

# HOSPITALITY

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Providing hospitality to the homeless & to those in prison, through Christ's love  
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## The Hardwick Trip

Text and Photos by Joanne Solomon

The pre-printed postcard was returned to The Open Door as expected, only the message this time was different. The top line on the card showed no check mark, telling us that "Jessie" (as well as a daughter and six grandchildren) would not be visiting her other daughter at the Hardwick prison in March. But when I noticed the bottom line, there was a moment of unexpected joy. Jessie had put a check mark in the space next to the words, "Sorry, I can't make it this month;" and had crossed out the word, "Sorry." Above it, she had written in the word "GLAD!" Out to the side was the explanation: She wrote: "Mary is home! Thanks for everything."

HOME. Family. Special words to many, but most meaningful and poignant to those who know the loneliness and difficulty of a forced separation. Jessie's family knew what this meant, and had for many months made the day-long trip with us to Milledgeville for a two-hour visit with her daughter in the women's unit of the prison in nearby Hardwick. What this also meant, was rising very early on a Saturday morning, gathering her large family together, meeting us by 9:30 a.m. for the trip, and returning home after 6:30 p.m. that same day. It would mean riding the bus from her home to meet us, and at times, even walking the long distance when her resources did not include adequate bus fare for her family. But the resources Jessie did have were a care and concern for the daughter she would visit in prison, a place for her when she returned, and most certainly, a "WELCOME HOME!"



Jan Thompson, Milledgeville Presbyterian Church, who coordinates the noon meal; and Steve Goetz, Emory Catholic Community, volunteer driver

The trip to the Hardwick Prison in Milledgeville, Georgia, is one aspect of the Southern Prison Ministry at our Open Door Community. We provide family members of inmates the opportunity to visit their sons, daughters, mothers, fathers, husbands, wives, grandsons or granddaughters. One Saturday each month, volunteer drivers in a varying assortment of cars and vans, depart from The Open Door and wind through the streets of Atlanta in a caravan, arriving at the MARTA Five Points station at Alabama & Peachtree Street, where we greet, and are greeted by our fifty to seventy friends who will be making the trip. It is here, on this windy, bustling corner in the middle of Atlanta where our friends have arrived by bus, by train, by foot. Often they share with us moments of thankfulness for times when: IT'S NOT RAINING (HALLELUJAH!); or a patient bus driver allows us to load up; and we don't have to keep circling the block to make way for MARTA; or we decide, after an intentional delay, to wait "one more minute" before leaving, and we see another of our families, hands waving, racing towards us! And with a grateful sigh, we're on our way!

After making a second stop for additional passengers on I-20, we continue along the Interstate for the first part of our journey before turning onto the country highway that leads us through Eatonton, and on to our destination.

We arrive at about noon-time in Milledgeville; a lovely, historic community southeast of Atlanta. Here we are always so warmly greeted at the Milledgeville

Hardwick - Cont. on page 2





Presbyterian Church, where each month a delicious hot meal awaits us, (as well as special treats for the children), lovingly prepared and served by various members of the church. Not only do we enjoy a delightful lunch-time together, but everyone has a chance to relax a bit, and be refreshed before driving the short distance to Hardwick for the visit there. The friendly spirit and the many thoughtful gestures from the folks here typify the genuine hospitality which we experience each time we visit.

Bill Morgan, pastor of the church, shared a letter with The Open Door that he had received last Fall from a woman in the Hardwick prison whose mother travels with us. She expressed her gratitude when she wrote:

"Every month you so kindly and friendly feed my family that comes from Atlanta to visit me. The Thanksgiving dinner, with all the trimmings was the only dinner I'm sure my mother had. I want to say "thank you", not just for my family, but for all those that are fed at your church each month." (In the letter, she had enclosed a small religious tract with a message about how, many times, people wait for, or expect, others to do certain things, and that sometimes in the end "nobody does anything.") Her letter continued: "I send this tract to you because you choose to be a "do-body"...you're a doer of the Word, and I praise God for you."

How grateful we are for these Christian friends in Milledgeville who open their doors to us with such a welcome and in such a caring way!

In preparing this article, I realized that the portion of our trip I would find difficult to relate would be the visit families, or friends, and inmates enjoy together. The meaning of this time shared, however, is partially reflected in...

The joy expressed by the mother sharing a picture of her son receiving his diploma; and her pride in his hours spent helping other inmates to read. She writes to us: "The trip to Hardwick means a great deal to me, for it is a time of fellowship with our loved ones; a time to show them that through it all we care, we're concerned, and we love them." And she encourages us with her words: "Keep on keeping on!"



HOSPITALITY is published 10 times a year by The Open Door Community (P.C.U.S.), Inc., an Atlanta community of Christians called to ministry with the homeless poor and with prisoners, particularly those on death row. Subscriptions are free. A newspaper request form is included in each issue. Manuscripts and letters are welcomed. Inclusive language editing is standard. For more information about the life and work of the Open Door and about others involved in ministry to Atlanta's homeless, please contact any of the following

Murphy Davis - Southern Prison Ministry Director  
Rob Johnson - Treasurer  
Ed Loring - Correspondence & Resident Volunteer Co-ordinator  
Joanne Solomon - Administrative Assistant (Volunteer Co-ordination, Hardwick Prison Trip)

## Newspaper:

Editor - Rob Johnson; Associate Editor - Ed Loring  
Manuscript Preparation - Helen McCrady; Graphics & Art & Photography - Donna Pickens; Rob Johnson, Joanne Solomon; Layout - Dee & John Cole-Vodicka, Mark Harper, Rob Johnson; Circulation - Norman Heinrichs-Gale and a multitude of earthly hosts and guests

It is reflected in...

Murphy recalling the touching scene when, as she and her carload of anxious and excited children approached the place where they would visit their mother, the children suddenly spotted their mother in the prison yard. No sooner had she stopped her car than the children, in Murphy's words, "hit the ground running"...calling "MAMA, MAMA!"

It is reflected in...

The slow, heavy steps of a grandmother with slippered feet, who walks laboriously through the gate at the River's Building, a grandchild on her left and her right; but with a wonderful smile on her face and a faithful spirit in her heart.

It is reflected in...

The letter we received which says:

"The Open Door Community Southern Prison Ministry has been and it still is an answer to both me and my family's prayer. My husband has been in Hardwick, GA for over three years now, and in those first two years me and my daughters went through so much to get to him. Such as three automobile accidents and approximately ten breakdowns, and that within itself was enough to want to give up. Only I knew I couldn't because Hardwick was and still is holding my other half. Even when I didn't drive I would car-pool with families of other inmates. And that too hasn't been very successful. So I start riding the bus but that didn't work too well either because it only gave me about 45 minutes max, to share with him. And if I was a few minutes late I would miss the last bus to Atlanta. I did these things to try to



## Hardwick Continued from page 2

save money, because it is hard to maintain a family, home, and car off a salary barely above minimum wage. One evening on our way back from Hardwick, it was raining very hard and getting dark fast. And I couldn't drive no more than 30 miles per hour, and there were times when I had to pull over because I couldn't see. Anyway while driving Interstate 20 West going 30 or less this young man slid right into me. My car went down into a ditch, but with the help of the good Lord I was able to get it out before it completely stopped. After that night things started going from bad to worse. I lost my job a few days later. And I knew that I couldn't see my husband because it was hard enough getting to him with little money. I felt it was impossible to get to him with no money. But through my husband the Lord showed me different. He wrote and told me that he had heard about this church that helps families of inmates with transportation to Hardwick from Atlanta free and he gave me a number to find out more about it. So I did, only to find out that our prayer had been answered. And I just want to say thank you Jesus! Thank you Open Door Community and May God Bless Each and Everyone of You."

### AMAZING GRACE

I can vividly recall organizing and planning for my own first trip to Hardwick shortly after I had begun working at the Open Door. Murphy, who had already made numerous trips to Hardwick, and on whom I was relying for initial "orientation", became very ill the day before our scheduled visit and was unable to go. I well remember how Murphy, in spite of her illness, pulled herself up in bed, outlined the trip's procedures, drew maps for me, gave some last minute tips, and most of all, encouragement.

It was on that initial trip I was greeted at the church in Milledgeville by Jane Tipton, who at that time was coordinating the noon meal, and whose husband,

3 Clyde, led us in our blessing as we sang together "Amazing Grace". As we joined hand to hand in a wide circle, I couldn't help but think of the bonds this circle represented: Bonds, not only between friends, new and old ones, but within these families as well; sources of strength and encouragement in difficult circumstances.

I thought of these families who would enter the prison buildings, allowed only the required picture identification, and no gifts for their loved ones but themselves. I was reminded of God's gift to people everywhere and in all circumstances of life. The gift of Jesus who gave freely of himself so that we might all know the eternal gifts of God's forgiveness and love: gifts which bring healing and restoration to the broken places in our lives. Jesus, the One who not only joins himself with us in our joys and in our sufferings, but joins us to his Resurrection Victory, and most assuredly to the hope and promise of God's AMAZING GRACE.

### A SPECIAL THANKS !

**VOLUNTEER DRIVERS:** The Open Door Community; The Emory Catholic Community (John Mills, Sue Jacobs, Steve Goetz, Chuck Eger, Mark Wedig); Donna Pickens, Trudy Green, Robert McGlassen, Freida Goddard, Bill McCormick. (Others who have assisted: Betsy Fodor, Ann Mayeux, Chris Brown, Mary Ann Ennis, Sara Floyd, Father Martin Iott, Gwen Gustafson, Jody & Barry Sanders-van)

**FOR THE USE OF THEIR VANS:** Butler St. CME Church, Richard and Jackie Barker (Lilburn), and Donna & John Pickens

**MONTHLY MAILING ASSISTANCE:** Barbara Shenk

**AND TO MILLEDGEVILLE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

## Open Door Schedule

### NEW SUNDAY SCHEDULE

Beginning July 20th

**SOUP KITCHEN :** 3:00pm - 4:00pm

**WORSHIP:** 5:00pm - 6:30pm

**SUPPER FOR  
WORSHIPPERS &  
HOUSEHOLD** 6:30pm

WE ARE OPEN...

Monday through Saturday, telephones are answered from 7:30 am until 6:30 pm and from 7:15 pm to 8:30 pm. The Building is open from 9:00 am until 8:30 pm those days. (Both phone & door are not answered during our lunch break (12:30-1:00). Please call in advance if you need to arrange to come at other times. On Sunday we are closed until 5:15 pm. Then our phones and door are answered from 5:15 until 7:30 pm

OUR MINISTRY...

SOUP KITCHEN - Monday-Saturday, 11-12 noon; Sunday 5:15-5:30 pm. BUTLER ST. CME BREAKFAST Monday-Friday 8-8:30 am

SHOWERS & CHANGE OF CLOTHES - Monday, Wednesday, Friday - 9:00 - 10:00 am (Be sure to call--summer schedule varies)

USE OF PHONE - Monday-Saturday, 9am - 4pm. SHELTER REQUESTS - Monday-Saturday 9am - noon.

SUNDAY WORSHIP - 7:30 pm. BIBLE STUDY - Alternate Wednesdays 7:30 - 9:30 ( May 28, June 11, 25)

FELLOWSHIP MEAL - Alternate Wednesdays 6:30 - 8:00 pm. ( June 4, 18)

ALL-DAY RETREATS - Every 6th Sunday (for our household & volunteers/supporters) - May 25 (call for details)





# 24 Hours On The Streets

by John Cole-Vodicka



Waiting. Waiting in slow-moving lines to eat a hot meal. Waiting, with one eye open, to be thrown out of the bus station ("ticketed passengers only, please") and onto cold, deserted 2 a.m. streets. Waiting for the sun to rise to warm chilled bones that survived the night. Waiting for a friendly face, or a smile, or even eye contact from passersby.

Walking. Walking from soup line to soup line. From labor pool to liquor store. From heating grate to bus station. Noticing the many barriers that have been erected to keep you out, to keep you walking. NO TRESPASSING signs. Security guards. Locked bathroom stalls. "Move on," they demand. "Move on." The unwanted must keep walking.

Wanting. For the job that is never offered. Wanting a bath and a change of clothes, a toothbrush, a cup of hot coffee. Wanting food in your stomach and a warm, safe place to rest a weary body. Wanting alcohol, to numb the cold and pain you feel, the pain that is impossible to endure alone.

"Look me in the eye!" you want to shout to the well-dressed, the comfortable, the indifferent.

"Call me by my name!"

"Touch my hand!"

"Sit with me!"

"Hear me out!"

"Forgive me, I forgive you."

"I am not your enemy. I am your brother, your sister."

"I am God's child. We are all God's children."



# Blown By God's Wind

## An Interview With Rob & Sally Goldman

by Elizabeth Dede and Mark Hurper

*The rule of Death that is now embodied in the apartheid system of South Africa has left native blacks uprooted, broken, and - thousands of times - the victims of state-sanctioned violence. With Alan Paton we hear the voices that are lifted above the turmoil, the cry of "the beloved country, for the unborn child that is the inheritor of our fear."*

For Rob and Sally Goldman, two white South African Christians from Durban, Pretoria's peculiar recipe for government has left them, too, with a certain feeling of uprootedness. Questioning the laws of a nation which seem to stand in such disturbing contrast to the laws of God, they found that the cry for justice being voiced by South African blacks was penetrating their own lives, causing them to reexamine their faith and call to discipleship.

They quit their jobs - she as a seventh grade teacher and he as a corporate personnel manager - and began devoting their energy to the South African draft resistance campaign. Presently Rob and Sally are travelling in the United States as witnesses to the tragic reality of South Africa. They also carry with them the hope that the Church of Christ might be able to reach beyond national and racial boundaries and bring about a better future in a land that is, first, a part of God's beloved earth.

The following interview was conducted while Rob and Sally visited the Open Door in March.

**Open Door:** "Apartheid"—long a word that has a unique and painful meaning for black South Africans — has become a common, if not infamous, word for many North Americans, as well as people around the world. As white South Africans, what is your understanding of apartheid?

**Sally:** I suppose for me it would mean things like living in an all-white neighborhood, teaching in an all-white school; being socially segregated and really having to make an effort to meet black people and to become friends with black people. Obviously we don't have the same kind of hassles as black people in terms of our daily life.

**Rob:** For us it means that we have economic privileges --and political privileges-- and it dehumanizes us as white people because it leads us to feel that we're actually superior. Black people are denied so much, and one is treated truly as a superior being if you're white, whether you like it or not.

One is also finding now that because of the separation, white people believe certain things about black people, and are caged in. White people are really oppressed in a different way. Our white community is the most heavily armed community in the world - in terms of personal arms. So then you ask, this is meant to be 'the White Utopia,' but is that freedom? And this fear is increasing, especially as the black unrest begins to spill over into the white community - which has never happened before.

**OD:** What does apartheid mean for the rest of the world?

**Rob:** I think that it can be a mirror. It can be a mirror in which the rest of the world can look at itself and see where they are doing in their own countries the same things that are happening in South Africa. When you get down to it, apartheid is about economic exploitation - racial exploitation; it's about human rights; it's about people not being allowed their personal dignity. It's about racism. We've seen all of these things in every country that we've travelled through in Europe--not to the same extent, but we've



Rob Johnson

seen it. So I think that when people see apartheid, they can look back at themselves and wonder what they're doing. I'm not saying this justifies it at all--people should want to be committed to destroying it.

The other thing that it means is a disgrace to the human race.

**OD:** We are lovers of peace, in favor of non-violent social change. Given the existing violence, and the seemingly hopeless situation, do you see an end to apartheid, short of revolution?

**Sally:** At times, when I feel quite hopeless and depressed, a violent revolution is what I see happening--that's what it looks like. But, I think we've got to believe in miracles at the same time. There's still time and room for things to happen relatively peacefully. I think that if there's a lot of pressure on the government--from forces both within and outside of the country--for change, then there's hope of a non-violent solution.

**Rob:** I think that the violence itself will not, in the end, bring the change. Look at Zimbabwe: the guerrillas didn't win the battle militarily. They provided pressure, but it was won politically and diplomatically. And, from purely military terms, there's no way that the guerrillas operating in our country could win. So I see the strategy of violence--apart from morals--as being impractical and unacceptable. I can appreciate black people taking up violence, and I find it very difficult to argue with those who do. But personally I feel that non-violence needs to be explored more in the country. There is a lot of non-violent action going on at the moment: trade boycotts, school boycotts, demonstrations. It's not as if the non-violent struggle ended in 1960 and the violent one is all that's been happening.

I suppose, on the other hand, that paradoxically, one's got to be open to the fact that you can't define the way God works in a given situation. And I think that we've got to accept that God's will might be brought about by violent means. There are accounts in the Old Testament of that happening. So that's also a possibility.

**OD:** Have you felt threatened by the violence?

**Rob:** Probably the closest we've gotten is hearing bombs going off. I remember one night in particular we had gone to a drive-in theatre and a bomb went off quite close by. The whole car was vibrating. It does cause a lot of fear.

Interview - Cont. on page 6





Rob Johnson

## Interview

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Sally: Friends of ours have experienced it more. We have friends who live very close to Phoenix. That's where the Gandhi settlement is, and that whole area was in flames because of riots between Indians and blacks.

**OD: What are some specific non-violent activities currently going on?**

Sally: Things like economic boycotts of shops. What happened was a lot of white businesses were perceived to be unfair in their treatment of black people, while making huge profits. And those businesses have been boycotted very successfully, mostly by blacks, but also by some whites.

**OD: Who organizes the boycotts?**

Rob: Grass-roots community organizations.

Sally: You never know completely who's organized it. If you're organizing that sort of thing, you try to keep it quiet that you're the ring leader.

Rob: It's actually quite dangerous to be known to be organizing consumer boycotts. They can really put you away for that. An interesting catch, though, is in the Eastern Cape where there are these two brothers, white people, who've really done a lot in the black community. They run a general store, and when the boycott came to that area, the boycott committee decided that that was the only white shop blacks could buy food from.

They have a system of tickets, so when people come out of the shop they have to have a ticket--like a receipt. So if they don't have a ticket, they've bought from a wrong shop and can have the things confiscated. So it's not clearly a black/white issue; it's those who are oppressing and those who are oppressed.

Sally: But then the police came along to this white-run shop that blacks were still patronizing and basically told them that if they didn't stop selling to blacks, they would close down the shop.

Rob: Police have the power to close shops if they really want to.

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**OD: Do white people take part in the boycotts?**

Sally: Some, but it would be very small, though.

Rob: In Grahamstown, the white community was approached by a black delegation, saying, "Why don't you help us?" Particularly white university lecturers, quite a few of them got together and did some publicity on it as well. So white people have joined in.

There are also school boycotts. At the beginning, there were boycotts for most of last year and then a parent-teacher-scholar and community leader organized representatives getting together. It was agreed that the kids would go back to school at the beginning of this year, and that they would go back until the end of March. If certain demands weren't met by the government, they would boycott again. So the end of March is quite a critical time.

Another form of non-violent protest is funerals. You know, that's really the one place where black people can legally get together in a group. So funerals are community events. A funeral lasts 6,7,8, maybe 9 hours. Often with as many as 30,000 people attending. With speeches and singing, it's a marvelous occasion.

Still, it's a terrifying thing that for just about every funeral for someone shot in the violence, someone else gets killed. It clearly is a tragic cycle.

**OD: How involved are white people in the struggle against apartheid?**

Rob: Maybe 20%--definitely a minority.

**OD: Why?**

Sally: A combination of things: people feeling that the government is right; those who feel that the government is too liberal; those who feel completely apathetic; those who disagree with government but are afraid.

Rob: What's also interesting on that point is something that has happened in this last year that would never have happened a year ago. One's finding white people actually going and meeting with black people in the banned liberation organizations. You're finding Stellenbosch University students, which is a traditionally conservative Afrikaner university, going to meet with the ANC youth league, despite the fact that the state president didn't want them to go and was threatening to take their passports away. That would have been unthought of a year ago.

**OD: Boycotts make us feel good because they give us a concrete symbol of our solidarity with the oppressed. Do boycotts really accomplish anything, or has it got beyond that point?**

Rob: I think personally it's of good symbolic value. It won't bring the South African economy to its knees. But, for me, symbolism is an important thing. And if people see that you're participating in the boycott to identify with the oppressed in South Africa, they will appreciate your action.

Each of us as individuals can only do so much. If you try to change the whole world you can really get despondent. But we need to be faithful.

**OD: What does the "pass book" mean?**

Sally: It shows where somebody has rights to live and work. Only Africans have to carry it. People are getting arrested at a rate of one every two minutes because they refuse to carry the pass book.

Rob: That whole system (pass books) is a good example of where America has helped to implement it. It's so organized now that you could go to one labor bureau, and the official there could punch into the computer the details on a person (who could be from the other end of the country), and the official could have all the details on that person and be able to determine whether he/she should be there or not. This is quite a recent development, this computerization, and American companies--like IBM--have supplied the technology, the hardware, the software, and the training.

Interview - Cont. on page 7



**OD:** Does your stance, as white Christians, on behalf of your black brothers and sisters, alienate you from the white community?

**Sally:** We have a lot of friends who are like-minded. So we have a lot of support from people who are even more involved than we are. But at work, people just can't understand.

**Rob:** On the whole draft resistance front, we've felt like quite a minority. One is seen to be unpatriotic who doesn't want to serve in the army. So that's been an area of alienation.

Also, we had to move from a white-only church just because we haven't felt that white congregations--on the whole--are in touch with the reality of black South Africa. And that's unfortunate that the church is being a mirror image of our society, and it is not providing an alternative witness to apartheid society. You'd probably find a lot of white Christians who feel that there's nothing wrong with what they're doing; after all, they're going to church every Sunday. They're going to the local congregation in their area--that is, a white-only area. I think a lot just don't feel that the effort can be made to bridge the gap that exists. I don't think that the white church has gotten to the point of 'siding with the oppressed,' or believing that "God is the God of the poor." The church leaders themselves haven't been instructed that way at the seminaries. So what can we expect from the people in the pews?

**OD:** How can you stand in solidarity with blacks?

**Sally:** You have to go out of your way. It's very easy to do nothing just because we are so segregated socially. It's perfectly conceivable to me that someone might go and live in South Africa for two years and have no idea of the injustice going on. That's the extent of the separation between blacks and whites. It's easier to have friends in the colored and Indian communities because you don't need a permit to enter an Indian or colored living area, as you do in a black area. We could be arrested going into a black area. There's also a language barrier, though most educated black people would be fluent in English.

**Rob:** What Sal mentioned raises another issue which is being faced at the moment in the church, that is the issue of civil disobedience. Romans 13 is always brought up as the bastion of law and order. According to the government, we are required to get a permit to visit a restricted area. We believe that is simply wrong to get official permission to visit a black friend or go to a black church. That comes out of our faith. It's really difficult to live in South Africa without facing the possibility of breaking a law. But I think we need to face up to that: Can we as Christians break laws? On what grounds can we break laws? Maybe that's been an area that's been lacking in the Church's preaching--God's law being higher than man's law.

**OD:** Could you say a little about the church you've been attending?

**Sally:** It's an Episcopal church, in a lower middle-class urban setting. It's Indian, primarily--with a congregation of approximately 150, with 20% colored--lots of poor people. It's very traditional with mostly apolitical people.

**Rob:** We have an Indian minister and several lay ministers. We also have a system of house churches within the larger church. Our house church leader lived in a small, 2-bedroom apartment with his wife, two children, his mother and two sisters. He and his wife slept in one bedroom with their children; the other bedroom was shared by the other three. So that was a real part of our own conversion process: eating and spending time with someone who lives in such conditions yet loves God. It's for our own education and our own growth that we've "gone across," as it were. To view things from another perspective changes our own. Yet, from the government's perspective, simple, personal encounter is quite a dangerous thing.

In the black township of Pretoria, there's a white Dutch Reformed minister, who used to teach at Stellenbosch University on the theological faculty. He

came to change through this personal encounter and now serves in a black church. Now he's got this thing going whereby they link up a white, African, Indian, and colored couple to meet together and move from one home to another once every two weeks or so. To me that's a significant way to bridge the barriers.

**OD:** Many of us who work for justice--be it on the streets of Atlanta with homeless folk, or in South Africa on behalf of an oppressed black majority--often find ourselves overwhelmed by the scope of the problems we face. Still, our calling is to bear witness to the Resurrection--to say yes to a dignified life for all people and to say no to any agenda that proclaims the rule of Death. What role has faith played in your struggle against apartheid?

**Sally:** It's because of our faith in the first place that we feel apartheid is wrong. I know that there are a lot of people who aren't Christian who also feel it's wrong and want to change it. But I don't know that within myself I would have the energy and the strength to fight something like that if I didn't believe it was so unChristian. Daily one is called to follow Christ, which should not only affect one's personal life but how one lives in a society, as well. Sometimes I feel very faithless, yet if one hopes for reasonable change here, one has to keep the faith, otherwise one would probably just give up right here and now.

**Rob:** I think there's an internal need to be energized by the Holy Spirit. To be renewed from within is, I think, the starting point. One must believe that God is out there, that God is at work in South Africa, that the Lord is a God of liberation. This is the same God who led the Exodus, and still leads the Exodus in various ways through history. Knowing that God is for freedom, for justice, makes me certain that it will happen. It gives me encouragement to continue. In the end, I think it is the nature of God that gives hope. Look at Abraham--he's really become my example. Even when his body was old and dead, he believed God's promise that he would have a son, and Sarah believed as well. And, it came about, not through what they did, but through what God did. They were faithful. And that is the starting point for us, too--to realize that God is on the side of change and of freedom and of justice.





# Hospital Visitation

by Ed Loring

The city

eats me alive

I am

John the Baptist  
with my severed head  
brought in on a silver platter  
ain't death beautiful?

Porter Smith is being eaten alive by cancer,  
hungry cells are racing from his air-starved lungs  
into his rigid neck.

He lies in bed at Grady waiting for words which cannot  
be spoken. A word of freedom from this death, these  
shark cells, but no such word exists. He lies and waits  
and Porter is being eaten alive.

"Porter. Hey, Porter"

"Ugh?"

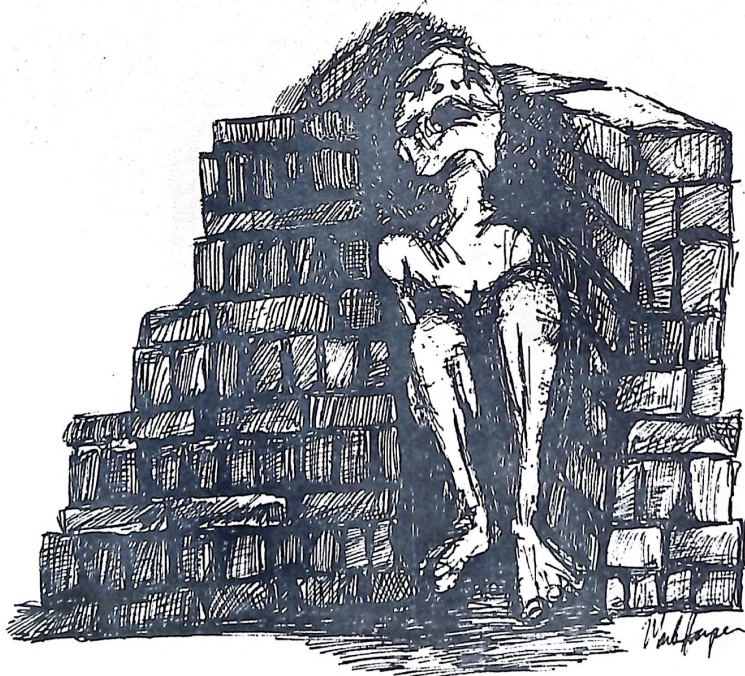
"Porter, it's Ed. Give me your hand."

(We wait while roars the dead tin below on  
the highway racing; racing toward the exit  
ramp that has not been built)

"Porter, I love."

"Yea. I love you, too."

One small filthy, dun, room filled beyond the brim  
and overflowing into the lice infected pis-drenched  
bathroom. Lights that give not light but the tech-  
nological glare that slowly pricks away at your eye-  
ball. Cold, metal chairs, brown, scattered folding  
tables, brown, two desks, gray. I hand him a cup of  
coffee, black, and as the knife slowly twists in my  
stone heart I beg to know, "how you doin'?"





John Longhurst



## Norm

ATLANTA-- The dining room crowd is thinning out. Mennonite Central committee U.S. volunteer Norm Heinrichs-Gale takes advantage of the lull to sit with a friend -- one of over a hundred homeless people who enjoy good hot soup and thick slices of bread at the Open Door Community soup kitchen.

They share small talk -- how it's going, what's new. The discussion inevitably turns to the Georgia winter -- does he have a place to sleep? It's an important question in Atlanta, where there are only around 1,300 night shelter beds for the city's estimated 5,000 homeless people. Norm's friend may be forced to spend some cold nights outside, or in an abandoned building. It's not an appealing prospect.

It makes Norm angry.

He draws a connection between the continued arms race and cutbacks in U.S. federal government funds for low-cost housing, medical care and other important social programs. "There's a lot of lip service about the homeless," he says, reflecting on recent national media attention. "But there still aren't enough shelters. It seems that we just want to push them out of sight. We don't want to see them on our streets."

The homeless in America, however, are unavoidable. Anywhere between 350,000 and 3 million people occupy the streets, parks, alleys of U.S. towns and cities. According to one study, 22 percent are children.

The Open Door Community exists to meet the needs of homeless people in Atlanta, providing a noon meal, medical care, legal aid, showers, a clothing exchange and residence for 20 homeless men. Begun in 1979 by two families who felt called to minister to the homeless and prisoners, it provided 130,000 meals, 11,000 nights of lodging at shelters it supports, 44,000 showers and exchanges of clothing and fitted 400 people with eye glasses. It truly is, as Norm remarks, an open door to those who have had doors of education, employment and housing closed to them.

Norm's work with the homeless at the Open Door is rooted in a deep commitment to Christ and to service. The son of missionary parents, he grew up in Third World countries and is no stranger to poverty.

While a student at Trinity Western College in Langley, British Columbia, he spent two summers as an MCC Canada summer gardener, seeing firsthand poverty in native communities. These experiences helped him see service with the poor as a good way to express his decision not to be "of the world."

"It's easy to be involved in a secure, materialistic society," he shares. "But I want something that will keep me out of that. I want to develop patterns for living for the future by living simply now."

Service at the shelter is helping him to do that, although the work is sometimes hard. "I see people who seem on the verge of making it," he says, "and then they get drunk again. But I have to remind myself not to measure success on whether an individual makes it or not -- I measure it on the basis of whether I've been able to treat each person with God's love and grace."

"I measure it in terms of my own faithfulness, not in terms of whether they respond right."

Now more than halfway through his MCC assignment, Norm doesn't know what he and his wife, Donna, also an MCC U.S. volunteer, will do next, but they do know that service will always be a part of their lives.

"I won't be a VSer all the time," he shares, "but it will have to take a major call for me to leave voluntary service to go into the regular working world." He acknowledges that this isn't the way many people view voluntary service -- most require an extraordinary call to leave the work world for a VS assignment. "This isn't where everyone needs to be," he adds. "It just shows where I am with God."

Until God shows them where they should go next, Norm and Donna will continue serving in Atlanta -- Donna as a tutor and Norm with the homeless who come to the Open Door for aid, compassion and care. "We're giving food and shelter," he says, "but we try to offer more. We try to fill the loneliness and emptiness, giving them love and self-worth."

Reprinted from the Mennonite Central Committee News Service, February 28, 1986.



10

# Dear Editor

Dear Editor:

I have just completed a careful reading of your September newsletter, and am deeply moved. My pastor, Hugh Carter (recently retired from Gulf Breeze Presbyterian) is at a peace conference in Montreal, and sent me the letter with a note that he had put me on your mailing list.

I find all of your articles to be such a beautiful affirmation of our purpose as "believers" in the world. I understand only in part, your trials and frustrations, and your rewards. I work with women inmates in prison and I do some work also at a shelter for "battered women" in Pensacola. I have found here an acute need for shelter for women - women released from prison and women with just no place to go.

Right now, I'm Clerk of the Session in my church, but will complete my term at the end of the year - but I am beginning now to explore my resources for there must be a way the need can be answered, in the name of the Church. The timing of the receipt of "Hospitality" is interesting, as this subject has been in my mind constantly the last few months, especially this week.

May the liberating love of God, continue to sustain, support and encourage you.

Mary Edna Logan  
Gulf Breeze, Florida



## House of Representatives

JIM MARTIN  
Representative, District 26  
161 Spring Street, Suite 415  
Atlanta, Georgia 30303  
Telephone: 451-1225/2688 Office  
878-0438 Home

Atlanta, Georgia  
January 6, 1986

COMMITTEES:  
INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS  
SPECIAL JUDICIARY  
UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF GEORGIA

Ed Loring  
Murphy Davis  
Rob Johnson  
The Open Door Community  
910 Ponce DeLeon Avenue, N.E.  
Atlanta, Georgia 30306

Dear Ed, Murphy and Rob:

Thank you for the 1986 calendar. I hope that as we work through the pages of the calendar, we will continue to be able to recognize God's grace at work in our community. Thank you for your reflection of that grace.

Sincerely,

Jim Martin  
Representative  
House District 26

JM/b

Dear Ed,

I have spent some time this morning reviewing materials on the Open Door Community which I have been receiving since last August. I am impressed with what's happened in the four years your program has been operating.

The next time I go to visit my son in Carrollton, I surely want to get over to Atlanta to meet you and see your operation.

I can understand why you have been successful for in your articles I can sense that you are motivated by the spirit and love of Christ and a deep compassion for hurting people.

Enclosed is a small contribution for your work.

Cordially,

L. H. Gustafson

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Hi! I am a Christian here at Warren Wilson college and have enjoyed your HOSPITALITY newsletter for little less than a year now. I am a fundamentalist (and do I dare say a Republican too!) who is hopelessly in love with Jesus. I wanted to write and say that I do not always agree with your stands on nuclear policy, womens' equality, Nicaragua, but do appreciate your dedication to the Lord. Your ministry is not an easy one. I know because I am a volunteer at an overnight shelter here in Asheville and also volunteer in the County Jail. I take my hat off to you all and salute your love. I believe you all know where your treasure lies (in Heaven) and who your Lord Jesus is.

Yours in Jesus,

Richard Anderson

Dear Editor:

Thank you for your courageous and compassionate work for humanity.

Was hoping the Open Door Community was vegetarian but from your Lent article realize it isn't.

My husband and I do not eat meat, poultry or fish because we feel sorry for the animals and do not want them to die or suffer for us.

When I help in the soup kitchens I always tell them if they have meat, poultry or fish that I can't help serve or prepare it.

Thanks again. Peace love and joy to all.

Dorothy S. Smith  
St. Augustine, FL

THE ROUND TABLE is the quarterly journal of the St. Louis Catholic Worker Community. Published in 8 1/2 x 11 magazine format and 24 pages in length, each issue is thematic in approach. Recent issues were: Spiritualities of the land; Children; Witnessing for Peace in Nicaragua; The Radical Church. It contains essays, poetry, and photographic essays from local and national contributors. Subscriptions are free. Write: THE ROUND TABLE, 1840 Hogan, St. Louis, MO 63106



Editor's note: Marc is our neighbor. He moved his law office to the building next to ours in 1983 (2 years after we began our ministry at 910). He believes that the homeless have become "inappropriate" in this neighborhood and that the Open Door should move away. We do not plan to move, but we will be helping Marc pick up his trash. Would you like to volunteer 5-10 minutes one day soon to come by and clean his yard?

## LAW OFFICES

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E. MARCUS DAVIS, P. C.  
RHONDA A. BROFMAN, P. C.  
BARRY L. ZIPPERMAN  
SETH D. KIRSCHENBAUM

April 30, 1986

Mr. Ed Loring  
The Open Door Community  
910 Ponce de Leon Avenue, N.E.  
Atlanta, Georgia 30306

Dear Ed:

You have always indicated to me that you wish to be a good neighbor. In that context, I have a favor to ask of you.

For two years now, I have had to pick up trash out of my yard every morning. The trash is left by people who use my driveway as a walk-through to your facility. I don't want to fence off my property, but I am very tired of picking up trash every day. Would you consider assigning someone from your staff or one of your residents to take over picking up the trash for me.

Thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,

DAVIS, BROFMAN, ZIPPERMAN &amp; KIRSCHENBAUM

  
E. Marcus Davis

EMD/mer



# The Homeless

Antioch Baptist Church  
Atlanta, Georgia

Joanne M. Solomon,  
The Open Door Community &  
The Atlanta Advocates for the Homeless

January 7, 1986

Honorable Mayor Young, Mr. Lomax, Mr. Arrington, Rev. Alexander, ladies and gentlemen. I consider it a privilege and an honor to be here today, and sincerely appreciate this opportunity to represent not only The Open Door Community, but The Atlanta Advocates for the Homeless as well.

As we gather here today, it is especially good to know that what binds us together is our common concern for the homeless of Atlanta, and our common commitment to greater levels of justice in our city. It is most reassuring as well, that we are meeting here, not at odds, but bound together in a common purpose and in a common spirit.

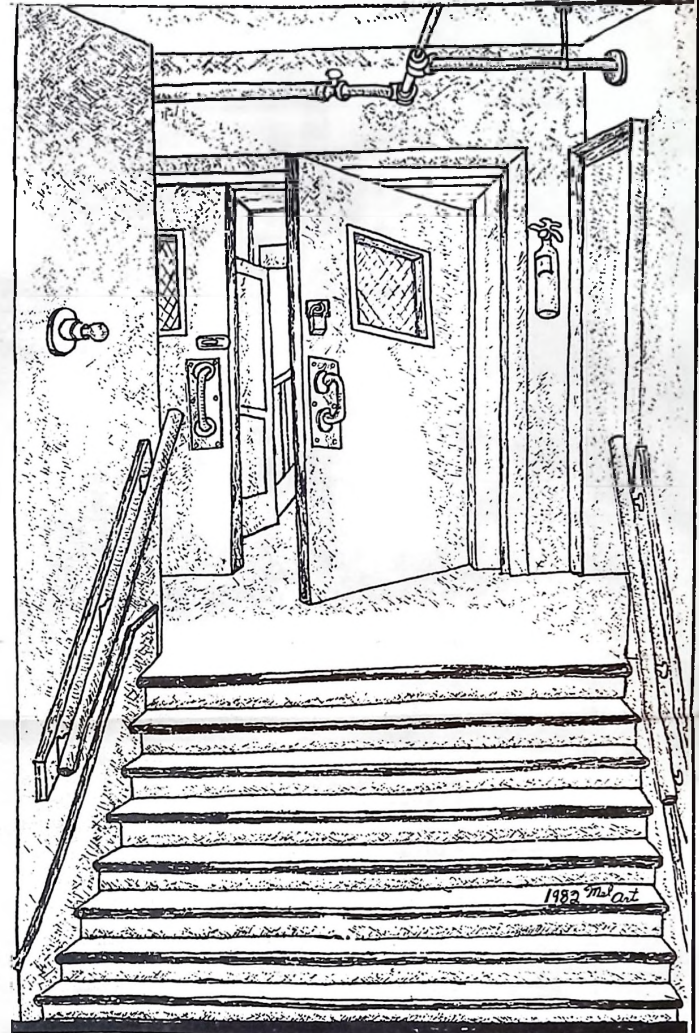
As we look at our city of Atlanta, we are very much impressed with, and are rightfully proud of the quality of life that many know and experience here. It is precisely this element that has drawn many of our nation's finest minds and talents to our city, and continually bears out the over-riding and apparent truth, that the collective efforts of many individuals, in the varying sectors of our community, has created a place where many people feel good about living.

Underlying the efforts of The Open Door and The Atlanta Advocates is the belief that as the private and public sectors of our city make a prioritized commitment to the needs of the poor among us, then we will have an even better community. As we take care of our poorest, our hungry and homeless, this will be positively reflected in our business community and our educational and cultural institutions; our religious community and governmental agencies will gain greater credibility; and pride in our city will be broadened.

For those of us at The Open Door who daily offer shelter, food, clothing, showers, medical and legal assistance, and ministry to the imprisoned, the key word is "hospitality". A hospitality rooted in Isaiah 58 which says that if you let the oppressed go free, break the yoke of oppression, share your bread with the hungry, cover the naked, and bring the homeless poor into your home, "then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily." It is this perspective which not only motivates, but challenges us as well. It is also a prophetic word that speaks to people everywhere.

It speaks to the magnitude and misery of the poor - which are matters of justice, and not charity. Charity is a solution offered by those living in comfortable circumstances to those who are not, and requires no fundamental or systemic change in our society. Justice is a different perspective: it is a cry from the victims and challenges root assumptions, popular attitudes, and basic structures. Justice, in the final analysis, asks for homes, not shelters; and the freedom to have one's own kitchen, not the necessity to stand in a soup line.

Those of us at The Open Door, in our own struggle for justice, live with the daily need to recognize the oppressor that lies within each of us; with the daily frustration of often having to say "no" to those who are visibly suffering and in desperate need; and with the fact that energy for the tasks we face is not limitless. These are constant reminders that we must rely continually on the grace of God, and God's sustaining love for us. It is this love which also brings the empowering awareness that Christ comes to us in the poor, the downtrodden, the homeless, and the hungry.



Those of us who are a part of The Atlanta Advocates for the Homeless, and have walked the streets, slept in the cold, and stood in soup lines with them, believe that our primary role is to raise the cry of the poor in our city and impress upon our community not only the immensity, but the immediacy of the problems of the homeless. We believe it is critical that those who have the resources, be encouraged to constructively use their imagination, intellect, and will, to act on behalf of those who lack the wherewithal and resources needed to break through the debilitating cycle in which they are caught. Most importantly, we are committed to the principle that adequate shelter and sufficient food are fundamental, human rights in a civilized society.

We would all agree, I'm sure, that shelters are not the final answer, but only a temporary one. However, the sad reality is, that in Atlanta, we are faced daily with folk who are in crisis and whose needs are urgent. We all recognize the fact, as well, that the problems of the homeless are many and complex, and are associated with numerous, long-term, systemic problems in our society for which there are no quick and easy solutions. However, in the words of a Rev. Whitley, "although Jesus said we will always have the poor among us, that does not mean we leave them in the streets."



Those who we find exiled on our streets are victims of quiet catastrophes; and in looking at several of the factors which have contributed heavily to their number we find the following: the massive depopulation of mental institutions over the past twenty years; the devastating lack of low-income housing; the destruction of single-room-occupancy hotels in the name of urban renewal; unemployment, lost jobs, Federal cuts in programs that assist the poor, and inadequacy of public assistance entitlements.

Woven into this picture we see people with physical and mental disabilities, chronic alcoholism, family problems, and individuals who lack marketable skills. There are teenage runaways, battered women, the elderly, and entire families; people who have been evicted from their homes, and dislodged from their community. It is against this picture that we so often hear the contention that the homeless "choose" to be where they are, and that it is a waste of time to help them. It is against this contention that the freezing bodies and casualties on our streets cry out.

We are mindful, as well, of the element of fear that is directed toward many of the homeless; however, we need to be reminded that hunger begets theft, but adequate diet produces healthy people who are better enabled to exercise their strength in the marketplace as productive citizens. Despair leads to harassment of those who appear smug and unconcerned as they go about their lives; hope creates and motivates a person to develop the resources needed to overcome what is destructive to the self and others. In a nutshell, healthy and cared for people help to make a healthier and more caring community.

The element of fear also leads many to create myths over the prospect of their city becoming a mecca for the homeless poor of neighboring regions, or suggest that the so-called "undesirable elements" go elsewhere. Every city and every region has such myths, but every "elsewhere" has its own homeless. No inn, no refuge, no shelter goes begging for takers.

Much energy, time, and money in our own city has been, and is continuing to be channeled toward helping Atlanta's homeless; and there are many individuals, like those of you here today, who are especially aware that this issue will not simply disappear. What is required is on-going attention to the needs of the homeless, and serious, comprehensive planning on their behalf.

To be homeless means to need everything: from food, clothing, and medical care, to phones, a mailing address, child care, toilet, shower, and laundry facilities. In looking at the needs of the homeless in Atlanta, I would like to target several critical areas of very basic concern.

Currently, the thirty-three existing shelters in the metro area are able to serve only 1400 of the estimated 5,000 homeless in our city. Admittedly, estimates as to the exact number of homeless are varying and uncertain; however, it remains very clear that we are presently unable to adequately serve all those who are in need.

The particular need is for more safe, clean, and accessible shelters which are small enough in size so that needs of the guests can be discerned and responded to. Small shelters can also better identify target populations, such as single women, families, or the mentally ill, and more easily develop programs that address their special needs and help them to build community. Presently, we need more night shelter and day shelter.

Currently, there are only six day shelters within the city. Most existing shelters house people from approximately 7pm to 6am, leaving shelter residents on their own for the remainder of the day, often seeking refuge in libraries, hospitals, and other public buildings.

A third area of concern is the need for year round shelter. Last April, when many church and city shelters closed, and until November when they re-opened, only 160 free beds were available for the city's homeless. Weekends and holidays are also times when services are fewer for the homeless, with Sunday ironically being the day of greatest scarcity for the poor.

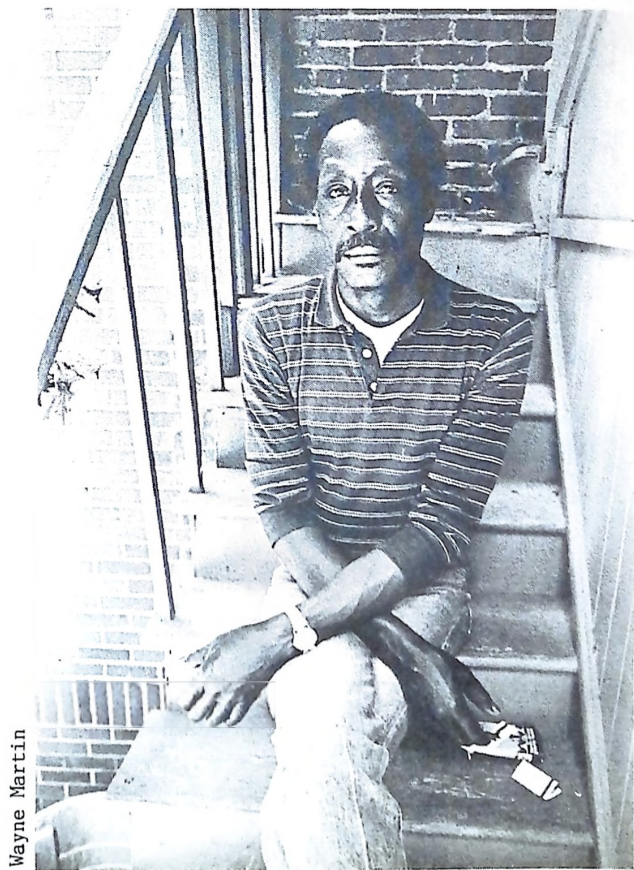
Another major problem is that of transportation. Access to shelter space is contingent on one's ability to simply get to a shelter. The city's recent effort to make accommodations for the homeless, by providing transportation from shelters where overflow exists, to available shelter space, has been a most helpful step forward. However, continued improvement and expanded efforts in this area are very important and needful. The development of a central, receiving shelter, or "Hospitality Center," having a 24 hour hotline, and updated information regarding shelter space throughout the city, with transportation available from a central point to these locations, would help maximize our current, available resources, and possibly increase the efficiency of present shelter efforts.

Denver, Colorado currently provides a model for just this type of effort. In Tennessee, Nashville's Coalition or the Homeless, in attempting to serve the increasing number of homeless in their city, is studying a program that permits local agencies to rent houses repossessed by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for a token \$1.00 a year if they are used to house the homeless. It is through this program that their Urban League and Hope, Inc. recently acquired a building they are now preparing to lease. It is their hope that five to ten new shelters will be started through this program during the next two years.

Currently in Memphis, the Memphis Interfaith Association is leasing ten single-family homes for its emergency housing program. These homes are occupied by single-families who may stay weeks or months, depending on the time they need to get on their feet.

In closing, let me add that the work we face may never finally be done, nevertheless, each step forward, however small, is a significant one; for each step eases human pain, and each step preserves human life.

Thank you once again for this time, and opportunity, to engage with you in a significant, meaningful, and creative step forward. A step forward in a pilgrimage we can make together to insure that our needful brothers and sisters in this city will be afforded the dignity every human deserves, that they will have enough food to eat; and safe, warm homes in which to dwell. Let this continue to be our vision, our hope, and our expectation. \*



Wayne Martin



# Life under death



Ed Crawford - Death Row, Georgia

The sun performed her magical, mystical ascent this morning;  
though I was not afforded the opportunity to see;  
From where I am there are barriers that prohibit casual  
consumption of the celestial sparkle and shine;  
So, I try to remember the dawns forgotten, as if they could  
become an independent and separate reality-  
Occasionally, I succeed; I enter into a world where humanity  
is humane and the beautiful is sublime.

Today the breeze is brisk and the skies are clear; at least,  
this is the report the keepers provide;  
Here the atmospheric pressures are intense; the forecast  
contains precipitation, gloom and a haze;  
Condemnation tends to cause loneliness, bitterness, and cold;  
there is usually a storm brewing inside;  
Is it because I am not your son or brother or neighbor  
that my death is promoted and praised?

Shh! The birds are singing one of my favorite songs:  
a gently, peaceful, contemplative strain;  
Once upon a once upon I danced to the melody  
through meadows private, luscious, and serene;  
Now I have to struggle to discern above the din;  
I am forced to listen through a constant pain;  
So much is different, so much is distant; shy is love  
intentionally unfelt and unseen...

Are you afraid of who I am or where I am or what it  
could cost were you brave enough to care;  
Is it possible that you might recognize a familiar face beyond  
the curtain of concrete and steel?  
Could it be that son or brother or neighbor; do you have the  
courage to be honest? do you dare!  
You may discover a part of your own identity within these walls;  
how does that make you feel?

Do not dwell; these are the questions without answers for the  
conscience that has no relief;  
Are you prepared to be judge and jury, have you the conviction  
to buckle the straps and pull the switch,  
If you accept either with favor or indifference, then you are  
liable for the results of your belief;  
Will it bring you satisfaction to smell my skin smoldering or  
to watch my body twitch?

Look! the trees are changing from green to gold; it's the  
colorful, fanciful period of the year;  
We experience seasons of the soul, profoundly parallel to  
those Nature has bestowed;  
Haven't we all had a summer of joy: the "good ol' days" free  
from the confusion and fear;  
A special segment of life when dreams were protected and our  
heart followed where the fair wind blowed.

Autumns are distinct, a rendezvous where the living and dying  
share a secret, much like you and I;  
The present will not be nearly as pleasurable or as profitable  
as that sunshine-summertime tryst;  
It can be, however, be an instance of appreciation for that  
which has yet to die;  
Winter is bleak and barren with destruction and decay-it'll  
depress the most fabled optimist.

Spring is the restorative, decorative manifestation of hope;  
the ice has melted, we have survived;  
I take stock of self, examining the sins and praying the  
forgiveness will be full and complete;  
An execution may occur next week or next month; at this  
precise moment I am alive;  
And so it is now, while I am able, that I ask you to help me  
wrest victory from defeat.

You are angry and I am hurt; both are logical and legitimate  
responses to loss and suffering;  
It is what we do with these reactions that determine the  
substance of our relationship with the Lord;  
Do we put our weaknesses aside and offer our sacrifices with  
gladness and thanksgiving;  
Or do we place our offenders in an electric chair, so that  
crime and punishment are in callous accord.

No! don't attempt to distort my existence or refute my claim;  
don't hide me within a numerical chart;  
Contrary to rumor and circumstance, I am that son, that brother,  
that neighbor, that friend;  
And, quite like yourself; I have a thinking mind and a  
feeling heart-  
What god is served if another life is removed? who will benefit  
in the end?

I do not hate you for what you seek; because you are human, it is  
a trait I understand;  
Each day, in a new way the world will introduce you to  
uncertainties, anguishes, and aches;  
The responsibility we have is to embrace God's attitude, to  
trust and obey the Royal command;  
Thus, I plead with you, do not permit my death to be added to  
the grievous mistakes.

I need you, not for the things that you may do; but, for the  
example you can be;  
Let me live and grow and heal through the presence of mercy  
and compassion and faith;  
Let us recall God's request with the gift submitted from atop  
Calvary;  
It is this life, though under death, for which I patiently  
await.

Jack Alderman - Death Row, Georgia  
"Dondee"  
10-8-85



# Not In Vain

by James Lee Spencer

So in a sense, even if we don't do anything, God will somehow get on and do it. If God's people aren't prepared to be faithful, then God will work through someone else anyway. Another thing that I've found to be really helpful is something which Thomas Merton wrote, called "A Letter to an Activist." In that he says that what's really important is not so much the social change movements or ideologies, but personal relationships. If you are able to develop a loving, empowering relationship with one other person--a black person, a white person, a yellow person, whatever--then you're doing something positive. That's what is required--to love one another. God calls us to be faithful, not necessarily successful. It's just a privilege to get in the way of God's wind, the wind of the Spirit, and to be a part of the movement to justice in South Africa.



## Feeding the Homeless

by Jeff Rexhausen

Editor's Note: Jeff and Theda Rexhausen with their children are members of the New Jerusalem Community in Cincinnati. They visited us during the Christmas holidays.

It was not a profound experience. But most of what God calls us to is not profound; it is plain. What God calls us to is ordinary, not special.

It certainly was what we consider a special day. Christmas Day. Midnight Mass the night before at a church just around the corner from where Martin Luther King, Jr. grew up.

The kitchen at the Open Door was filled with people readying the dinner we would serve. From eight in the morning until ten, brothers and sisters were slicing turkey, stirring gravy, setting tables--preparing the food which had been laid out the night before.

Ten o'clock. Time for a prayer--a short one because there was a long line of people waiting out in the freezing cold, waiting to be welcomed into this house.

I was a runner. Literally. The runner's job was refilling things like the cranberry bowl, the butter dish, the roll basket, the coffee and water pitchers; serving extra helpings of turkey, dressing, yams, and beans; and passing out dessert.

Some of the people seemed to be eating enough for three days--yesterday, today, and tomorrow. They probably were. From ten o'clock until two-thirty or so they came and went, keeping the dining room filled with about forty at a time, until all had eaten their fill. About three hundred--mostly men, some women, and even a child or two--shared our food, allowed us the privilege of serving them.

Yes, the privilege. There were more pleases, thank yous, and compliments about the food than you'd hear at a governor's ball.

Perhaps you, too, have figured out by now that the day wasn't special; there would be another meal to prepare and serve the next day. What we did wasn't special. The people were special. Each one of them. Jesus not in the day, not in the dinner, but in the person.

Serving that dinner didn't make the headlines; it didn't make a statement; it didn't make a significant impact on anything. It simply made some people a little less aware of their hunger for a while. And it made me a little more aware of mine. "Take this and eat it...."

Almost two decades have passed, since the day I found myself locked up behind prison bars.

That same day somehow I knew - you know how you can just feel some things - while listening to those steel doors slamming behind me as I walked past them that, the world I once knew - my wife, my fourteen month old daughter, my foster mother and father, those who I had accompanied on my job, the freedom I had shared as a citizen; as an individual; and as a family man; all of which, I both loved and enjoyed - I would not know, nor enjoy, anymore, for a long time; if, in fact, ever again.

So began my confined life - at age nineteen, in a whole new world of strange anxiety. Never before had I confronted such fears. What had I become exposed to? The "horrors" of prison (race riots, head bashing, knife stabbing, homosexual rapes, and prison guard brutality). It seemed a nightmare - all too real to me! Now, the question is, has it all been in vain?

That is the question I have asked myself in the most recent years. And in spite of all - my prison ordeal - I can honestly say to you that, my imprisonment has not been in vain. Instead, it has been a milestone to a better way of life. Indeed, the way of "love".

However, had I not been willing to change my attitude and the way I perceive others in life - which I now believe is the intent of prison - I, too would be, as I have seen in the case of many fellow prisoners, a mentality that says: I am not to blame. And with that attitude, I too, would be unchanged.

But praise be to God, and the Lord Jesus Christ; that a few years back, I heard His voice and yielded to the transforming power of His love. He changed me - completely. He gave me a new life - A life in Christ! I truly thank God for all He's done for me. He kept me through it all, with a sound mind - God.

I invite you to examine me. To see, if there be any bitterness or, any other thing of ill-will in me. That, would prevent me from returning to the free society.

If you should find me ; other than a heart filled with love for all humanity; other than a true sorrow and deep regret for the life I have taken, for all whom I have wronged, for all the grief, suffering and pain I have caused others in my life; if you should find other than a willingness to show someone they are traveling wrong; and should you find in me other than a heart that just wants to serve the good of all people; if you should find in me other than - then I am a liar and a fraud. And prison has failed to change me.

Although, a resident on "Death Row" at this writing - I am trusting God to set me free from prison, real soon. Meanwhile, I would really like to have your prayers and your "moral" support. And I would simply, just love to hear from you, if you will.

Thank you for reading this. And I hope my cry for your help will not be in vain.

Write to: James Lee Spencer  
PO Box 3877  
Jackson, Georgia 30233

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

Name

Street

City, State, Zip



# THE RISE OF CHRISTIAN CONSCIENCE VIDEOCASSETTES FROM SOJOURNERS

**T**he Rise of Christian Conscience videocassettes present a thorough and compelling portrait of the new movement that is arising in the churches. All over the country, Christians are coming together in new ways around a common commitment to the sanctity of all human life, the biblical message of justice and peace, and a new vision of community. The many streams of this growing movement of faith and conscience converged in a unique way when 1,500 people attended Peace Pentecost 1985 in Washington, D.C. The presentations from that event are now available on videocassettes.

The Rise of Christian Conscience consists of three videocassettes: "The Roots of Christian Conscience," "The Streams of Christian Conscience," and "Be Not Afraid." It is designed to be used in a six-, eight-, or 12-session series, making this resource ideal for churches, schools, peace and justice groups, workshops, and conferences. An accompanying participants guide gives background and bibliographic information and suggests ways to choose the series length that best fits your needs. The cost of the three-tape series is \$195. Each of the three videocassettes is also available separately.

In addition, the complete meditations by Jim Wallis and Henri J.M. Nouwen (portions of which are included in *The Rise of Christian Conscience* tapes above) are available on one videocassette or individually. A participants guide is included with all purchases.

You may order these videocassettes by filling out the attached form or by writing to us. Payment must accompany all orders. Please allow two weeks for delivery.



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An example of faith and conscience in action, *Be Not Afraid* (formerly available only on film) documents the events of Peace Pentecost 1983 in Washington, D.C. From the ecumenical worship service at the Washington Cathedral attended by 2,500 people, to the civil disobedience action at the Capitol Rotunda and the arrest of 242 people, the videocassette closely follows each step of preparation and captures the spirit of faith and worship that pervaded every action.



## Coming Next Issue:

### Witness For Peace in Nicaragua

Helen McCrady and Rob Johnson from the Open Door (along with 14 other Atlantan's) have just returned from a Witness For Peace-sponsored visit to Nicaragua. Ed Loring had been their for a month earlier in the year. Beginning in the June issue of *Hospitality*, we will begin sharing some of the powerful and challenging experiences gained there. In the meantime all of us are eager to speak with groups in the Atlanta area. Be encouraged to schedule us for a visit.

**Note** - As we go to press, the Atlanta delegation has been especially angered and saddened by the news of 12 West German volunteers being kidnapped by the Contras in southeast Nicaragua. The site of this continuing terrorism is Jacinto Baca—a small village where our group spent its time in the countryside. Whether or not the incident has been resolved by the time you receive this issue of *Hospitality*, please call your Congressperson and demand that our government do what it can to prevent such actions by the Contra.