers, is the inherent classism of Luther's decision to side with the Princes during the Peasants' War of 1524 and 1525. Undergirded by the erroneous emphasis on justification by faith alone, Luther chose the wrong side of the conflict. "Which side are you on?" is a question every Christian must face every day. The gospel is clear while church history is cloudy. We must make reparations for the ways Luther's momentous decision has shaped our faith and practice. Jesus, like the peasants, was slaughtered by princes. We are called by Christ to side with the oppressed against the oppressor. We cannot have our faith and not practice it, too.

To bring a street person into home or church is to honor both justification by faith and the good works of charity and justice. To make home with the strange beings--little by little--is

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Homemaking

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to undo the history of white folks since 1525, who time after time have been on the wrong side. Ask any Native American, African American, labor pool worker, homeless person, Sandinista, Blues or Rock and Roll singer.

The cracks in Christendom are letting fresh air flow through. We are being called to an old way of life in a new day. Rather than transforming culture into our image of Christ, we may live with him in the flesh and agony of the poor. Only Lazarus could heal Dives, but by his death the gap was too wide to bring them together. We have about 37 years left before Lazarus is so far away from the European American mainline churches that we cannot reach him.

While Charles lies snoring on my back porch in the early



morning hours, another friend sits studying his Bible. His commentary is his life. His faith is that Moses and Jesus are liberators. His hope is that he will be led by the Holy Ghost to a house and a good job. His reality is that he is despised and rejected among most of us. He is dying a slow and incredibly painful death. He has no gas chamber or oven to face, only the endless wandering with nowhere to go until his body breaks and he is dead.

There are three biblical resources I wish to note for preaching and practicing homemaking among the housed and the houseless.

First is the Cain and Abel story (Genesis 4:1-16). A central theme of the European American experience is loneliness. Though we came to these wondrous shores for religious freedom and economic opportunity, the cost has been too much for us to bear. White folks are, like Cain, marked. We bear in our souls and spirits a curse that has to be transformed into the graceful blessing that it may yet become: "You will be a homeless wanderer on the earth" (4:12b). Cain, the betrayer of his brother, had to leave God's presence, his home, and live in a land called "Wandering" or "Nod" which is east of Eden. The power of connection through imagination is redemptive here for

us. *We are the homeless ones.* We, white and rich like Dives, yearn for community and connectedness. Like Cain we fear and tread the land upon which we so hungrily walk. As we are empowered to claim our homelessness, our loneliness, our aimless wanderings looking for a pulpit without the agony of sermon preparation, we can connect with the Lazarus outside our doors and on our city sidewalks. In these days to claim Cain is to renounce Dives.

Secondly, none of us will find home on earth. If we are homemakers we must be careful that home is not our idol. One cause of homelessness among baptized believers is the belief among many that home is a this-worldly possibility. But Jesus tell us:

"There are many rooms in my Parent's house, and I am going to prepare a place for you. I would not tell you this if it were not so. And after I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to myself, so that you will be where I am. You know the way that leads to the place where I am going" (John 14:2-4).

Last Fall while driving on the famous U.S. Highway 61 toward the King Biscuit Blues Festival, Nibs Stroupe and I talked about the theological and political significance of life after death. Nibs taught me that a fundamental meaning of this doctrine is that we cannot find home on earth. This is a most helpful insight for preaching and practicing homemaking. We are wanderers on the earth seeking home, experiencing a foretaste as we become homemakers with the homeless. Yet home always eludes us while on earth east of Eden. We strive for home for Jesus is our homemaker. How, asks Thomas, can we get home? Replies Jesus, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:5b-6a). I am the home.

Paul's letter to Philemon is the third biblical resource for sermon preparation on homemaking between rich and poor, African American and European American, housed and homeless. Like Jesus, this letter, too, has been neglected. Not because of the battles about norms and hermeneutics, but because of the terrible way the Bible meets us where we are.

Cain reveals that we are homeless wanderers. Luke teaches that homemaking is possible only as we invite Lazarus into our houses. Jesus tells us that our home is ultimately in heaven. Jesus is the homeless in and of themselves. Philemon reveals the center of our political and sociological identity, and then proceeds with a biblical love ethic. We, North American mainline white Christian folk are slaveholders. That is, we say "yes." We say "no." We are the oppressors. In Atlanta, which is 65% African American, with a Black mayor, city council president, majority of city council, it is the white business community, led by Presbyterians, Methodists, and Episcopalians, that determines public policy. "Votes count, resources decide." This letter is peculiarly addressed to us as Christendom cracks. The Bible understands us as slaveholders. We must open our hearts to this revelation.

Paul gives us a biblical ethic. While the slaves are still slaves, the poor still poor, the oppressed yet oppressed, Blacks still black, gays still homosexuals, we are to bring them into our homes.

Paul does not assert that Philemon is to free Onesimus. Rather, he is to make home with him. Philemon is to practice hospitality; he is to welcome the slave inside as a brother--a member of the family. This is a radical love ethic rooted in covenantal promise and baptismal vows that create a common life. This is no house building for the working poor every Saturday morning (houseslaves as Malcolm X would say), good though that be. This is a life together rooted in the redemptive power of Jesus Christ. "And now we are clothed, so to speak, with the life of Christ himself. So there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles, European Americans and African Americans, between slaves and free, men and women; we are all one in union with Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:27b-28).

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Views From Church Pews

by Elizabeth Dede

As the daughter of a Lutheran pastor, I have spent a good bit of time in church pews. Because I had my first experience with pews when I was eight days old at my baptism, I really never paused much to reflect on them. They were just part of church decor.

But recently I have had a new kind of contact with church pews: they are the furnishing for the visiting room where I visit our friend Horace Dix in prison at Hardwick. So I have now, 31 years after my baptism, begun to reflect on church pews.

First, let me share with you some of my childhood views from church pews. The church I grew up in had a statue of a gigantic Jesus (we're talking 10 to 12 feet), ascending into heaven (or at least through the ceiling). I always wondered, "Was Jesus **really** that big?" but I never asked an adult. What if he had been a giant? Bible stories would take on scary proportions. Anyway, that statue sort of commanded the view from any pew in the church. We had our eyes fixed on Jesus!

As the pastor's family, we sat in the front of the church, with two empty pews in front of us. My mother always reminded us that the whole congregation was watching, so we'd better behave, and, indeed I felt their eyes boring holes in my back. Why weren't they looking at Jesus? My younger brother and I had a propensity towards severe cases of the giggles at somber moments during the service. Early on in our childhood Mom discovered that she had to sit between us. Even then, the giggles would start to contort our bodies as we tried to suppress the laughter. Mom would slap us on our thighs. "Stop that, you kids!" she'd hiss. "Everybody's watching!"

I often wonder what my dad was thinking as he looked out on his flock and the two wayward sheep up front. That was another thing we saw from those pews: Dad--singing, praying, reading, preaching, blessing; his view was completely different from ours. Often his back was to the giant with uplifted arms. Dad never sat in a pew.

Some other things about church pews. They were uncomfortable; you couldn't slouch. I never could understand the people who fell asleep during the sermon. How could you get comfortable enough with those hard, straight backs? Turning around was strictly forbidden! Dad knew if my friend Teresa was in church, but I didn't until the thing was all over.

Then I left home to go to college, and I had some new experiences with church pews. I went to Valparaiso University, which has the distinction of sporting the largest chapel on a college campus anywhere in the United States. Several thousand people could sit in this place, and the pews were lined up row upon row. There was another gigantic Jesus here--rising and shining from the cross. But what struck me most from my pew was the pulpit: it was mounted high above the congregation, so the preacher always talked down on us. During the singing of the hymn prior to the sermon, he would climb a sweeping staircase to get to the pulpit. There he was far away, a tiny creature, booming down on us with a word from on high. Sometimes the preacher was good. Other times I had this fantasy, or perhaps it was a hint of mental illness, that I would stand up in the middle of the sermon and start arguing with whatever lunacy was being preached at us from way up there. I'm sure my family is appreciative that the Spirit never actually so moved me.

Communion was a major production in this chapel. Lutherans go forward to the altar to receive the bread and wine. Can you imagine 2,000 people doing this every Sunday? Once as I was waiting in line, I had the distinct impression that I was one cow among thousands, being herded along. A moo almost escaped from my lips, which were actually forming the words to the hymn, "I Come, O Savior, To Thy Table." Finding my way

back to my seat always created a sense of panic for me. Hundreds of pews, stacked up on each other, looking exactly the same. All those thousands of mid-Westerners lined up, looking like identical cattle, wrapped in coats because there was no way to heat this enormous barn. I couldn't pick out the people who were sitting in front of me, and because I wasn't allowed to turn around, I didn't know who was behind me. After weeks of frustration, I finally discovered that during the sermon I could count the windows back to my pew. From then on I was able to return to my seat without any problem.

But now to those pews in the prison visiting room at Hardwick. The first time I saw them I chuckled to myself, "What a funny way to furnish a prison visiting room." Then I irreverently wondered, "What church closed down and sold their pews to the state?" or "Which congregation decided to redecorate and sold the old pews to the prison?" But why did the prison have church pews in the visiting room? It seemed almost sacrilegious.

Having thought about and experienced pews, however, it makes perfect sense. It is uncomfortable to spend a few hours in that visiting room. The pews are hard and straight-backed. It's difficult to carry on a conversation because pews are made to cause you to look straight ahead, not at the person next to you whom you are visiting. If more than one visitor comes the problem is compounded. Once Ed and I went together to visit our friend Horace. I thought it would be best for us to sit one on each side of him. Horace was kind of like my mother, separating the misbehaving children. That arrangement didn't work at all. In order to talk with both of us, Horace kept having to turn, or one person got left out of the conversation. Finally, Ed suggested that we both sit on one side of Horace. That was better, but still uncomfortable. Whoever was in the middle was unable to be part of the conversation without leaving somebody out.

Prison visiting rooms are designed to be "flugel space." The term has its roots in the German language and the word for "fly." It describes a place that is not welcoming to people, a place that does not encourage people to stay. A Greyhound bus station is flugel space. You go there only to board a bus. The chairs in the waiting room are fixed, hard plastic, not molded to fit any body comfortably. Ask any homeless person. You are not welcome to stay in the Greyhound bus station. A fast food restaurant is flugel space. Burger King and McDonald's want to serve lots of people, so they don't encourage you to hang around. The seats are basically bright yellow, hard plastic church pews. Dare we add churches to this list?

One final thing. There is no gigantic Jesus in the prison visiting room. You'll only find ones in human form there. Hmm. . . the things you can see from a church pew.

Elizabeth Dede is a partner at the Open Door.



Our mini van has made hundreds of prison trips and other journeys with the community. It now has nearly 140,000 miles and is showing its age. Do you have a reliable station wagon or mini van to donate to the Open Door? Please call 874-9652.

Facing Jesus: Holy Week And The Streets Of Atlanta

by Chris Serb

Editor's note: Chris Serb is a Jesuit Volunteer who works at Samaritan House of Atlanta. He spent 24 hours on the streets with us during Holy Week and shared the following reflection with us.

I have always believed that understanding is the key to any relationship; you cannot judge another person until you've walked a mile in his or her shoes. In my recent work life, however, I haven't always practiced what I preach. In my role as an employment counselor for homeless job seekers, I place many demands and expectations upon my homeless brothers and sisters. I require them to get organized, to submit 12 to 15 job applications each week, to work on their interviewing techniques, and to take the initiative in changing their lives for the better. During the course of the week, many of my homeless friends impress me with their drive, their ambition, and the strength of their will; but just as often I am frustrated by those who lack the energy, the courage, the motivation to do something positive with their lives. Not until Holy Week, however, when I spent 24 hours on the streets with the Open Door Community, did I really understand the deeper issues which most homeless people face as they struggle through their day-to-day lives.

From 5:00pm Thursday to 5:00pm Friday, I temporarily relinquished my possessions, my money, my home, and my bed as I spent the day on the streets of downtown Atlanta. With four others, we moved around from soup line to soup line, from the



park to the bus station to the library, sleeping for 5 or 10 minutes wherever we could, walking from place to place, but having no particular place to go. As I grew tired from lack of sleep, wet from the rain outside, and frustrated from all the time spent waiting in lines and wasting idle hours, I realized for the first time how frustrating the daily lives of my friends must be. How can anyone conduct a coherent job search when they rarely get more than three hours of sleep each night? How can my homeless brothers and sisters continue to challenge themselves and be challenged without the support of family, friends, or loved ones? How can homeless people carry themselves with dignity and respect when they don't have a place to call their own? The strength of those people who "make it" is truly incredible. At Samaritan House, we try to provide a sense of home, a warm atmosphere, and a feeling of belonging to our homeless friends; but until I slept in the streets, moved from soup line to soup line, wasted time in the park, and was scorned by downtown business people looking at my scruffy, disheveled appearance, I didn't realize the magnitude of the obstacles which homeless people have to face each day.

My most vivid memory from my night out came as I was trying to sleep. The five of us found cardboard boxes and slept in a dirty, smelly, noisy alley. I managed to doze off for fifteen or twenty minutes here or there; and each time I woke up I reached for my pillow, my blanket, and my mattress, only to grab cardboard, concrete, and steel. The next night, after a

shower, a hot meal, and a few phone calls to some friends, I went to sleep in my safe, warm, comfortable bed. But I woke up uneasily several times during the night, imagining myself on cardboard, steel, and concrete; and yet I found myself safe, comfortable, and warm in my own bed, my own house, my own world.

After my experience on the streets, I sincerely pray that we can build a society where everyone who wakes up uneasily at night, grasping for concrete or cardboard or any other sort of tenuous, temporary shelter can feel the warmth and comfort of their own bed, their own blankets, their own family, friends, and loved ones, and their own sense of home. *

Gift Of Relationship

by Dee Cole Vodicka

One beautiful spring afternoon recently my children and I went to play at a nearby park. When we arrived at the playground a worried looking woman approached me and said, "I feel I should tell you that there is a man here who several of us are afraid of. He is acting very strange and we are trying to keep the children away from him." She pointed across the park to an African American man sitting on a bench.

I quickly recognized him as a friend of our community--a gentle but disturbed homeless man, who is afflicted with talking to imaginary friends and enemies. I said, "Oh! That's Ron." The woman was astonished--"You know him?" We then had a wonderful conversation while I explained my relationship with Ron and how I know him to be a kind and friendly person. She was very sympathetic to his mental condition and to the horror of homelessness in our land. During our time together he became a person in her eyes.

While we were talking, Ron walked by, having a heated exchange with his demon. He looked over, saw me and my children, stopped, smiled, waved and walked on.

As a woman and a mother I certainly understand the fear that grips our land, the need to be cautious and careful. But I am so thankful for the gift of relationship I experience at the Open Door with people who are so very different from me. To know people's names, to see friends rather than strangers, is a profound blessing.

Dee Cole Vodicka is a resident volunteer at the Open Door.



Frances Pauley

Stories Of Struggle And Triumph

Edited by Murphy Davis

Transcribed by Elizabeth Dede

Editor's note: We continue here with Part IV of a five-part series of stories from Frances Pauley's life and work.

Part IV

When I park out in the backyard of Nine-Ten and come in the back door, usually to the tune of the washing machine, all of a sudden I have a feeling that comes over me--I feel like finally I'm in the right place. Even if the back hall is dark, and I wonder what I'm going to run into, or if all the trash has been moved, I still feel at peace and at home. Then I begin to see people and faces, and people put out their arms and give me a hug, and I know I'm really where I belong. That means so much to me. One of the handicaps of growing older is that you sometimes feel that there isn't a place for you any longer because you can't do the things you used to do. The sense of belonging in this community is such a joy in my life.

I love it that we can listen to each other, and it means so much to hear about other people's lives--where you're from, what you've done in your life, who your mother was. So this time I'll tell you a little more about my life and my background.

I was born in 1905, in a little town in Ohio, south of



Frances celebrating her birthday at the Open Door

Cleveland where both my mother's and father's families had been early settlers. In fact, I have a letter that one cousin wrote describing the walk from Connecticut to Ohio. They had two covered wagons, and they tied the cow behind the wagons. This cousin was 14 years old at the time, and it was his job to walk behind the wagons with the cows to keep them happy all the way from Connecticut to Ohio. That was the beginning of my family's time in Ohio.

My father built a house when he and Mama married back of the cow pasture where my grandfather had give him a little parcel. I was the second baby, and I was greatly cherished because there were lots and lots of boys in my family, but I was the first girl in a long, long time. So I know I had more hair ribbons, and cared for them the least, of any little girl that ever was born.

My father had a clothing store in this little town and one

Saturday night when I was about two and a half, it burned down. About that same time my uncle was starting a business, the H.G. Hastings Seed Company, here in Atlanta, so he persuaded my father to come to Georgia to help. So down we came. My mother was quite, quite homesick. This was only about forty years after the end of the Civil War, and as you might imagine, there was quite a bit of feeling about these Yankees moving into Decatur.

One of my earliest remembrances, and I treasure this, came from my mother. I talked a lot then just like I do now, and she said, "Now, when they call you a damn Yankee, you're to smile and do not answer them back." I think that was good, because early on I had to learn at least that little bit about discrimination.

My grandfather came to visit with us every winter, and it was his habit to go to church early every Sunday morning. He would meet old Mr. Hammond under the tree in the front of the churchyard before Sunday school. Both of them had fought in the Civil War, so they would sit out there and fight the battles all over again under that tree. Then when it was time, they would go arm-in-arm up the steps into the church for Sunday school. They were fast friends. That taught me a lot.

When I was about eight or nine, the church was doing some of its good deeds by going to help with the kindergarten at the Fulton Bag and Cotton Mill. Mama decided it would be a good idea to take me along so I could play with the little children. As you might well know, the conditions in the mills in those years were really awful, and it made a real impression on me. The children were so dirty and there were flies everywhere: I remember how the room smelled, how it felt, how it looked, just as if I'd been there yesterday. It was overwhelming to me, but it was good that my mother took me, because it began to make me know a little bit that everybody didn't live the way we did.

Later on I would sometimes go with some of the other young people from the church out to the DeKalb County poor farm. They had simple little houses and a dining room with pretty adequate food. But what was important to me was getting to know the people who lived there. I remember liking them and thinking one old lady was so attractive and so funny. When I was writing a play when I was at Agnes Scott, I wrote about her: she stole away from the poor farm and went to the fair and won a duck. I remember that part because she came on the stage carrying a duck. That was another time in my life that I was able to learn more about people whose lives were different from mine.

Like a crazy person, I got married in 1930! Seems like anybody who could read the paper would have enough sense not to do that. In 1928, maybe, but by 1930, somebody should have understood what was going to happen. But I must say that the 30's were probably the happiest years of my life. We were never really hungry, but we did worry about work. My husband was a landscape architect, and you can imagine how much work there was for him. When the WPA and the PWA came along, Bill was able to have a hand in the formation of that, which was exciting. But then he was able to start getting jobs, and that was really exciting because we were able to buy food. For instance, Hurt Park downtown near Georgia State, was designed by Bill and built with PWA money (except the fountain which was paid for by a foundation).

In all that government-funded work, Bill was never paid what he would have been in private business. As designer and supervisor of the project, he got the same scale of wages as everybody else. That was great--so different from how things are today. Even with all the unemployment, the rich are getting richer. In the 30's the rich were jumping out the windows. Nobody had any money, so there was a different feeling about it.

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It wasn't a disgrace to be out of work and not to have any money, and you weren't looked down on, because we were all in it together. Everybody talked together about how to get the cheapest things and feed your baby the best and how are we going to see that everybody had something to eat. There really was a different attitude that helped us think more about each other.

In the 30's we started the free lunch program in the DeKalb schools, [see Part I, March, Hospitality], but by the late 40's and early 50's I found that racial justice was the place I really wanted to put my energy. When I made the decision not to be affiliated with any all-white groups any longer, I had to resign from the club where we often took guests to eat and from my Methodist Church which was theoretically segregated at that time. Fortunately, my husband went to a church that was theoretically desegregated, so that's where we took the children. But every time I would almost join his church, I'd be sitting out there waiting for the children to come out of Sunday school and somebody would come out and say, "Why don't you just come on and join this church? You know all the best people in town go to this church." Well, that would turn me off for another year or two. So I wasn't affiliated with a church for a good many years until I came to the Open Door to be part of the worshipping community here.

1954 was a big turning point, and I began to need to learn more and meet new friends. I began to watch the paper, and when something would be going on at Spelman or Morehouse, I'd go. Well, naturally, I did stand out because at that time very few white people were over there except some of the faculty. People were quick to speak to me, and it didn't take me long to make friends. I joined the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, a wonderful organization. And Mrs. Sadie Mays (married to Dr. Benjamin Mays) taught me more than any one person. If I said something that was out of line, I want you to know she told me about it--not in a mean way. It was very caring, but it wasn't overly kind and soft.

One time I went over there and they were having commencement at one of the colleges at Atlanta University. Bill



Frances with Open Door partners Ed Loring and Dick Rustay

was parking the car, and I had gone up and was waiting for him to come. I was standing behind all the chairs and it was outdoors. Well, before Bill came, here came the procession. When they got to me, the president was leading the line, and he recognized me, so he bowed. I bowed back. The man behind him thought I was bowing to him, so he bowed, and I bowed. Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt was the speaker that day, so she's coming along third in the line, and she thinks I'm bowing to her, so she bowed. I felt like two cents, bowing with everybody, but there never was a time I could stop.

I want to tell you about Mrs. Roosevelt. So many pictures of her make her look ugly, but I want to tell you

what--when she smiled she had the most beautiful face I almost ever saw. And I wouldn't take anything for having seen her that far away, bowing. It's a wonderful remembrance to have.

About that time they asked me if I would be the director of the Georgia Council on Human Relations, and I said, "I don't know enough. I've worked with the League of Women Voters, and I've worked with a few inter-racial things around the state, but I just don't know enough." By that time Dr. Martin Luther King had moved back to Atlanta, and I had gotten to know him and Mrs. King, so I went to see him. I said, "What do you think about this? They've asked me, but I don't have any experience or any training--I just don't think I can do it." He said, "Yes you can," and he encouraged me. So I said I would. He said, "You'll have problems raising money, but I'll help you." And sure enough, he did. He said, "Let's have a big dinner." I said, "Great, but let's don't have it in a church basement. Let's have it out in the open and advertise." And we did. It was just tremendous, a great success. We had all the threats of a bombing, but nobody bombed us. It really was beautiful. Dr. King asked Carl Rowan to speak and he introduced Rowan, which shows you it was early in King's career. By that time very few of us had heard or knew "We Shall Overcome," so we had a group of students from over at the University come and teach us. And as that whole big crowd learned to sing "We Shall Overcome" I looked at Carl Rowan sitting at the head table with tears streaming down his face. It was a wonderful occasion.

Frances' stories will continue in the July Hospitality.

*



More Than A Habeas

by Melanie Finch-McGinnis

You stand, head and shoulders above me, an ethereal woman-child beauty, a revolutionary having not yet found her cause. In time, perhaps as a result of pain or maybe having grown weary of the burdensome weight of oppression, you will pick up your own sword to fight for the first time in a lifetime of battles. You will fight with a ferocity that will sometimes frighten you. Your dogged determination and quest for vengeance will horrify those who have not yet been robbed of that which they would die for. You will fight as if your life, your children's lives and the lives of your children's children depend on having entered the war. My Baby Revolutionary, your cause will not be a safe one; safety is not in your genes. And it will cost you. It is in the cost of the battle that you will build your strength; for the cost will be painfully high and the fight, a lonely one. There won't be any comforting hugs or encouraging words but even still you will fight. The cost of the fight is high but the price of having never lifted the sword is your soul. Yes, you will fight.

Melanie Finch-McGinnis is a prisoner at the Hardwick prison in Georgia.

Knowing Little Peace

by Amy Winebarger

"Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword." (Matt. 10:34)

I grew up in a small town in Upper-East Tennessee. Two years ago I began attending a small, liberal arts college, also in Upper-East Tennessee. During those nineteen years, I was never confronted with racism and very rarely with sexism. I went to a Presbyterian Church that I joined when I was 14. I prayed regularly--alone and with friends. No one even spoke of such atrocities as homelessness or the death penalty. We were mainly concerned with parents, tests and boyfriends. My life was fairly peaceful, save for the occasional fight with my parents or paper due.

I stumbled upon the Open Door accidentally. I was planning to spend my Fall Break with my friend, Leigh Stokes. She suggested that we spend the five-day break volunteering in Atlanta. I departed from college and would not return to the simple, quiet peace that I left.

Slowly, I am beginning to understand the Open Door, the grace that overcame me that weekend in October. Nowhere else can one sit down with someone completely different and share the love of God. I found Jesus in an African American man with a 7th grade education and a lengthy prison record. And he wasn't a pretty, peaceful Jesus. He bore the lashes of racism and the nailmarks of poverty. This Jesus handed me his sword and commanded me to fight for justice, for him, for the least of these. . . .

When I moved into the Open Door two months later, I was ready to lay down my sword. After constant battles with my parents and friends, I was wondering whether it was really God's will that I move in. I was yearning for peace, only I knew I could never return to the same passive peacefulness I had left. My life at the Open Door is hectic--working six days a week, reading books on liberation theology, the civil rights movement and feminism, and playing (and winning) Spades game upon Spades game. Eventually, peace crept up on me in the oddest of moments--during a calm soup kitchen or working the clothes closet for showers. The peace that the Open Door offers is not



Amy and Open Door partner Gino Williams

the shallow boredom I found in my college dormitory. It is the peace that "transcends all understanding." It is a peace that I cannot describe or recreate within myself. I can only rejoice when it comes upon me and cherish its memory during the most chaotic of times.

Amy Winebarger is a resident volunteer at the Open Door.



In Memoriam

Johnny Westbrook, our friend, formerly on death row, died February 20, 1993.

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A North American Base Community



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Contact: Ed Loring, 910 Ponce de Leon Ave., NE, Atlanta, GA 30306-4212 * 404/874-9652 or 876-6977.

Bob Dylan, God, And The American Dream

by Bert Cartwright

Editor's note: Bert Cartwright is a retired pastor who has for years been a significant interpreter of the lyrics and cultural importance of Bob Dylan. Please read his The Bible in the Lyrics of Bob Dylan.

How does God regard contemporary American life? That is the question that song poet Bob Dylan pondered in the seclusion of Woodstock in 1966 and 1967. Although always acquainted with the Bible, Dylan in these years searched the scriptures more earnestly in his life-long search for ultimate meaning. The result was a 1968 album called "John Wesley Harding," which he later dubbed rock's first biblical album. Although it has many biblical allusions, the album centers more theologically upon America and what God thinks of it.

In his song on this album titled "I Pity the Poor Immigrant," Dylan daringly feels his way into God's perspective and has God speak about America in the first person. Dylan takes his inspiration from the Holiness Code found in Leviticus 26 in which the Lord warns of the terrors that face those who disobey God's laws.

In this passage the Lord expresses the stern pity of a monarch who, while punishing the people, will not utterly destroy them. God is a divine sovereign who rules and overrules history not with sentimentality, but with the punishing pity of grace.

Dylan, the severe critic of contemporary American culture, sees America as breaking covenant with the God who has brought the people to these shores. Transposing Israel's ancient story to the story of the American people, he pictures America's inhabitants not as a liberated Jew who has been led into the Promised Land, but as an "immigrant," who like the wilderness Jew "wishes he would've stayed home."

The Lord's indictment of American society is devastating. Reflecting the threatened desolation of Israel in Leviticus, the Lord pities the "immigrant"

Who uses all his power to do evil

But in the end is always left so alone.

The immigrant is described as the one "who with his fingers cheats/And who lies with every breath." The immigrant "builds his town with blood" and "falls in love with wealth itself/And turns his back on me."

The Lord of this American song speaks in the exact words of Leviticus 26:20 of the one whose "strength is spent in vain." The result is that their heaven is "like iron" (Lev. 26:19). Just to be sure that the listener understands that this Lord is speaking of America, Dylan transposes the phrase to "whose heaven is like Ironsides."

Just as the Israelites of Leviticus 26:36 find that "the sound of a driven leaf shall put them to flight," so America as the "poor immigrant" is one "who hears but does not see." America, as the poor immigrant "passionately hates his life/And likewise, fears his death."

This song closes with the judgment that the American Dream has failed. The "poor immigrant" is one "whose visions in the final end/Must shatter like the glass."

The song ends with an enigmatic couplet:

I pity the poor immigrant

When his gladness comes to pass.

Taken literally, "comes to pass" may mean that happiness comes only to pass one by. But the archaic biblical phrase "comes to pass" can mean "to happen." It would seem that the Lord's pity lies in "the final end" when happiness can only be fulfilled upon the shattering of the American Dream.

Bob Dylan, like many of us today, is better at puncturing the illusions of the American Dream than in pursuing that which makes for universal happiness. But in the "final end" the results are not left up to us. It is in the shattering of the false visions, that God is able to show the stern pity of grace and give the people what they cannot bring about on their own.

Bob Dylan who once said in a song that he was not a prophet or a prophet's son, bespeaks the prophetic voice of those who in their protest against injustice believe that the prophetic word will not return empty.

From the perspective of this song, the work of shattering the false visions of America is an act of faithfulness. In what seems to be futile crying out against the false values of American society, we are opening the way for God to break through with God's dream which is Shalom. The Lord in stern pity will in sovereign majesty bring that dream to "come to pass." *

Glaring Justice

by Terri Rachals

HALL OF JUSTICE
AMERICAN DEMOCRACY
LAND OF THE BRAVE AND FREE
SPECTACULAR CASE,
ARRAIGNMENT HEARING. . .

EYES DOWNCAST SHE MOVES,
SHACKLED GAIT UNCERTAIN
INCHING ALONG THE CAMERA-LINED HALLS. . .
BRIGHT LIGHTS GLARING
FLASHING
SHUDDERS CLICKING
TAPE ROLLING
REPORTERS GAWKING
EYES BULGING LIKE SPECTATORS AT A BULL FIGHT
AWAITING A GORY SCENE;
SCRUTINIZING AS SHE'S ESCORTED BY
HANDCUFFS AND CHAINS INTACT
PROTECTING THEM FROM HER-
THEY PEER
WAITING FOR HER TRANSFORMATION TO THE
MONSTER THEY SUPPOSE HER TO BE;
NEWEST ADDITION TO THE CIRCUS SIDESHOW;
BETTER THAN THE HERMAPHRODITE OR TWO-HEADED
COW. . .
THEY HECKLE HER
LIKE TRIBAL KINSMEN JABBING SWORDS AT THE
COBRA TO SEE THE DEADLY DANCE;
UNWILLING TO AWAIT THE JURY OF PEERS
THEY CONVICT HER IN THEIR NEWS. . .

DEAD SOUL MIRRORED IN HER EYES,
HER SILENT TEARS WATER THE COURTHOUSE FLOOR.

Terri Rachals is a prisoner at the Hardwick prison in Georgia.



• A NEW BOOK • THE BIBLE IN THE LYRICS OF BOB DYLAN

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BY BERT CARTWRIGHT

Available from: The Bob Dylan Collectors' Service
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Grand Junction, Colorado 81502



Grace and Peaces of Mail

Dear Ed,

I hope that the Easter celebration was renewing for you. It is so tempting to fall into the double trap of either resignation or bitterness, both of which abandon God's world to whatever fate. It is so hard to embody authentic hope in the midst of death and dying. We cannot promise those to whom we minister that things are going to get better. . . that's the problem of hope in today's urban environment. Clearly the beginnings of a crisis are upon us, and it may be that we have to go through it to find any realization of our hope. But we have to keep presenting the vision of a renewed humanity and a "city with foundations" which is history's goal. . . the vision of a viable and sustainable urban lifestyle, ways to live together that preserve and maintain human dignity with justice and compassion, so that our common life may itself become a sacrament, an outward and visible sign of God's grace and providence. What a challenge! I look to you and others in urban ministry for those small harbingers of hope.

Peace,

Bill Swain
Tallahassee, FL

Editor's note: Dr. Bill Swain is a professor of Religion at Florida State University in Tallahassee. Bill and his wife Elaine are long haul friends of the Open Door Community and the journey for justice.

□□□□□□□□

Dear Open Door,

A group of my friends and I got together for dinner on Friday to celebrate Bob Marley's birthday. We took up a collection and voted to give it to the Open Door.

It's not much, but we hope it helps you do your work.

Peace--

Ellen Ott
Atlanta, GA 30307

□□□□□□□□

Dear Friends at Open Door,

I trust this long-overdue update finds you all in good health. I am very well, and praising God for the gifts God continues to shower on me.

After many months of unemployment, I have been working since January for a union trust fund in Chicago. It is a good job, and a challenging one. Since February I have been living in my own apartment in DeKalb, IL--a combination farm town/college town, about 40 miles from my job but about the same distance from my children (in the opposite direction).

I truly miss you all, and my Hardwick friends, and everyone else I left behind, especially thinking of you as Easter draws near and you are preparing for Holy Week on the streets. I am with you in spirit, and continue to pray for you all. Last year on Easter I was privileged to attend your sunrise service and breakfast. This year I will be in prison. I've been taking an 18-month old baby to see his mom at Dwight Women's Correctional Institution, and we will go on Easter. She is 26 and has been there since just after his birth. Can't think of a better way to celebrate the resurrection!

I am taking a course in conversational Spanish at a local community college, which should help as I become more involved with prisoners' families. There is also a sizeable Hispanic migrant population here, and I may help in that area as well.

I promise to let you know what I am up to from time to time.

Peace and Love--

Susan Przytulski
DeKalb, IL

Editor's note: Susan Przytulski is a good friend of the Open Door Community who provided leadership for the Hardwick Prison trip before she moved to Illinois.

□□□□□□□□

Dear Open Door,

I have been thinking about the life and mission of Martin Luther King, Jr. on the 25th anniversary of his death. It is really sad to see how little of his work has been completed. So much hate and poverty remains. New hate groups appear on our streets as more people just turn and look the other way.

Atlanta is still a divided city. If you got the big money you can live 1st class! Atlanta as a city is more focused on image and hype. The Olympics will help those with wealth and connections. The working poor and middle class will pay the taxes but will be left out in the long run. Atlanta tolerates symbols of hate like Confederate Ave. The City of Martin Luther King has a long way to go. Why can't the City do more to help the poor and displaced? Atlanta will give big property tax breaks to Post Properties to build upscale housing next to downtown. Atlanta will help rich developers in Grant Park make big profits.

'93 is an election year in Atlanta. Let's call on City Council members and the mayor. Focus on the needs of people not just the wants of the wealthy. Write your city officials. Do it for the memory of Martin!

Sincerely,

Scott Petersen
Atlanta, GA



Dear Friends,

I was very touched by your willingness to help out during my very difficult days. My mother's unexpected passing has been the closest, intense pain that I have faced. Your aid in Andrew's visit was not only comforting, but incredibly helpful. His selfless spirit served all of us in the midst of family tragedy and I know you all made that possible by gathering time, funds and car. Thank you deeply.

Your community continues to inspire me. I just finished reading Part III of Ed's articles on hope. Seeing my own world turn upside-down has been heart-breaking and, although I have always felt a passion to fight injustices in our world with action and heart--I have never been this sensitized to pain. I realize my plight seems shallow or light in comparison to the unbelievably disgusting days that society forces homeless lives to live. On the other hand, somehow my heart has been deepened and seems raw. When I read about victims of various world ills, it impacts me in a new way. Then to read about your ability to see hope--that's healing to hear and ministering to my heart.

Mom taught me a lot about our responsibilities as Christians. She volunteered and served her friends in a homeless shelter in downtown Greensboro and her time in that office was a critical part of her life.

I am moved and brought to a new level in life and will continue to be advocates for you and common ministries in our world. As I work with college students, my focus continues to be simpler lifestyle, serving the oppressed and opening friendships with differing cultures. Thanks.

Peace and Joy--

Cindy Edwards
Clemson, SC

(continued on page 11)

More Letters. . . .

(continued from page 10)

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

In his latest book, The Nonviolent Coming of God, James Douglass stresses the point that we must love our enemies. He's right, of course, but as I'm sure you know that's a damn hard thing to do. And without God's help it can't be done, at least I don't think so. Yet we ain't never going to change our enemy through violence or dislike. I find that whenever I make an attempt to be at least halfway friendly to someone who is opposed to the homeless or is racist or sexist or homophobic my day goes better.

Picked up a new button for my button cap which is loaded with various radical-type buttons and which I wear every day, causing others to be positive about me being weird. Anyway the button says "Poverty Is Violence"--a profound truth!

Also finally got that great bumper sticker that has the peace symbol and the wording "Back By Popular Demand." It's on the back window of our dear old 1970 Dodge, mainly cuz there's no more room on the trunk and bumper. Regardless what people say or think, we gotta get the message out, don't we?

In Solidarity and Love-

Jerry Robinett
Tucson, AZ



Dear Friends at the Open Door,

We read your last Hospitality from cover to cover, as they say, and we were much impressed with the poster of Willie Dee. We love his saying, "We gonna do the best we can 'til we can't." Also personally knowing Willie Dee makes the work and dedication of the Open Door. Please send us a poster of Willie Dee.

Love to you all, known and unknown to us--

Roberta and Mason Ellison
Elmwood, CT

Editor's note: Bobbie and Mason Ellison are good friends of the Open Door who, as part of their retirement, spent time as resident volunteers with us in 1988.

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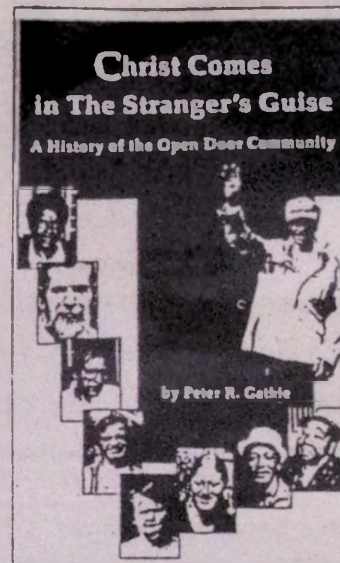
Dear Friends,

The article on Frances Pauley is wonderful. I thought, "Bob Dylan could have written a fine song about Frances if he had known her during his great songwriting period." Then I found the article on Bob Dylan on back in this same issue. I loved "hearing" Frances tell her stories in your paper. I hope that I can pick up more copies.

Love,

Anne Nicolson
Atlanta, GA

□□□□□□□□



Christ Comes in The Stranger's Guise:

A History of the
Open Door Community

Peter R. Gathje

For your own copy of Christ Comes in the Stranger's Guise write to

Phillip Williams
910 Ponce de Leon Ave., NE
Atlanta, GA 30306

Please send a \$10 donation to help cover printing and postage and to feed the hungry and homeless.

Homemaking

(continued from page 3)

Ironically, the very scriptures used by proslavery Christians in 18th and 19th century America are resources for us today as we discover the radicality of life together and homemaking in the body of Christ. The church cannot wait for the end of slavery, poverty, or oppression to occur; wish it as we do. We must this very day open our homes to the homeless poor. Out of a life together shall emerge a renewed church and a political agenda which will include housing as a human right and constitutional guarantee.

Without taking the poor, the wanderer, the slave, and Lazarus into our homes and churches to practice the vocation of homemaking, the white mainline Protestant church is doomed to die a dismal death. We have about 37 years before the chasm is too wide for Lazarus to cross. Which side are you on? Oh, which side are you on?

Ed Loring is a partner at the Open Door Community. This article first appeared in Journal For Preachers, vol. XVI, no. 4, 1993, under the title "Homiletics, Homilies, and Homemaking." For a subscription please write to: Journal For Preachers, PO Box 520, Decatur, GA 30031-0520.

*

**OUR JOB IS LOVE
OTHERS WITHOUT
STOPPING TO INQUIRE
WHETHER OR NOT THEY
ARE WORTHY.** THOMAS MERTON

WE ARE OPEN. . .

Monday through Saturday, telephones are answered from 9:00am until noon, from 1:30 until 6:00pm, and from 7:00 until 8:30pm. The building is open from 9:00am until 8:30pm those days. (Both phone and door are not answered during our 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 open from 7:00am until noon. Sunday afternoon our door is answered until 5:00pm.

OUR MINISTRY. . .

SOUP KITCHEN--Wednesday-Saturday, 11am-12 noon

SUNDAY BREAKFAST--Sunday morning at 910, 7:15am

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

SHOWERS & CHANGE OF CLOTHES--Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, 2-4pm (Be sure to call; schedule varies)

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

SHELTER REQUESTS--Wednesday-Friday, 9am-noon

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

WEEKEND RETREATS--Four times each year (for our household and volunteers/supporters), July 9-11.

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

Open Door Community Worship

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

Join us!

- | | |
|---------|---|
| June 6 | Worship at 910
Don Beisswenger preaching |
| June 13 | Worship at 910 |
| June 20 | Worship at 910 |
| June 27 | Worship at 910
Houston Wheeler preaching |



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From 11am til 1:30pm, Monday through Saturday, our attention is focused on serving the soup kitchen and household lunch. As much as we appreciate your coming, this is a difficult time for us to receive donations. When you can come before 11:00 or after 1:30, it would be helpful.

**We desperately need
JEANS
for our clothes closet.
Can you help?**

A Note On Donations

We appreciate all your donations that keep us going. Please help us by bringing them only to our front door. We suggest you park in our side driveway, lock your car and come ring our doorbell. We will get folks inside to help you bring your gifts in.

Donations left at our back door usually do not get to us. Folks in our front yard may offer to help, but this causes problems for us, so we ask you to ring the bell and let us help instead.

Many thanks!



910 Needs A Paint Job

Can you donate paint, brushes, scrapers, and other supplies?

Can you spend an afternoon painting with us?

Please call Elizabeth at 876-6977.