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May 2000

## Fighting Class Cleansing at Grady Memorial Hospital

by Samuel R. Newcom

*(Editor's note: Dr. Samuel Newcom, Associate Professor of Medicine at Emory University, has been protesting the denial of adequate care and medication for Grady patients. Dr. Newcom has headed the Hematology-Oncology Clinics at Grady and the VA Hospitals, but has been placed on "Administrative Leave" by Emory for speaking out on behalf of his patients. This article is reprinted with permission from "Ethics & Behavior," vol. 10 (1), Copyright © 2000, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.)*

### GRADY BACKGROUND

The 106-year-old Grady Memorial Hospital was renovated in 1994 and has 50,000 outpatient visits each month. About 16% of the annual support is provided by two counties: Fulton and DeKalb. The county supplement has been reduced 25% since 1992 and is currently \$90 million. Medical staff are provided by the Emory University School of Medicine. In 1984, Morehouse School of Medicine assumed responsibility for 10% of the patients. The medical schools were paid \$55 million as reimbursement in 1999. Patients are 90% Black, they may be indigent, and the patient population includes a large number of people older than 65. One third of the patients have Medicaid, one fourth have Medicare, and a small percentage have private health insurance. A card system identifies each patient's coverage. Patients with no income, no holdings, and no insurance are given "zero" cards.

On July 1, 1984, the year I joined the faculty, the President of Emory University and the two counties signed 30-year contracts to provide care for the patients of Grady and to supplement the budget as needed. Prior to 1998, the "zero" card patients received no bills for their medical care and received free medications from the outpatient pharmacy.

Emory University has an \$8 billion endowment that is the sixth largest in the nation. As health care in California, Boston, and New York was coming under the control of organized business, Emory administrators took no defensive action. The medical school continued to recruit new faculty. Funding was found for new projects including \$275 million for a new Crawford Long hospital, \$125 million for a Cancer Center, \$75 million to supplement the overhead of the Emory clinic, and money



KATHE KOLLWITZ

for two research buildings and three additional floors for the Emory Clinic. A contract was signed by the university awarding clinical administrative decisions to Columbia/Hospital Corporation of America. Many other projects were planned including suburban clinics, a new nursing school, and major campus alterations including reconfiguring the Quadrangle into the shape of a Coke bottle. In 1994, the current vice president for health sciences and the president of the university were recruited from the Northeast.

Even though 50% of the medical students and Emory house staff are at Grady at any time, the new administrators ordered *further reduction* in expenditures at Grady. Several patient care programs, such as the Minority Patient Cancer Program funded by the National Institutes of Health, were closed.

### PERSONAL BACKGROUND

For ten years (1984-1994) I served at Grady

in the Section of Hematology/Oncology as Chief of the Hematology Clinic and as a medical oncology attending. In 1994 all three Grady medical oncologists were transferred to other duties, leaving Grady with no medical oncologist. I was reassigned as Chief of Hematology/Oncology for the Veterans Affairs hospital adjacent to the Emory campus. I lobbied the Dean and was allowed to keep a busy hematology clinic downtown at Grady.

Further devastation occurred in July 1996, when the Veterans Administration (VA) had no Fellow assigned for the first 6 months of the year. At Grady there was no Fellow for 10-1/2 months of the year and, after 1 year with no faculty, one part-time clinical oncologist was assigned there from the Emory clinic.

Early in 1997, the Emory Clinic revealed that it was approaching bankruptcy. Overexpanded, there were 20 hematologists and oncologists attempting to earn a living in one 500-bed hospital. Several had asked for their own Fellow and all had been enjoying a generous travel budget. Using the purloined VA Fellow, one faculty member had been able to cover two large practices, one at the Emory University Hospital and one at an affiliated hospital, Crawford W. Long. This double coverage had earned more than \$4 million. The reported overhead was 90%. Most of the other physicians had been much less successful.

After two faculty meetings in April and May 1997, it was proposed that additional Fellows be pulled from Grady and the VA and assigned to help cover the other private practices at the Emory Clinic. Medical residents at Grady were decreased to half-time. Simultaneously, I was asked to become a full-time VA employee. Emory would provide a "teaching supplement." An offer of faculty promotion (to full professor) would accompany the agreement. My income and personal status would improve. My relationships with my supervisors would remain good. Student evaluations stating that I was an excellent physician and teacher could be sustained.

### ETHICAL DILEMMA

The evolution of American health care funding has left many physicians with a terrible conflict. For example, Emory President William  
*(continued on page 2)*



(continued from page 1)

Chace has written that physicians are no longer bound by the Hippocratic Oath. He stated that physicians are employees under the direction of nonphysician employers and therefore function under the direction of their supervisors, regardless of the best interests of their patients. My dilemma, therefore, was whether to accept this partial removal from my profession and its guidelines. More specifically, should I ignore the misuse of VA Fellows and the severe negligence at Grady? Could I overlook the withdrawal of care from the poor and its transfer to the insured in return for a steadily rising, secure, federal salary, comfortable benefits, and a faculty promotion?

The patients at both the VA and Grady were suffering. A Morehouse student was hospitalized at Grady with acute lymphoblastic leukemia. He had a perfectly matched sister but was denied a bone marrow transplant at the Emory Clinic because his father's insurance would only pay \$10,000. At the time, he was 21; he is now dead. A Georgia Tech student stopped all therapy for his hypercosinophilic syndrome and died at Grady because of professed hopelessness induced by his distress over the loss of mature and experienced physicians. A mid-town caterer was given high doses of chemotherapy at Grady and died. These were avoidable deaths and, although not my responsibility, occurred in my former service.

At the VA, the reduction in house staff was accompanied by the "Service-Line" reorganization. This created a health maintenance organization facsimile with timed clinic visits (20 min), physician's assistants, a restricted formulary, and no teaching or research time for physician faculty. There was also an experiment in capitation with patients being limited to \$2,500 per illness. One patient had his platelet support arbitrarily stopped

after ten days (he had expended more than \$2,500) and died with a brain hemorrhage. Other patients did not receive their medication (immunoglobulin), which was temporarily considered too expensive for VA patients; both died of infection.

### ETHICAL DECISION

Despite President Chace's dictum, I did not see any choice for a physician who had sworn the Hippocratic Oath. My allegiance to the poor at Grady continued. The care at the VA was being misrepresented as an improvement when, in fact, it was clearly a withdrawal of care. I felt that I was being asked to defraud sick people and, as a teacher, to defraud physicians-in-training. I refused to tell medical students that withholding medicine from their patients was an appropriate action or that it was necessary to accept this rationing of care. The United States was wealthy beyond all measure and denying health care to uninsured military veterans and the poor was unacceptable to me.

Although I began my protest in the academic way, setting up meetings with my division head, my VA chair, my Emory chair, and the dean, it became obvious that decisions could not be changed. The university president would not meet with me. In a letter, I reminded the president that this withdrawal of medical care from the VA and Grady was designed to maintain huge salaries at the Emory Clinic, some greater than \$1 million to \$2 million. I told him of the large number of faculty demanding support from private practice. I pointed out that those faculty administrators at Grady and the VA who were not complaining were receiving salary supplements from the Emory Clinic and that I had been offered a similar supplement. I was emboldened by my own speech.

Although Emory administrators

now identify the decision to withdraw support from the two public hospitals as self-preservation, I believe the decision was made easier by racism, greed, and reprehensible concepts of class cleansing. The medical school administrators talked about "winning a competition for patients, about maintaining the outstanding" reputation of Emory, and about "team-work." I included copies of my letter to Former President Jimmy Carter (a professor at Emory), to Dexter King (Director of his father's Center for Nonviolent Action), and to the chiefs of staff at the affected hospitals. When there was no response, I added elected and appointed officials.

### UNIVERSITY'S RESPONSE

The response was predictable. The Chief of Medicine at the VA, who had not received the letter directly, exploded. I could not write to anyone outside the VA without his permission and without his review of the document. I reminded him of the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and told him that he was out of line.

I received a proposal for reprimand. The VA Chief of Medicine was made Director of the Hospital for 1 day and reviewed his own proposal, said it was accurate, and I was formally reprimanded. I was then fired as Chief of the Section (September 1997). I was assigned to do things I was already doing and then asked, in writing, why I did not do them. I was eventually terminated from the VA in April 1998 for not attending a clinic, even though I had been given permission to miss it. I was escorted to my car by three armed federal officers with handcuffs.

As evidenced from memos, my chair at Emory and the dean of the medical school were watching these events closely. I was immediately informed by the university that

termination of my tenured faculty position had been requested "for failure to carry out duties as assigned." I was ordered off campus. The locks on my office and laboratory at Grady were changed. When I produced e-mail confirmation of permission to give a lecture in Germany, an additional charge was added, "making written allegations of wrongdoing circulated to university administrators and prominent individuals outside of Emory ... that are injurious to both Emory University and to patient care." The patient care charge was explained by the fact that I knew I would be fired and therefore would be denying my patients my services. I was placed on administrative leave in April 1998. I continued to receive my full salary (the VA portion now being covered by Emory) and will for at least another year.

### ADMINISTRATIVE LEAVE

While I was on administrative leave, the accreditation council for graduate medical education sent a letter of warning to Emory's division of hematology/oncology for failure to properly supervise and educate trainees. The ear-nose and throat department was placed on probation. Letters of warning were also sent to cardiology, pediatric cardiology, pediatric surgery, and nuclear radiology. The Emory obstetrical and gynecology faculty were submitting bills for procedures that students had performed at Grady. At the request of the state Attorney General, the university repaid the state of Georgia \$4.5 million. Emory University was found to have applied for and received \$1 million from the state's Indigent Care Trust Fund. The money proved to have been used for Emory University campus activities.

In 1999, the Grady administration, supervised by Fulton and DeKalb commissioners and overseen by Emory trustees (the Emory-Grady Committee), ("Fighting," continued on page 5)

## HOSPITALITY

*Hospitality* is published 11 times a year by the Open Door Community (PCUS), Inc., an Atlanta community of Christians called to ministry with the homeless poor and with prisoners, particularly those on death row. Subscriptions are free. A newspaper request form is included in each issue. Manuscripts and letters are welcomed. Inclusive language editing is standard. For more information about the life and work of the Open Door, please contact any of the following:

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Open Door Community

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# The Foolishness of the Gospel

by Kristen Barger

*For the message about Christ's death on the cross is nonsense to those who are being lost, but for us who are being saved it is God's power. The scripture says, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and set aside the understanding of the scholars." So then, where does that leave the wise? or the scholars? or the skillful debaters of this world? God has shown that this world's wisdom is foolishness! For God in God's wisdom made it impossible for people to know God by means of their own wisdom. Instead, by means of the so-called "foolish" message we preach, God decided to save those who believe. Jews want miracles for proof, and Greeks look for wisdom. As for us, we proclaim the crucified Christ, a message that is offensive to the Jews and nonsense to the Gentiles; but for those whom God has called, both Jews and Gentiles, this message is Christ, who is the power of God and the wisdom of God. For what seems to be God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and what seems to be God's weakness is stronger than human strength. Now remember what you were, my friends, when God called you. From the human point of view, few of you were wise or powerful or of high social standing. God purposely chose what the world considers nonsense in order to shame the wise, and God chose what the world considers weak in order to shame the powerful. God chose what the world looks down upon and despises and thinks is nothing, in order to destroy what the world thinks is important. This means that no one can boast in God's presence. But God has brought you into union with Christ Jesus, and God has made Christ to be our wisdom. By him we are put right with God; we become God's holy people and are set free. So then, as the scripture says, "Whoever wants to boast must boast of what the Lord has done." (1 Corinthians 1:18-31, TEV)*

Well, to be such a somber season, Lent sure does take us on a pretty wild ride through the Bible. Last week we got to see Peter give Jesus a tongue-lashing and hear Jesus

call Peter "Satan." This week we've got Jesus throwing an absolute fit in the middle of church, and then we hear Paul tell the Corinthians that God is a moron.

Now if you missed that part about God being a moron, don't worry. It's not because you were drifting off in the middle of reading the scripture. It's because Bible translators are such spineless weenies. The Greek word that Paul uses, which is translated in the version we read as "nonsense" and "foolishness," is "moria," which has the same root as moron. So you might read the first verse of this

effective policy making and skillful negotiation. Surely, if you were God and were trying to make a difference down here, that's what you would do, isn't it? If you were going to go to all the trouble of coming down here and becoming a human being, wouldn't you want to be one of the best ones? An intelligent person, an attractive person, an influential person? And of course, you would use all of these gifts for good, to help those who are weak and powerless, the so-called "less fortunate."

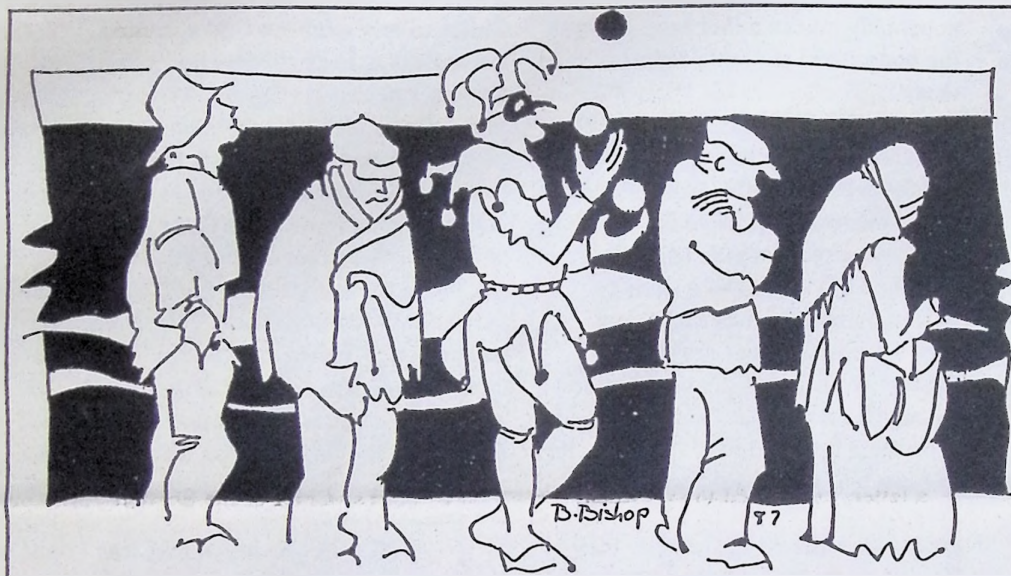
But God is a fool. God chooses none of those options. God

knows how to get our attention. But if you don't believe what Paul says, all you have to do is listen to today's Gospel reading about Jesus making a big scene in the Temple. The spin on this story that I've always heard is that this is where we finally get to see Jesus letting the hypocrites have it. I mean, "Blessed are the meek" is fine for the Sermon on the Mount, but even Jesus has his limits, and finally, he's going to get tough and take some action. But this week when I read this story side by side with the passage from 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians, all of a sudden I thought, "you know, Jesus is really just making a fool of himself."

Now I have to confess that this revelation came less out of extensive exegesis of the text than it did out of my own experience participating in the Grady campaign. I had been really psyched about the first action that I was going to be a part of, which was the first action down at Emory University. It seemed so dramatic, so romantic — marching for justice, singing in the streets, raising our common voices into one great voice of liberation — oh, I was really into this protest stuff, even though I'd never actually been to one. Then we got down there, and there's maybe 20

people there, and we're just walking in this little circle up and down the sidewalk, trying to sing in unison except you can barely hear the person right in front of you because of all the cars flying by — and then it starts to rain. And I felt like a fool. I felt so little and so silly and so EXPOSED out there at that busy intersection, and I just hoped no one I knew would drive by. This was not glamorous or courageous — it was nonsense. What good was this going to do twenty people with wet hair singing "This Little Light of Mine?" How was this going to make any kind of difference?

Now, of course, I have the benefit of hindsight, and I know that what we did that day and all the little and big actions of the Grady Coalition since last March, have made a significant difference in the ability of the poor to have access to health care, though we've still got a long way to go on that one. But you can't even say that for Jesus's Temple action. It was just sheer foolishness. I mean, he didn't organize a grassroots coalition, he didn't contact the media, he didn't paint any catchy slogans on placards, he didn't even have a follow-up  
(continued on next page)



passage like this: "For the message about Christ's death on the cross is the kind of thing that morons would believe."

Now, moron is an ugly word, much uglier than nonsense or foolishness. According to my dictionary, it can just mean a really stupid person, but the more common usage was as a nasty way to refer to the mentally retarded. But I don't think Paul is trying to be ugly or nasty towards God in this letter to the Corinthians. He's just calling it like he sees it. God, being God, might have chosen any number of highly effective ways to get the message of salvation across to the people who really mattered. God might have come to earth as a philosopher, as a well-educated and polished author and professor who could have won the attention and respect of the cultured elite by explaining all the subtle nuances of God's plan for salvation. God might have come as a miracle worker, a flashy entertainer who would have entranced the masses, probably through the use of television. God might have come as a powerful leader, a masterful politician who could have changed the world through

doesn't come to help the poor, the weak, the vulnerable — God comes as one of them. God comes as a poor person, a person without formal education or social influence, and the way that God chooses to demonstrate God's love and justice and mercy is by being executed as a legally convicted criminal. What Paul is trying to say in the strongest language he can find is that there is something in the nature of God that actually prefers weakness and brokenness and even failure to any of the ways which we would use to gain success. Paul doesn't really try to explain why God is this way, and I sure as heck can't, but here it is right here in the Bible. "God purposely chose what the world considers nonsense in order to shame the wise; God chose what the world considers weak in order to shame the powerful. God chose what the world looks down upon and despises and thinks is nothing, in order to destroy what the world thinks is important" (Verses 27-28).

Now maybe we can write off what Paul has to say here as simply exaggeration for effect. He doesn't really mean that God is foolish and weak; he's just a good writer who



("Foolishness," continued from previous page)

strategy meeting — all he did was bust into the Temple, turn over the tables and yell the truth about what was happening there at the top of his lungs. But when he left, what do you think happened? They herded all the animals back in, put the tables back together, stacked up the coins in neat little piles and picked up right where they left off. There is no record that Jesus' action resulted in any kind of effective reform of Temple practices. There was no reduction in the lines at the sacrifice booths. There was no change in the Temple Board of Directors to make it more representative of the diverse population served by the Temple. There wasn't even a bill passed to create a Temple Oversight Committee to monitor the management of Temple funds. In fact, there is no evidence that there was a single concrete result of Jesus' action in the Temple except for one—it got him killed. And Paul tells us that this is exactly the kind of God that we get in Jesus Christ—one who deliberately chooses the most ridiculous, the least "effective" way to get the point across. And if we are honest, we will have to say, along with the Jews and the Greeks, that that's not really the kind of God we were looking for. This is not a God to whom we can "relate." Yet if we call ourselves Christians, and claim to be followers of Jesus Christ, this is the God we get.

This past week we had a wonderful visit from Suzanne Miller, who is a fourth-year medical student. On Monday at our Weekly Ministries Meeting, Dick asked Suzanne to share her experiences as a volunteer at the L'Arche Daybreak Community in Toronto. For those of you who aren't familiar with L'Arche, it is a Christian community started by a man named Jean Vanier that offers hospitality to the mentally and physically disabled. Suzanne shared with us how the vulnerability of L'Arche's core members, who have their weakness and brokenness on display all the time, moves the assistants—that is, the "normal" people—to become more vulnerable in exposing their own weaknesses. We all had lots of questions, in part because Jean Vanier and the model of L'Arche was one of the important resources for the Open Door when it was getting started. Finally it seemed that all the questions had been asked and we were about to move on, and then one more hand popped up. It was Ed Loring's, and he asked one of his typically mild, non-intrusive inquiries, "Suzanne, could you tell us—who is your Jesus?" Now having spent a little time with Ed,

I wasn't all that surprised by the question. But I wasn't really prepared for the honesty of Suzanne's answer. She thought for a minute and said, "My Jesus is the Jesus of the Beatitudes, the one who said, 'Blessed are the poor. Blessed are the hungry. Blessed are those who mourn.' And I look at that list, and I know that that's not me, and it scares me."

And I felt like someone had let all the air out of my lungs. Because it scares me too. And I'd be willing to bet that it scares a lot of you too. I mean, it's kind of startling to live a good portion of your life under the illusion that you're doing everything right; you're grooming yourself to have a good, successful life, only to find out that God isn't looking for successes. God, apparently, would rather hang out with the hungry and the suffering and weak.

"So then, where does that leave the wise? or the scholars? or the skillful debaters of this world?" (Verse 20). Where does it leave the corporate executive, the basketball star, the Ph.D.s, the Duke Divinity School Jameson Jones Preaching award winner? What are the successful people of the world to do when you realize that God has turned everything upside down? Well, as far as I can tell, we've got two choices. We can use all of our smarts and power and influence to rewrite the Gospel, to make it a more comfortable and comforting story for the rich and powerful—in essence, to claim the name of the Gospel while at the same time writing off its fundamental message as nonsense. Foolishness. Something only morons would believe. And, for the most part, this is the option that the mainline church, the church into which I am about to be ordained, is choosing.

But there is another way. It's harder. It's pretty painful, in fact. The bad news is, we have to go back to school. Or to put it another way, we have to sign up for what Ivan Illich called "deschooling." We have to *unlearn* the practices of privilege, of success, of relying on our smarts and money and status to make us more like who *we think* God should be. But who will be our teachers in this deschooling? Where do we register for this class?

Well, if we are trying to learn what it means to follow a saviour who was weak and despised, we will have to learn from people who know what that's like. And in our world as in Paul's, those people are the poor. In fact, Paul says that's exactly who God has called to be in the church, so God can teach the world through them how different *God's* wisdom is from ours.

Of course, this is the part of the passage that the mainline lectionary leaves out, but there it is, right there in the Bible. "Now remember what you were, my friends, when God called you. From the human point of view few of you were wise or powerful or of high social standing. God purposely chose what the world considers nonsense in order to shame the wise; God chose what the world considers weak in order to shame the powerful" (Verses 26-27). So if the bad news is that we have to go back to school, the good news is that God has provided us with teachers. Our teachers are the poor, the weak, the despised. Our teachers are the homeless, the prisoners, the mentally disabled. These are the people who know what it means to cling to the cross of Jesus Christ, to rely solely on God's strength and salvation, because they don't have any other options. They don't have money and status and nice clothes and educated speech under which to hide their brokenness, their failure. They have only the promise that God has chosen them, not because of who they are, but in spite of who they are, and they know what it means to have to reclaim that promise every single moment that they struggle to survive in a world that thinks they are nothing. These are the folks who can teach us what it means to follow Jesus Christ, the *crucified* one.

That's the conclusion that Jean Vanier came to. He decided that if he were going to live by a Gospel that the world thinks is for morons, he had better get close to the people the world said were morons. So he and a priest invited a mentally disabled man to live with them, and the L'Arche community was born. Now I'm about a preschooler in this deschooling process, so I thought I would let Jean Vanier explain how it is that the weak lead the strong in Christian community:

"Those who come close to people in need do so first of all in a generous desire to help them and bring them relief; they often feel like saviours and put themselves on a pedestal. But once in contact with them, once touching them, establishing a loving and trusting relationship with them, the mystery unveils itself. At the heart of the insecurity of people in distress, there is a presence of Jesus. And so they discover the sacrament of the poor and enter the mystery of compassion. People who are poor seem to break down the barriers of powerfulness, of wealth, of ability and of pride; they pierce the armor the human heart builds to protect itself; they reveal Jesus Christ. They reveal to those who have come to 'help' them their own poverty and vulnerability. These people also show their 'helpers' their capacity for

love, the forces of love in their hearts. The [poor have] a mysterious power: in [their] weakness [they are] able to open hardened hearts and reveal sources of living water within them ... The poor teach us how to live the Gospel. That is why they are the treasures of the church." (*Community and Growth*, p. 96)

So what does this all mean for our lives? Well, it means that if we really want to know what it means to live by the cross, we had better drop whatever it is that is keeping our lives walled off from the poor, whether it's money or comfort or family ties or race or education or even pride in our successful recovery from addiction. We have to shake off whatever it is that creates the distance between us and those who are weak and despised in the world. Because whatever those things are that we cling to for security, whatever credentials we hold up to the world as a sign that we're one of the successful ones and not one of the failures, one of the strong, not one of the weak, whatever it is that separates us from the poor is the same thing that keeps us from the cross. And the promise is that if we choose that harder path, if we live lives among those whom Jesus says are blessed, then we will be blessed too. We will learn to face our own weakness, our own failure, our own deep ache and desperate need for the God who wept and suffered and died a failure to lead us into the new life of Easter. But we can't get to Easter without going to the cross.

This is the Lenten journey into which we are all invited, a journey into our own brokenness. Those of us who have spent our lives trying to cover up our broken places will need some help navigating that journey. Of course, we'll have to go looking for the teachers, because most poor folks don't even know the treasure they have to offer. This world is so mixed up that those who know they are weak are trying to act like those who are acting like they are strong, when the Bible says it should be the other way around. We see this a lot at the Open Door. When new community members come in from the streets, they almost always want to apologize for the fact that "they don't have it all together yet." And then someone, usually Gladys, who is a woman with many years of deschooling, will say "Well, you're in the right place. Nobody here has it all together either. This is a place for people who don't have it all together." The church is a place for people who don't have it all together. *The cross* is a place for people who don't have it all together. The heavenly banquet table is a place for people who don't have it all together. Thanks be to God. Amen.



("Fighting Class Cleansing," continued from page 2)

quietly activated a requirement for the "zero" card holder to pay \$0.50 per prescription. Many saw this as a hardship, but Emory faculty were not informed and did not protest. Doctors for some patients prescribe 10 to 15 different medicines. The pharmacy would not fill a prescription for more than 30 days. As a busy physician embroiled in faculty turmoil, I was not aware of this new copayment.

In 1999, however, I was on administrative leave. I could read the newspaper thoroughly every day. Thanks to a diligent reporter, David Pendered, I soon learned that full pharmacy charges were being proposed for these "zero" card holders. The counties were reducing their support once again and the Federal Balanced Budget Act was forcing deep cuts in Medicare and Medicaid. "Zero" card patients were being looked to as a source of revenue.

In February 1999, the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* editorial staff began to call for state intervention at Grady. I wrote a supporting letter to the editor entitled "State Must Act to Save Grady" that decried the pharmacy plan and pointed out that Emory University was at least partially responsible for the financial crisis at Grady. The phone rang from a number of readers. One call came from Reverend Murphy Davis, one of my patients, now cured. She and her husband are Presbyterian ministers who maintain a 64-room [community] that serves the homeless on Ponce de Leon Avenue, known as the Open Door Community. Murphy and her husband, Reverend Ed Loring, were concerned and had seen my letter. Because of immediate outrage about the proposal to charge full price, the pharmacy proposal had been changed to a \$10 copayment for each prescription as well as a \$5 copayment for each clinic visit and a withdrawal of transportation. Emory trustees and the Grady administration had obviously targeted the very poor (the "poorest of the poor") for elimination from the health care system. Murphy said that the Open Door Community would be "in the street" in front of Grady in one hour. I said that my wife Janis and I would be there too. I put on my white coat with stethoscope, name tag, flashlight, and percussion hammer.

#### NONVIOLENT CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

Although I was at Berkeley in the 1960s and helped 25,000 marchers take back Forsyth County, Georgia, from the Ku Klux Klan in 1985, I had never really picketed before. The experience is exhilarating and empowering. The newspaper said there were 60 of us. We marched back and forth chanting and singing on Butler Street in front of the hospital and in front of the Glenn building, which holds some of the low-level Emory medical school administrators. The Open Door brought

a bullhorn and we made speeches. My white coat attracted a lot of attention. Television news covered my words and they were quoted in the newspaper: "Medical students and young doctors are being taught not to care." We challenged politicians to speak out. We asked why wealthy Emory University had no public or moral stand on this life-threatening issue affecting their patients.

We picketed weekly during March 1999. Our numbers grew and it was an impressively diverse group with Black and White politicians and ministers, community leaders, patients, the homeless,

nurses, lab technicians, concerned citizens, and one or two doctors. I was not the leader of this group but many said they were comforted and inspired by my presence. We demanded and eventually received a 5-1/2 hour conference with Edward Renford, the \$200,000-per-year Chief Executive Officer of Grady. He

promised that no patient would leave the hospital without medication and signed the statement. At our request, a secret Grady document was produced that showed that the Grady pharmacy had predicted that 6,500 people would die or suffer within 60 days of restricting access to medication. Within 24 hours, Dr. Neil Shulman, a second Emory faculty member with free time, had documented that patients were still being forced from the pharmacy without medication. One man had a seizure in front of the Open Door Community and fractured his arm. Although doctors agreed to treat him for the fracture, he was once again sent out from Grady without either his seizure medicine or pain medicine.

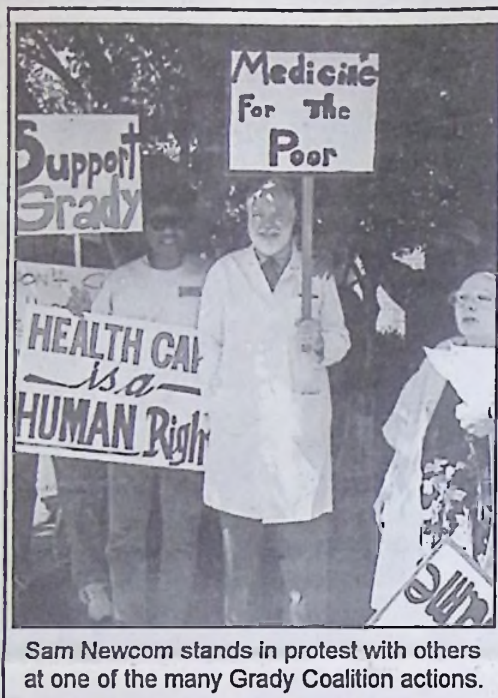
Monday, March 22, 1999 was an important march. We entered the hospital for the public Grady Hospital Authority Board meeting. Almost at the same time, I was notified that the university would hold its Faculty Hearing Committee meeting the week after that to make recommendations about my faculty position. My lawyers were ready.

The Hospital Authority Board meeting was tense. The room was packed with most of us standing. The board attempted to carry on its business concerned with various committee reports, but the media and the activists were overwhelming. A man in a wheelchair, Ronald Spencer,

cried in pain because he could not receive his medications. Finally, business was set aside to discuss the pharmacy issue. Several of us spoke, pointing out the death-dealing nature of the Board's decision and their own prediction that 100 people per day would die or suffer. Mr. Spencer begged the Hospital Authority to give him relief. Despite our pleas, the board voted to maintain the \$10 copayment.

A near riot ensued. There was no physical violence but the news media have continued to show Reverend Loring, Dr. Shulman, Reverend McDonald, and others shaking their

fingers in the faces of these board members. The board ran out of the back of the room. Riot police appeared in the doorways. The newspaper reported that two lock-up vans were brought to Grady to take the protesters to jail. Fortunately, order returned, as did the board members. They voted again and put the policy on



Sam Newcom stands in protest with others at one of the many Grady Coalition actions.

hold for 30 days.

#### FACULTY HEARING

The following week my faculty hearing was held with five tenured Emory faculty members, my department chair, the medical school lawyer, my two lawyers, the department chair's personal lawyer, the university's lawyer, and a time keeper. President William Chace refused to appear. The VA had prohibited all VA employees from participating. I presented two affidavits from former VA employees and my own testimony. I was not allowed character witnesses or to submit a current curriculum vitae. The "failure to perform duties" charge was dismissed by a 4 to 1 vote. However, the "irresponsible" speech charge remained by a 3 to 2 vote and was presented to the President and the Emory University Board of Trustees for a decision that has not yet been rendered. During my hearing, State Representative Billy McKinney and his daughter, U.S. Representative Cynthia McKinney, with several others, picketed the administration building with a large sign saying, "We support Dr. Newcom and Grady Hospital." My VA Chair, who had been transferred to Oregon, did not testify or submit an affidavit. My division head, who expressed support for me, resigned two weeks later and

is now a Mormon missionary in Munich, Germany, having retired from medicine. Following the hearing, my department chair stepped down and accepted a research and development position. Alumni formed an organization (ABDICATION) and have demanded the President's resignation.

#### CURRENT STATUS

In addition to the hearing and the near riot, I participated in a Georgia State House hearing on Grady. I suggested to the 100 representatives, senators, and commissioners present that Emory University should be held financially and professionally responsible for the patient care at Grady. I also participated in a state Senate hearing held by Senator Nadine Thomas, a Grady nurse. As in the House hearing, during the Senate hearing I showed that Emory University was partially responsible for the difficulties at Grady. The Emory Clinical Dean, William Cassarella, was the first Emory administrator to be present at any public Grady event. The Grady Coalition (now several hundred) demonstrated at the Fulton County commission and received an additional \$3.5 million for the pharmacy budget at Grady. We repeatedly picketed, lobbied, rallied, and met at the DeKalb County commission, receiving \$1.1 million the same day that property taxes were reduced by 35%. These DeKalb County demonstrations resulted in the arrests of 7 of us on one day and 30 of us on a second day. Fortunately, the sheriff of DeKalb County was a vigorous supporter, so release was immediate if desired and treatment exemplary. As of this writing, the Grady Coalition is preparing to lobby Emory University directly. We are asking for 15% of the endowment to be set aside for Grady support (4%-8% to be used annually) and investment management to be continued by Emory's brokers. We propose that control of this money (\$40-80 million annually) remain in the hands of community activists in collaboration with concerned Emory and Grady physicians.

Except for family and neighbor consultations, I have not practiced classical medicine for over one year. However, I feel I have contributed more significantly to the health of my patients. Regardless of the outcome, I still could not accept the alternate path. I am fortunate to have already experienced a 35-year medical career and to have financial resources. Young physicians are frequently unable to protest in this way because of their great financial dependence. Society must act vigorously through legislators if excellence is to be maintained in future physicians and health care. Universities with huge stock market endowments should provide increased financial support for their public teaching hospitals. It is the right thing to do.



# The Grady Coalition— One Year on the March Together

by Murphy Davis

Over the past year, we have chronicled in great detail the movement and accomplishments of the Grady campaign. In rallying in support of the poorest patients of our local public hospital, we have been blessed with the extraordinary grace of being part of an exciting diverse coalition of individuals and groups representing practically every class, race, and social group in the city. The success of the coalition's efforts has astounded us. (New readers will find a delineation of the issues and a partial chronology of events in Dr. Sam Newcom's accompanying article in this issue.)

As we passed the one-year mark in our journey together, it seemed important to reflect in a broader context on the significance of this campaign coalition and some of the crucial issues that have been raised for us along the way. We have had numerous reflections in *Hospitality* about the related issues of privatization, the squeezing of institutions that serve and help the poor, and the growing wealth of the privileged elite, but I also want to look at the Grady campaign in the context of the wider pro-democracy movement of which it is certainly a part.

Why, indeed, has the Grady campaign coalition been so important?

#1. Well, for one thing, it worked!

Those of us who are accustomed to advocacy for the homeless poor, the prisoner, and the death-sentenced are not accustomed to success, and it has been startling at times to realize how many of our goals have actually been accomplished.

I. We were able to stop the policy of charging the poorest of the poor \$10 for each prescription and \$5 for clinic visits. The "zero card" patients immediately started meeting their clinic appointments and getting their medications. (We will never know, of course, how many of these patients faced serious medical crisis and/or death during the week that the policy was in effect. Nor will we know how many patients never heard of the change in the policy, or how many were simply too discouraged and disheartened to come back. But

the damage was stopped.)

II. We were able to help raise \$56.5 million from Fulton and DeKalb Counties and the State to avert the immediate financial crisis facing the hospital.

III. We were able to advocate for changes and improvements in the pharmacy system, so that it is now actually working better and more efficiently for the

empowered us to work together quickly to respond to the crisis. We understand that advocacy for health care for the poor will be an ongoing need, and it seems clear that we will be able to pull ourselves back in force as needed.

#3. We created a public experience and public picture of a very diverse coalition of individuals and groups working together in common cause.



A typical scene during one of our Grady Coalition actions outside the Hospital.

patients than it did before the particular crisis emerged.

#2. The coalition is still basically together. The nature of coalition work is for groups and individuals to come together around a particular goal or objective, and after a time, to disband and move on to other issues and concerns. Many coalitions are short-lived, and it is very difficult to hold common ground among groups and individuals with different agendas and constituencies. It is not easy work, and coalition efforts often leave broken relationships and misunderstanding in their wake. Part of the success of the Grady coalition has been based on the fact that at the core of the leadership has been a group of us who have known and worked with each other for many years, primarily through relationships around The Open Door Community, Concerned Black Clergy, the Atlanta Labor Council, Fulton Atlanta Community Action Authority, and the AIDS Survival Project. A basic level of trust and mutual appreciation and support already existed that enabled and

This public image of diversity challenged the popular assumption that we are divided and segregated by race and class and other factors and that there is very little we can do about it. News reports of our pickets and actions showed elderly Black women marching with white plumbers, and preachers, and civil rights activists, and gays and lesbians, elected officials, doctors, nurses, hospital staff, seminary professors and labor leaders, lawyers, Christians, Jews, Buddhists, and atheists, young and old, Black, white, Asian, and Latina. There we were, *working together* to bring about change.

#4. The Grady Coalition has created a public experience of participatory democracy. The values and demands of the expanding global marketplace require political lethargy on the part of the general public. We are encouraged in our cynicism and distrust of what "government" can do about any of the problems that face us. The more we believe that "we the people" are powerless to do what needs to be done, the more we are

willing to turn over public business to private enterprise. In the process, the institutions of democracy and democratic process suffer. The campaign publicly disputed this requirement of political lethargy. We voted with our feet and our bodies and our voices, and we showed that it *can* be done. People *can* work together across all the walls that divide us, and can reshape the public agenda.

#5. The coalition effort has lifted a public clamor on behalf of the common good. The drift of the social and economic forces among us are toward the consolidation of power and resources for the privileged elite. This process demands privacy, secrecy, and the expectation that everybody will stay focused on their individual lives and well-being. The coalition's message has reaffirmed the common good as the most worthy goal of our political action. We must stand up for the poor and marginalized to affirm our shared humanity and solidarity. When the most vulnerable among us suffer, *we all suffer*. This is solid Biblical theology, but hard popular rhetoric in the public arena. We have had, you might say, a revival.

#6. The secrecy and back-room deals that are a given for the decision-making processes of the elite were publicly challenged, and the process of decision-making around the use of public resources for the public hospital was opened up for public debate and accountability. This is the way it is *supposed* to work for public institutions. But we have, in fact, become so passive and lethargic as a body politic that little is known about how decisions are made, the press does little to investigate and/or inform, and few questions are asked. Public hospitals have closed in other cities and similar decisions have been made at times with little or no public outcry or dissent. The Grady Board and administration certainly did *not* anticipate their decision for a 600% increase in prescription costs to be publicly debated.

#7. The dramatic public actions of the coalition planted seeds of imagination. All of us who witnessed the unfolding drama were encouraged in our faith and (*Grady Coalition," continued on next page*)



("Grady Coalition," continued from previous page)

capacity to believe that the way things are is not the way things have to be.

#8. We worked together on an issue that struck a chord with many people. When it comes to health care in the age of HMOs, many, many people are beginning to understand that we're *all* in trouble. Here is an issue that is not *just* about the poor; it is a problem that we share. Even middle-class people understand this one.

#9. The momentum of the Coalition actions has empowered other actions. Other doctors and hospital staff have been empowered to stand up, speak out, and blow whistles (and some of them are being forced out, especially by Emory Medical School). Light is shining in some dark corners and questions are being asked where silent complicity has been the norm and the expectation. There was passionate legislative effort in the recent session of the Georgia legislature. Senator David Scott waged an all-out (but unsuccessful) battle to establish a state oversight committee to examine lucrative and possibly illegal contracts between Grady and certain powerful elected officials.

The Grady Coalition Campaign has been and continues to be a significant political movement. But it is probably a sign of the times that our success has been in the public

arena and our major outstanding issues are with the wealthy private interests. While all issues are certainly not resolved, we have been able to effectively call the decision making process of Grady Hospital to accountability. We have had very limited success in calling Emory University to accountability. Last spring the Coalition called on Emory and the School of Medicine to make public 19 documents and letters of warning and probation known to have been issued to the medical training programs at Grady Hospital. The Coalition's request was followed by a similar request from the office of the Georgia Attorney General. To date, Emory has released only 5 of the documents and has shown little willingness to discuss their cutbacks in patient care at Grady. It leaves us with an increasingly urgent and pressing question: how—as we conduct our public life together—will we demand accountability of the private interests that have increasing power and control of public resources and issues that concern everyone?

But the significance of the Grady campaign is an ongoing reminder that true health is rooted in the life of a community—the mutual care that we share and our willingness to involve ourselves in the struggle for justice and the common good. This struggle, indeed, will be the source of our healing.

*Murphy Davis is a Partner at the Open Door Community.*

## It is All Connected!

Expelling our youth from school. Jailing our young people for non-violent offenses. Shelling and shooting down our people for simply being in the wrong place at the wrong time. So-called anti-gang loitering ordinances and police "sweeps" detained over 90,000 in Chicago—more than 80 people per day.

These are the reflections of a troubled nation, seemingly intent on developing its new industry—The Jails and Prison Complex. Around the country, jailing has become the number one crop in counties where corn used to grow. As America has reduced its farm production—the backbone of rural communities—it has simultaneously raised its rate of incarceration of brown and black people.

Why? Because evidence shows that crime pays. The Federal prison industry is a \$30 billion industry.

America has the largest prison population in the world. At the current rate of incarceration, by 2020, there will be 4.5 million people in jails and prisons in America. The runaway jailing of our people is disconnected from charges of violent crime. Over the last ten years, violent crime has dropped 21%, but incarceration has risen 50%. Crime is going down and the prison population is going up because ... crime pays.

The nation builds 1,098 prison beds a week. A new \$41 million dollar facility provides a small town with 200 construction jobs, 400 permanent jobs and a \$10 million annual payroll. Revenue is the incentive to keep locking up people. Empty jails do not produce revenue.

This inordinate determination to stabilize the prison economy has come

with a price—Education. Our nation has chosen incarceration over education. In 1980, the education budget in America was \$27 billion dollars. The prison budget was \$8 billion dollars. By 1995, the education budget dropped to \$16 billion dollars and the prison budget ballooned to \$20 billion dollars.

This insidious trend led us to Decatur, Illinois, where six African-American students were expelled for two years without due process and without hope of schooling and graduation. The road before them was an obvious path to prison. We could not live quietly with that judgment. We went there. We marched. We raised visibility and we placed this "Zero Tolerance" mindset on the national agenda.

The two-year expulsion has been rescinded and reduced to nine months. The boys will not be left to idly walk the streets. They are in alternative schools for high school credit. The two seniors will graduate with their class. And not one single student has been expelled since we went to Decatur.

While we are winning the fight against "expelling," police "shelling" and killings are too high. This serious cancer is spreading on the body of law enforcement in America.

Citizens are dangerously close to becoming immune to such tragedy. It is now fodder for slick slogans, "driving while black," "wallets can be dangerous to your health," "reach out and kill somebody." The callous disregard for life is not funny; it is demonstrated daily by police departments. Providentially, the Blue Wall of Silence is cracking.

- Rev. Jesse L. Jackson,  
Rainbow/PUSH Coalition

## Join us as a Resident Volunteer!



Open Door Partner Ira Terrell and Resident Volunteer Franklin Harkins recently ran in a race to benefit Presbyterians Answer to Hunger (PATH).

### Spend 6 to 12 months as a Resident Volunteer

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

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



# Street Words

by Ed Loring

Do you remember Bard Rudder? He lived here at 910 a long time ago. He is a brilliant man and a graduate of Georgia Institute of Technology. He began the phone and door rotation shortly after moving into our home from the persistent streets of Ponce de Leon Ave. At that time we had Tom T. Hall's Cadillac limousine parked in our back yard waiting for the Second Coming. Rev. Will Campbell is a pastoral friend to a number of the Nashville country singers and Tom T. Hall is one of Will's sheep. One day they were riding down the highway. Will's bourbon was sloughing back and forth as they tumbled along. Wise as a serpent and gentle as an Anabaptist in Zwingli's Zurich, Will turned toward Tom and said, "Tom, this car is obscene; you ought to give it away." "Okay," said Tom, who must have recently read the story of Jesus and the rich man (Mark 10:17-29). So Will told Tom about the Open Door Community, and Tom figured that he could give the limousine to us and we would let five or six homeless folks live in it. We did not do that; but when Bard Rudder came to live with us, Tom T. Hall's limousine was parked in our back yard waiting.

Bard did not appreciate our "no TV" policy, and he hankered after a little eye contact with Satan. Therefore, he learned how to get the keys to the limo, and after hours, to locate himself in the broad back seat, and cut on the color TV. This went on for a while unbeknownst to those of us who sleep in beds. However, our brothers and sisters who sleep on the earth around our house were well aware. Several did begin to negotiate with Bard so that after the late night movie was over, folks climbed in for the night. Tom T. Hall's vision of his limousine as a home for the homeless came true. For awhile. Finally, Murphy and I decided to take the limo to Koinonia to demonstrate the differences between urban and rural discipleship. At the time, Koinonia partners were mainly riding tractors and walking around barefooted. They did take the car into Americus for ice cream, and even picked up some of their Habitat for Humanity friends for a ride. Before we left 910, we discovered certain evidences of habitation in the limousine and that

ultimately ended Bard's TV parlor.

Bard left a few months later and went to work for John Pickens as a paralegal. This was the most important and happiest time of Bard's life. In fact, I never talk to Bard without his telling me stories of his work with John. How amazing life is when we are gifted to have good work! John and Bard brought liberty to many captives. Folk harassed by the powers and police, the business

places: on the streets while drinking and raising hell, in prison for drinking and raising hell, and in mental wards and insane asylums. After three street days on the turf and in the hood, he was under lock and key on the 13th floor of Grady Memorial Hospital—the Psychiatric Unit. He called on a Sunday morning and asked for a visit. Kristen, Franklin and I headed to the 13th floor after lunch. The police-woman at the metal detector was

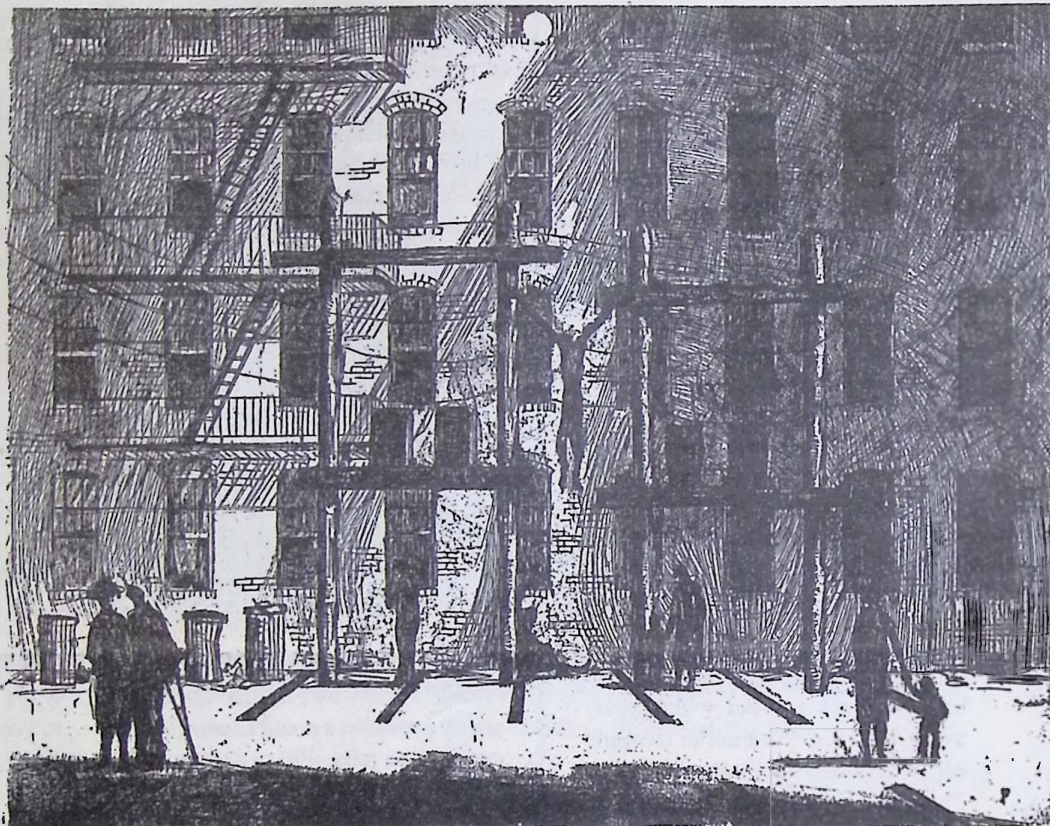
was Bard. My heart jumped up. Bard ran over to the table and shook hands with us. Then he said, "It's hot in here. Let me get you a drink of water." Franklin, Kristen, and I were grateful. Bard left the room, walked down the hall, and came back in a few minutes balancing three small paper cups filled with cold water. Suddenly, just before he entered the visitation area two enormous police officers jumped Bard and yanked him up against the wall. Getting his hand behind him, they shuffled him down the hall and out of sight. We could not hear anything through the glass. No one said anything. And with only a pause in the din of the visiting area, life returned to its irrational and disconcerted illness. We never did get a drink of water.

At 5 p.m. that afternoon I preached on hospitality and overcoming barrenness, especially among old men and women. One of the greatest texts among radical disciples who do not believe in the American Empire or that the Emperor wears clothes is Genesis 18. Abraham offers welcome and shares a meal with three strangers. The ancestors tell us "as soon as Abraham saw the three folk approaching, he ran out to meet them. 'Please do not pass by my home without stopping; I am here to serve

you. Let me bring some water for you to wash your feet; you can rest here beneath this tree. I will also bring a bit of food; it will give you strength to continue your journey. You have honored me by coming to my home, so let me serve you.' 'Thank you; we accept,' they replied." This is almost verbatim what we had said to Bard when he offered to get us each a cup of cold water. Funny, odd really, isn't it: how the living Word keeps living in such holy places as the psychiatric units of public hospitals.

A couple of weeks later Angie, Franklin and I left the Open Door Community at 6:30 a.m. to go to worship and eat breakfast at Blood and Fire. We found our place in a pew and listened to the leader call for folk to come forward to give a testimony or sing a song. Suddenly, there was Bard before us. He talked about a Ray Charles song, and it made no sense to me. Then, he shared that this was a very special day for him. His former sweetheart from

(continued on next page)



Ghetto

ETCHING BY TOM LEWIS-BORBELY

folk, and neighbors, were set free from the city jail or the now infamous Fulton County Jail. I do not remember how long Bard and John worked together, but it was a long time, particularly in terms of street time.

Somewhere along the line, during his childhood and in the center of his family life, Bard was deeply wounded. The wound has grown over the years. While we were still serving grits in the Butler Street CME basement, I would often see Bard on his way to a day clinic run by Grady Hospital. Sometimes we would chat and remember our shared past; sometimes he would look past me and not know my name. Other times he was filled with fear and felt that the police and spiritual powers in the sky were after him. When the boot fell at the CME Church, I lost contact with Bard.

In mid-March Angelo got out of jail in Orlando and got back to the Atlanta streets in no time, or maybe it was postmodern time. Angelo is a friend who spends his life in three

reading her Bible when we arrived. She said that since we were pastors, we did not have to pass through if we had no gun, knives, or fingernail clippers. We said we did not; she let us pass. On the other side of the detector, we joined hands with her, made a circle, and had a prayer for liberation, the mentally ill and a thanksgiving for the power of the Word. Then she let us inside the Psychiatric Unit.

The visiting area is a locked room within a locked room. There is glass on all sides so lots of light spills into the room like white sheets tumbling down the laundry chute. We joined a number of other visitors and residents as we entered the room. Angelo greeted us with bear hugs and a face full of smiles. He wanted to know about Murphy immediately. I told him she was great and that this day is her birthday. "I am preaching this afternoon, and my sermon title is 'Don't Laugh! Murphy is Going to Have a Baby.'" Angelo was upset at first. Then. . . And then. . . There



## Welcome to the Spotlight

- Ray Wetzel -

This month, this little light shines on our good friend Ray Wetzel. Ray is retired from the Air Force and is currently an elder at Oakhurst Presbyterian Church. About five years ago, he came to us by way of reading *Hospitality*. When asked what he liked best about rising up at 3:15 a.m. and driving to the Open Door to cook grits and eggs, his reply was: "Besides the fact that it has become a habit, I have come to believe that it is very

important, especially for those that genuinely need a hot breakfast. Doing this act has become a very important part of my spiritual journey and, best of all, it gives me satisfaction and makes me feel GOOD!"

Thanks, Ray, for your support and very wonderful friendship.

*Tonnie King is a Partner of the Open Door Community.*



Ray Wetzel getting ready to cook the grits for the Open Door Community's morning breakfast for the homeless.

("Street Wise," continued from previous page)

San Francisco, whom he hadn't seen in 20 years, was coming in to reunite with him that afternoon. After standing awhile before the lectern and with the mike in hand, he lost interest and sat back down.

We joined Bard and several other friends on the way from the worship space in the shelter to the dingy warehouse where a good breakfast awaited us. We sat in a small circle and told a few street stories. Then I turned to Bard, "Why in the world did those cops jump you at Grady?" I asked. "Oh," he replied, "I had washed the TV screen after they told me not to." Wow, I mused, I sure wish he had cleaned the TV and back seat of Tom T. Hall's limousine back in 1985.

*Ed Loring is a Partner at the Open Door Community.*

## An Uneasy Peace

by Chuck Campbell

*(Chuck Campbell is Assistant Professor of Homiletics at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia. He and Stan Saunders are authors of an upcoming book about their adventures with the Open Door Community on the streets of Atlanta. The book, The Word on the Street: Performing the Scriptures in the Urban Context, has just been published by Eerdmans.)*

My friend and colleague, Stan Saunders, who teaches New Testament at Columbia Seminary, regularly reminds me of the importance of physical location in the interpretation of Scripture. *Where* we read Scripture, Stan argues, shapes the way we interpret Scripture. Reading a biblical text in a seminary classroom or a pastor's study is a very different exercise from reading Scripture in a night shelter, or in a jail cell, or in the Grady pharmacy waiting room. Time and again, students in our classes have confirmed Stan's insights. Old familiar texts suddenly take on new life when they are read on the streets of Atlanta outside the seminary classroom. *Where* we read shapes what we read.

Recently I have discovered that the same thing is true of worship. Where we worship shapes the meaning of our worship. This discovery

has come on Wednesday mornings, when those of us who serve the breakfast at the Open Door go outside after the meal to worship with the men and women who gather in the front yard. Out in the yard, as a witness to the city, we pray together, sing together, and read Scripture together. There are testimonies and solos and prayer requests. The worship has become a rich and important time for many of us. Indeed, some of the homeless folks regularly ask as they come in for breakfast, "Are we having service today?"

At the end of each service, we pass the peace—a ritual in which I have participated in many congregations. In some ways, our ritual on Wednesday mornings is similar to what happens in those congregations. Out in the yard the passing of the peace is a time of greeting and hugging; it is occasionally a time when reconciliation replaces conflict; and it is a time when many of us experience the presence of Jesus Christ in our midst.

On Wednesday mornings, however, there is another dimension to this "peace" that makes it very different from what I have experienced in other places. There is a difference that makes this peace an uneasy peace. As we share the peace of Christ at the end of our front-yard service, some of us are on our way back into the house at 910, but others must remain outside in the front yard. At the end of our worship each week, we ritually enact the continuing injustice of homelessness in the world. Breakfast has been served, and showers and lunch are ahead. But, still, some of us go back inside, while others remain outside. It is an odd and uncomfortable way to conclude our worship.

In this space, the passing of the peace has taken on new meaning for me. I have been reminded that the peace we pass is God's Shalom, which includes justice as well as peace. When I share the peace of Christ with a homeless person in the front yard at 910, I cannot be satisfied with the individual or spiritual dimensions of that peace. In addition, I am challenged to recommit myself to work for the justice that will make that peace a social reality for homeless people. And when a homeless person says "peace of Christ" to me, I am reminded that this "peace" is not simply shared for my personal comfort, but rather is good news that seeks to set me free from my own complicity with the powers and principalities that force people to live on the streets.

In the front yard of the Open Door, the passing of the peace becomes the gift and the call of Shalom—of peace with justice. And for those of us who return inside, that peace is always an uneasy peace, which calls us to more faithful discipleship along the way of Jesus.

## Memorial Day Hamburger Feast

Memorial Day is our largest meal of the year--most soup kitchens are closed. We need to be prepared with...

**320 pounds of ground beef,  
hamburger buns,  
cabbage for cole slaw, and  
baked beans.**

**We are grateful for your help as we  
welcome our hungry friends.**



## Wasps Too Can Love

by Ed Loring

for Louise Cate

Wasps too can love  
Not like the beautiful bees  
Brown and yellow from the hollow  
Tree beyond your lawn  
who fondle fragile flowers  
and drip honey in their homes.

Wasps too can love  
Oh, not like big black buzzing  
Bumble bees biting  
Circling the apple trees in innocence.  
Ready but unsure.

Wasps too can love  
Not like the yellow-jacket  
up and ready to fly and scam  
needling your food and busy  
as a Black Republican just off  
Welfare with 2 part-time jobs  
And a letter from Trent Lott.

Wasps too can love  
Not like the dirt-dauber  
Never homeless where mud  
Oozes like a sore on a hungry child's skin  
And ever ready under the picnic table  
To build a Habitat House and  
prove she is reliable for a mortgage.

Wasps too can love  
Not like a Hornet  
Mad as Amos  
Fast as Elijah on the way to Jezreel.  
Attics of cedar, vermillion  
Hidden in the private hedge.  
Nature's gated community?

Wasps too can love  
Slowly,  
In the confusing October sun  
Meandering below the ceiling  
Then swirling like the whirlwind  
lights beside my bed.  
Stinger poised, wings flutter  
he winks and drones,  
"I love you."

## To my sisters and brothers of the Open Door,

...My first awareness of the work of the Open Door came as a result of the youth group in our church. The YOU, Youth of Unity, began to collect money on Super Bowl Sunday as part of the Souper Bowl experience. On these Sundays the youth would wander around the church with soup pots, buckets and sometimes bowls requesting that the members of the congregation to remember those who were hungry and less fortunate than they. The youth group then would designate where the money they collected would go. Whether it was one of the youth or one of their sponsors I don't know, but somehow the Open Door was a recipient of at least a part of these funds. As a result of this gift our church began receiving copies of *Hospitality*. Being a busy minister I often did little more than glance at each issue as it came across my desk. God certainly had other plans for me and during the Lenten season about 4 years ago the ABLE clergy caucus invited a variety of individuals to come and address us regarding issues of poverty, homelessness and particularly social justice. It was during this series of presentations that I first had the opportunity to meet [Open Door Partners] Murphy and Elizabeth. I recall the incredible passion and conviction they expressed, and when their time was over it was difficult for them to stop. God had planted a seed.

When *Hospitality* next crossed my desk, I began to look at it a little more closely. Our church's involvement with ABLE became more of a passion for me. My personal involvement with ABLE was what provided life for me in ministry. But ABLE was not enough. Somehow pulpit ministry had become sterile. I know that the sense of sterility was in me, and not the ministry, but nevertheless that is how I felt. All the while *Hospitality* kept coming. Each time it came, I would read a little more of it. Finally the day came where I was reading the section about volunteers needed. Help was needed in the kitchen on Fridays. Friday was my day off so that seemed perfect, except I usually had an early morning appointment which meant it would probably be around 10:30 or 11:00 before Linda and I could get there. When we came to talk to then Open Door Volunteer Coordinator Brenda, she was quick to point out there was a Friday afternoon ministry that was available which would allow us to run all of our errands and still play an active part in the ministry

and outreach of the Open Door. So with a sense of great satisfaction in our souls we began venturing to 910 Ponce on Friday afternoons to do our part in assisting the homeless of Atlanta.

It wasn't long before it became clear that the work was not about assisting the homeless, but it was about touching the presence of God in forms and expressions I formerly had refused to acknowledge. I sensed there was something powerfully different about the relationship between the Open Door Community and those they served, something that was radically different from the social agencies I had half-heartedly supported over the years. That difference became clear to me when I read *Christ Comes in a Stranger's Guise* [the history of the Open Door Community]. What I realized was this was not a slogan or a catch phrase for community members to rally around, it was rather a foundational principal on which their ministry and in fact their very lives were founded. Over my years in ministry I had often spoken of beholding Christ in others, but now I began to experience what that truly meant.

Those who are homeless were not fed because they were hungry; they were fed because as they stood there, there was a holy presence disguised as a homeless person and the food was part of the experience of communion that we are all called to experience. On the occasions Linda and I were able to join with the community in a meal I experienced the power of the Eucharist in a way I had never known. As we joined on occasion in serving the meals to our homeless brothers and sisters it was as if we were sharing in much the same way Jesus shared in the event we call the Last Supper.

As we worked in the shower ministry our view quickly changed from one in which we provided clean clothes and showers for the dirty homeless to one like the experience of baptism. As with all mystical experiences it is difficult to express in words how this affected us and the impact it had on us. We came to know many of our brothers and sisters who came for clothes and showers. They influenced our lives in ways it is impossible to express. For myself I know I am different and that difference is a result of being touched by Christ who came to me in the guise of a person from the street.

On June 13th I left pulpit ministry and sought to discover where the Spirit of God would next lead me in life. On many occasions I was asked, "Now that you are no longer doing Sunday services, where are you worshipping?" My response was always the same. I am worshipping at the Open Door. The reply usually was, do they have services there? To which I would reply, yes, but it is not the service that I am talking about. Worship for me is honoring and serving the presence of God. For me service became worship. In my homeless brothers and sisters I experienced that Holy Presence called the Christ. My dear brothers and sisters of the Open Door Community, thank you for allowing me for a brief time to be an active part of a community that lives its life based on the truth that "as you have done it to the least of them you have done it unto me ..."

In the Oneness of the Holy Spirit,

Albert Wingate  
Virginia Beach, VA

## The New Slave Labor System

The 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution abolished slavery everywhere except in prisons. In the 1970s Chief Justice Warren Burger called for turning prisons into "factories with fences."

After slavery was abolished, southern states instituted "convict leasing" in which prisoners, nearly all Black, were turned over to private employers who could treat them like slaves. The practice was banned in the 1930s, but was replaced by state-run chain gangs.

A survey of prison industry leaders found that 39% said that profit was the most important issue of prison labor, while only 12% cited rehabilitation.

In the world of for-profit prisons, recidivism simply means repeat business. The more people they can get locked up, the longer they can keep them locked up, and the worse their conditions of confinement, the more money the prison owners and managers make.

A Department of Justice publication makes it

clear: "Inmates represent a readily available and dependable source of entry-level labor that is a cost-effective alternative to work forces found in Mexico, the Caribbean Basin, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific Rim countries."

U.S. prisoners are being paid as little as 11 cents per hour—in some cases no wages at all—to manufacture goods for corporations such as McDonald's, TWA, and Starbucks. These same multinational corporations, also including General Electric, American Express, AT&T, Sprint, MCI, and Chevron earn an estimated \$40 billion a year from prison labor in the United States.

Meanwhile, many rural and suburban communities around the U.S. are welcoming the construction of new prisons as their best hope for employment and economic growth.

(Reprinted from the January/February 2000 Issue of "Freedomways," the newsletter of the Prison & Jail Project in Americus, GA)



**Responses to "Soul Stealers,"  
Hospitality, February 2000**

Dear Friends at the Open Door,

In the cover story in a recent issue of *Hospitality* ["The Soul Stealers," February 2000], the writer described the stresses and humiliations visited upon men as they are inducted into the prison system. Whatever one's philosophy of crime and punishment, I am certain most physicians would agree that at least one thing was very wrong with the picture painted by this writer.

We read that prisoners are herded into a common shower area and made to shave their heads using the same disposable razor. Sharing razors in a prison environment is not safe and should be abandoned immediately.

Why? Because HIV, Hepatitis B, and Hepatitis C are all blood-borne viruses. Hepatitis in particular is readily spread from person to person through small cuts or shaving nicks. Across the country, prison systems are starting to discover that they are knee-deep in Hepatitis C epidemics. Even more often than its cousin Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C leads to serious or fatal liver damage including cirrhosis and cancer.

In a prison environment, rates of infection with all these viruses are already higher than normal, so the potential for spread is heightened. Prison officials who enjoy lawsuits, the prospect of astronomical prisoner healthcare costs, and the specter of these diseases spreading further into the general population as prisoners are released back into the community should continue with business as usual.

Otherwise, they should make certain that everyone's got his own razor and toothbrush.

Sincerely,

Alice Alexander  
Atlanta, GA

(Editor's note: Alice Alexander, a copy editor for "Hospitality," is also Editor of the "TB Monitor," and writes about infectious diseases.)

Dear Mr. Galovic:

Your "Soul Stealers" article in the February [2000] *Hospitality* stole my heart. I have made about 50 reproductions (hope you don't mind) for distribution to caring Christian friends. I want them to live (as I do every week [in the D.C. jail]) the real, true life of a brother/sister locked down in animal cages. I want them to feel the vileness, the sin of incarceration. I want them to view the pain on

Jesus' face at the evil inflicted on His wayward children and at the abject indifference of His self-righteous children. "Soul Stealers" serves to accomplish these aims better than anything I've seen so far. Thank you so much and please thank the very, very courageous author.

In Christ,

Brother Louis F. Schwartz  
Chevy Chase, MD

Dear *Hospitality*:

After reading your article in the February 2000 issue of *Hospitality* on "The Soul Stealers," I would like to say thank you to the writer of truth. Thank you for the courage to say the truth. May your reflections open the eyes and hearts of all the enemies. On Judgment Day the Creator will bless you for doing the correct thing. You have educated the ignorant. Now we must trust that the truth will do its work of enlightenment; because of you the world is brighter. Together we can and we will move the darkness. Congratulations. Keep up the good work. Keep on talking and telling the truth.

Se Oui Lu Ta Lone Wolf

Dear Murphy, Ed, Elizabeth, Adolphus and other friends at the Open Door,

I really enjoyed the issue of *Hospitality* that had "The Soul Stealers" as the lead article [February 2000]. This is something I will share with the students at Connecticut College, where I am part-time Protestant Chaplain.

Enclosed is a copy of an article on St. Francis House that appeared in *The New London Day* on December 25! I thought you might appreciate the reporter's allusion to "an open door" in the headline!

We're doing well. Almost through a year of working on this.

Love to all,

Sincerely,

Fr. Emmett Jarrett  
Saint Francis House  
New London, CT

**Responses to "Remembering  
Mama," Hospitality, March 2000,  
by Murphy Davis**

Dear Murphy,

What a lovely tribute to Mary Bailey. She was such a sweet and kind person - "beautiful inside and out." I'm sending *Hospitality* on to my brother, Bruce Boney. He remem-

bers you as a little girl visiting in Greensboro.

You do wonderful work with the Presbyterian Ministry and at the Open Door. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Janet Boney Webb  
Snellville, GA



Dear Murphy,

The article you wrote for *Hospitality* that came last week was delightful. It brought back such good memories of your mother. We didn't see each other very often, but we always enjoyed each other's company, found lots to talk about and share ... Thank you for such fun remembering your very special mother.

The Open Door does a great job. I'm always impressed when I read about it ...

With love,

Anne Rose  
Richmond, VA

Dear Murphy,

Just read that beautiful tribute to your mother! She was a wonderful woman - except when she made me eat Spam. So many good childhood memories.

Sue Pierce Holland  
Wilson, NC

Dear Murphy,

I sat down at my table with two weeks worth of mail, promising myself to "get through it" quickly. I picked up *Hospitality* which I always enjoy reading, thinking I'd only take a quick glimpse through it. I loved your article about your wonderful mother! My mom is still alive and possesses many of the same positive qualities you mentioned about your mom. I was especially impressed and laughed

as you described your mother's take charge attitude and ability to celebrate right to the end. What a way to live and die!

Thank you for this moment to reflect on life and death even amid my mundane bill paying activities!

Peace and joy,

Rachel Yoder  
Fort Wayne, IN

Dear Murphy:

That was a wonderful article about your mother in the recent issue of *Hospitality*. She's had a lot of influence on many, many people ...

Patrick M. Williams  
Jacksonville, FL

**Other Letters**

Dear Ed,

More than you know, I appreciate the personal and loving invitation to be a part of the Open Door family. Your identification with the poor, oppressed and unwanted souls is God in our midst!

Murphy's story illustrated by Leo was a masterpiece of journalism [*Hospitality*, January 2000, p. 1]. Love *Hospitality* cover to cover.

Hugh Carter  
Gulf Breeze, FL

Dear Residents and Volunteers,

I wanted to thank all of you for giving me a priceless and profound experience over my break. Your warmth, determination, kindness, and experiences have inspired me more than I can express. I think about all of you every day. You are all incredible in your different experiences and ideas. Each and every one of you showed me the beauty of the connections between God's fellow creatures. Every day at the Open Door I woke up knowing I was going to spend the day among people who had the power to teach me a much larger definition of family. I am so grateful for the memories I have and the lessons I learned. I hope I can take this awakening experience and continue to teach myself and others the message of universal love and understanding. Thank you again for the laughter, inspiration, and understanding you gave me. Peace be with you.

Love,

Lauren Lowe (Oasis #2)  
Nashville, TN



**WE ARE OPEN. . .**

Monday through Saturday: telephones are answered from 9:00am until noon, from 2:00 until 6:00pm. The building is open from 9:00am until 8:30pm those days (Both phone and door are not answered during our noon prayers and lunch break from 12:30 until 2:00). Please call in advance if you need to arrange to come at other times. **On Sunday we are open from 7:30am until noon.** Sunday afternoon our door is answered until 5:00pm.

\* \* \*

**OUR MINISTRY. . .**

SOUP KITCHEN: Wednesday-Saturday, 11 am - 12 noon  
 SUNDAY BREAKFAST: Sunday morning 7:30 am  
 WEEKDAY BREAKFAST: Monday-Wednesday, 6:45 am  
 SHOWERS & CHANGE OF CLOTHES: Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, 9 am (Be sure to call; schedule varies)  
 USE OF PHONE: Monday-Tuesday, 6:45 am-7:45 am, Wednesday-Saturday, 9 am-noon  
 HARRIET TUBMAN FREE MEDICAL CLINIC: Thursdays 7:30pm.  
 CLARIFICATION MEETINGS: Selected Tuesdays, 7:30-9pm.  
 WEEKEND RETREATS: Four times each year (for our household and volunteers/supporters), next retreat is our Spring Retreat May 5 - 7.

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

If you have found Hospitality helpful and would like to know more about the Open Door Community, please fill out, clip and send this coupon to The Open Door Community \* 910 Ponce de Leon Ave., NE \* Atlanta, GA 30306-4212.

\_\_\_\_ Please ADD to the Hospitality mailing list.

\_\_\_\_ Please accept my tax deductible donation to the Open Door Community.

\_\_\_\_ I'm interested in volunteering. Please give me more information.

\_\_\_\_ I would like to explore a six to twelve-month commitment as a Resident Volunteer at the Open Door. Please send more information.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ St \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ + \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

**Open Door Community Worship**

*We gather for worship and Eucharist on Sunday evenings followed by supper together.*

*Please join us!*

May 5 - 7	Community Spring Retreat at Dayspring Farm No Worship at 910
May 14	5 p.m. Worship at 910; Nelia and Calvin Kimbrough, leading worship
May 21	5 p.m. Worship at 910; Nelia and Calvin Kimbrough, leading worship
May 28	5 p.m. Worship at 910; Kristen Barger, preaching

**Are You Moving?**

Bulk rate mail is not forwarded by the U.S. Postal Service. Send Hospitality, 910 Ponce de Leon Ave., NE, Atlanta, GA, 30306-4212, your new mailing address as soon as you know it. Please enclose the mailing label from your most recent issue.

*Thank you!*

**Clarification Meetings at the Open Door**

Plan to join us on selected Tuesday evenings for presentations and discussions of topics relevant to the justice struggle. Call us for dates and times.

**Volunteer Needs**

Soup Kitchen servers (9 am - 12:30 pm) on Fridays  
 Shower helpers (from 9 am - 11 am) on Wednesday - Friday  
 Hardwick Trip drivers  
 Sunday - Wednesday (6 am - 9 am) Morning Breakfast servers

If you would like more information about volunteering, contact Dick Rustay at 404-874-9652.

**Medical Supplies (for our Thursday Evening Harriet Tubman Free Medical Clinic)**

aspirin  
 Tylenol  
 bandages  
 antibiotic cream or ointment  
 hydrogen peroxide  
 isopropyl alcohol

**Can you help with the medicine cabinet?**

**Open Door Community Needs**

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

Meat for the soup in our Soup Kitchen  
 Sandwiches  
 Table Lamps  
 Floor Lamps  
 Chest of Drawers  
 Small Drop-leaf Table  
 Vacuum Cleaners  
 Twin Beds

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

From 11am til 1:30pm, Monday through Saturday, our attention is focused on serving the soup kitchen and household lunch. As much as we appreciate

your coming, this is a difficult time for us to receive donations. When you can come before 11 or after 1:30, it would be helpful. **THANK YOU!**