

# HOSPITALITY

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## Relating to The Poor

by Ty Brown

One of the growing concerns in my life since coming to the Open Door has been the question: How can I best relate to the poor? For a middle-class person, it is almost a cliché to wail at the economic and social walls which separate rich and poor. Those walls are very real, however, and the grace we receive at places like the Open Door is the opportunity to experience this dividing line directly, without allowing television or newspapers to define this experience for us. This direct experience allows us to struggle with ways to overcome those barriers and slowly dismantle the walls.

It is out of this struggle that I have learned that many of the ways in which I wanted to help the poor are in fact temptations to be overcome, false solutions which primarily serve my own need rather than the needs of others.

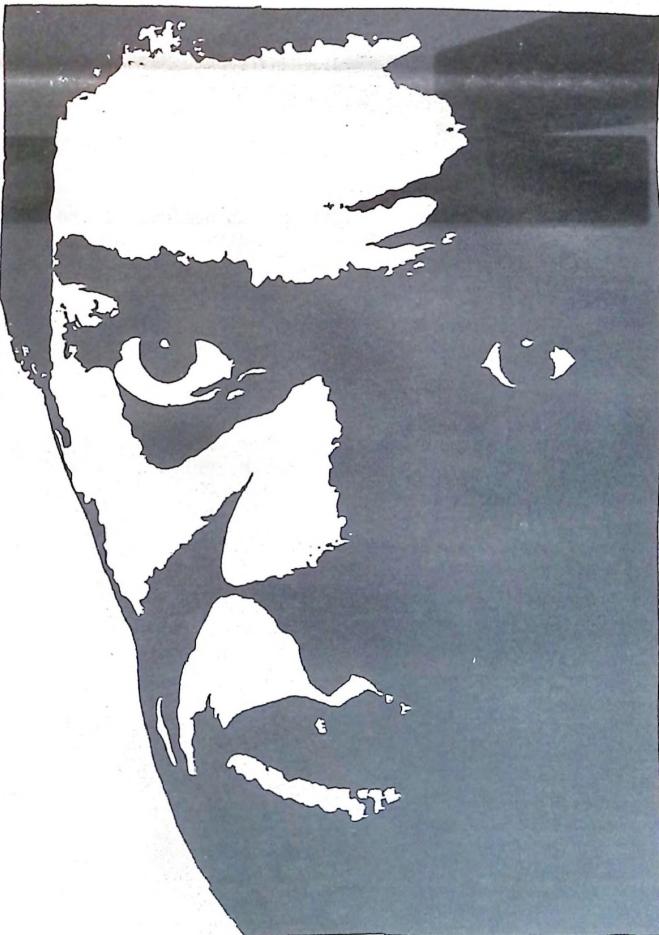
In rereading the discussion of the temptations of Jesus in the desert (Luke 4:1-15) presented in Parker Palmer's *The Active Life: A Spirituality of Work, Creativity and Caring* (to be released this Spring by Harper and Row), I realized that Jesus' struggle in the desert in many ways mirrors my own struggles here.

Palmer's discussion concerns the way these temptations of Jesus creep into everyone's life and I began to see how this is particularly true with those who are called to serve others in need. Palmer uses Henri Nouwen's terms for each of the temptations and I find these helpful. Nouwen calls them the temptations to be relevant, powerful and spectacular. I want to consider all of these but find the temptation to be powerful the most telling in my own life and will focus on this demon last of all.

Jesus' first temptation is the challenge to turn the stone into bread, thus satisfying his hunger and ending his fast. Nouwen terms this the temptation to be relevant because it seems to be a direct and immediate solution to a pressing problem: hunger. Jesus refuses the challenge, however, by reminding us that people do not live on bread alone. In other words, there are deeper, more complex issues to be faced and simply satisfying his hunger would leave the most important work undone. Hunger is merely a sign that something of much broader consequence is going on.

Similarly, those of us who work to feed the hungry often fall victim to this temptation to be relevant, or to put it more precisely, we often seek a quick-fix solution to hunger without facing some of the far more disturbing realities which are hunger's causes. This is not to say that we should stop feeding hungry people, for Jesus' fast was voluntary, not forced on him by economic oppression, and he personally fed multitudes. But rather, we must look beneath the external signs of hunger to confront the deeper and more painful realities which give rise to such suffering. This confrontation can be difficult for us because we soon see that we are all implicated who in any way help create and maintain this economic and social system which inherently causes the suffering of many for the pleasures of a few. It is painful because

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there are no quick fix solutions and we must shatter the illusion that the suffering of the poor is an unfortunate accident easily remedied by a few crumbs from the master's table. The desert journey we are called to undertake leads us inevitably towards facing, both within ourselves and within the society whose benefits we enjoy, the true progenitors of poverty: the twin sins of complacency and greed.

The third temptation Jesus faces and the second one I'd like to consider is the temptation to be spectacular, to throw himself off the top of the Temple without so much as stubbing his toe. As far as I can tell, the only good this act would do is to prove to his detractors that Jesus is in fact the Chosen One. Jesus refuses this temptation, declining to put God to the test. There are certainly times later on when Jesus does some spectacular things, but with reasons other than building up his own image.

Most of us are faced with the desire to be spectacular, to prove that we are, if not the Chosen One, at least someone special, worthy of attention and love. Working with homeless people often can provide us this opportunity. For one thing, there are many people who stand amazed at someone's ability to live voluntarily at a place like the Open Door. I cringe whenever someone tells me how "noble" it is that I work here at the Open Door (If only I could explain how little we sacrifice to come here compared to the rewards we reap!). Partly, I cringe because I'm fighting the temptation of believing such haughty acclamations about myself which I know to be untrue and unearned.

Also, we sometimes become tempted to behave in such ways that are designed to enhance our image among those whom we serve. In various and often subtle ways we try to make ourselves seem more lovable or more powerful to those around us. It's almost as if we desire to build a sort of fan club: How many homeless people know my name? How many poor people talk about how great I am?

We all want people to like us, to believe we are special, but when this becomes the motive for our actions we are no longer serving the poor but using them to enhance our self-esteem.

In addition, this tendency can hinder our ability to treat all people equally. For if we are motivated by the desire to make people like us or to be grateful to us then we are in danger of ignoring, rejecting or even despising those who do not respond to us favorably. The harsh reality is that many homeless people are angry and cynical (for many valid reasons). We must be prepared to relate to those who dislike us or are angry with us or ungrateful in as loving a manner as to those who praise us and find us spectacular.

The central temptation in the story and in my own life is the temptation for power. The devil offers Jesus all the power and glory of the kingdoms of the earth if only Jesus will reject God and worship the Evil One. This makes it plain that to seek personal power is to turn one's back to God. Nevertheless, one of the strongest temptations while working with oppressed people is the quest for personal power.

What I mean by power is the ability to control people and events around us, to make them conform to our will. For many people this desire does not stem from selfish or evil motives, but from a longing to help others, to make things better. Despite these motivations, when we seek to amass power for ourselves, maintaining and building that power quickly become the



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Murphy Davis--Southern Prison Ministry  
Director  
Ed Loring--Correspondence & Resident Volunteer  
Co-ordinator  
Carol Schlicksup--Hardwick Prison Trip  
Dick Rustay--Volunteer Co-ordinator

\*\*\*\*\*  
Newspaper:  
Editorial Staff--Ruth Allison, Murphy Davis,  
Elizabeth Dede, Ed Loring  
Layout--Ruth Allison  
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If the Church was in a sacred spelling bee tomorrow, it would do fine with the word "reorganization". . . and with the word "hospitality" it would be out of the contest.

--Joe Gilmore, from Kirkridge "Readings and Intentions", 1989

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priority. "If only I had the power to make things better," quickly degenerates into, "If only I had more power!"

The dynamic I've seen all too often is that of folks seeking power to help others only to end up using those others to gain power for themselves. The desire to change the world for the betterment of all can often mask a deeper desire to recreate the world in one's own image. And as we are mortal and flawed, this is a dangerous thing indeed.

Those of us who work with the poor must be extremely careful because, whether we realize it or not, as soon as we step into the role of helping the poor we are also stepping into a position of power over the poor. We have what the poor need, whether it be soup, showers, or political influence. And because we control that which poor people must have, we have a certain amount of control over poor people themselves. In truth, we are less different from politicians and corporate executives than we want to believe and this puts us in a position requiring great discernment.

If we have this control over poor people and we think we know what's best for them, the temptation becomes very great indeed to exert our influence to make poor people do what we think they should be doing. Further, we decide that, since we know what's best for poor people, we must enhance our own power any way we can, including manipulating and using those whom we started out wanting to serve. From this point on, the goal is to amass power and influence and the original motivations, however magnanimous, are lost.

The results are tragic and insulting to poor people. Just recently I've witnessed poor people manipulated to advance the power and platform of a particular organization only to be discarded when their value as props on the stage of politics ended. In fact, the very folks who claimed to be in coalition with these poor people called them to action while ignoring their most basic needs, even placing their very lives in danger, and all the while denying the homeless people's rights to participate in the decision-making process. This kind of betrayal of the poor is calculated, cruel and, unfortunately, common.

I'm particularly sensitive to this temptation to be powerful because it is such an influence on my own life. Not a day goes by when I do not see the suffering and anger around me and imagine myself leading a mass uprising of the people. At the point of uprising, however, the revolutionary fantasy flounders, for, in sad and honest truth, I don't know where to lead them.

But it is where fantasies fade that reality begins, and at the point where I acknowledge my own ignorance I begin to recognize my own limits and accept my own powerlessness.

Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit out into the desert to taste of the suffering he would experience for the rest of his mortal life. He was shown by the forces of darkness some tempting ways to avoid such suffering and live a good and easy life. He rejected such temptations, desiring instead to enter into suffering even as we suffer, even to the cross.

The devil left only to return at the appointed time, which in my opinion, is every day. And every day we must enter the desert to strip ourselves of numbing illusions and comfortable complacency. The desert, for me, is the poverty that surrounds us, and by sharing in the suffering of the poor and the despair of the homeless we may truly experience the relevant, powerful and spectacular grace of God.

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## STREET ART

When Lawrence McGuire was asked to draw scenes of street life for *Hospitality*, he chose to graphically illustrate how quickly oppression can become internalized. These two pictures show a homeless person who is delighted with the cast-offs of the affluent.

Mr. McGuire has lived on the streets for more than a year.



## Invisibility - or Blindness?

by Elizabeth Dede

On Monday, October 16, we finished our worship in Woodruff Park at 5:30pm, beginning the second night of the Festival of Shelters. Folk from the Open Door went home, and the people who work in the office buildings downtown went home, leaving our little group and about forty of our friends who have no homes to go to sitting in the park. I sat on a bench and looked at all the people who had no homes, actually only a tiny percentage of the people in Atlanta who are homeless, and wondered, "How can this be? How can the people who work downtown--take their lunch breaks in the park and gaze from their windows to the park below--how can they look at this large number of people everyday who are on the utter fringes of existence, living in a city park--how can they see this everyday and fail to be appalled? Why do they silently go home? Why don't they come down from their office buildings crying and shouting about the injustices of the world?" Briefly the thought fluttered through my mind, "The homeless are invisible. You cannot see them when you walk through the park. You cannot see them sitting on the benches when you leave work to go home at five o'clock. You cannot see them asleep sitting up when you take your lunch break. The homeless are invisible." But I remembered seeing the homeless in Boston five years ago, and I remembered crossing to the other side of the street so that I could pretend that they were invisible.

The next morning at 11:30 we showed up at the entrance to Underground Atlanta with signs and leaflets, asking the city to make good on its promise of a new park called the Al Smith Park to replace Plaza Park which was destroyed to construct the plaza for Underground Atlanta. I had a stack of leaflets in my hands, and I cheerfully greeted people on their lunch breaks, asking if they'd like a leaflet. Now, I know that I wasn't invisible. Folks from the Open Door had met us in Woodruff Park. They said hello to me; they even gave me a hug; they felt me. They didn't say anything in shock and horror about my disappearance. Yet, suddenly I felt invisible. People in business suits and spiky heeled shoes walked briskly past me. They didn't answer my good morning; they didn't shake their heads; they didn't look at me; they didn't say, "No. Go away." They just passed me by, implying that they did not see me. I almost wanted to chase after one yelling, "Hey! What's wrong? Am I invisible?"



Being ignored during the Festival of Shelters!

The next evening Murphy led the worship in Woodruff Park. She read from Luke 4, where Jesus reads from the scripture, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because God has chosen me to bring good news to the poor. God has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed and announce that the time has come when the Lord will save the people."

I heard the words, "recovery of sight to the blind," and then I knew that the phenomenon I had struggled with during the past couple of days was not invisibility--those without homes who live in Woodruff Park, and those who challenge the system that allows Woodruff Park to be the home for so many people, are not invisible; instead, it was widespread blindness among those who would wish that the homeless and the challengers were invisible that I observed.

And then I understood how the homeless can live in a park right under the noses of the executives who work in the Trust Company Bank building and not bring shame upon the executives. Then I understood how those same executives on their lunch breaks could walk blindly right past a person who is talking to them. Those who work in the tall buildings downtown are suffering from blindness. And I was sad for the business executives when I thought of all the beauty in the world blind people miss. I also knew why they didn't cry out against the injustices that are so visible in our city: blind people cannot see ugliness either.

On Tuesday evening Ed Weir led our Bible Study in Woodruff Park, where the community was joined by many of our homeless friends. What a privilege it was to hear them talk about the injustice and ugliness that they know so well. Most spoke of the lack of good work that forced them onto the streets. One shared the fear that he lives with every night--his inability to sleep because he is afraid that he will be attacked. He told of witnessing fights and stabbings. Another told of the joy he feels in having a job for a whole year and being able to rent a room. Someone spoke up and asked how much he makes after a year on the job. His answer was the minimum wage--\$3.35 an hour. Everybody agreed that this was a crime and his employer should be forced to raise his hourly pay or go to jail. Some shared their sense of being trapped because they lacked an education. One eloquent young man confessed that he could not read. But they all agreed that keeping their sense of dignity was most important in the struggle. Certainly we all experienced great dignity in these folk as we sat and listened and were taught by them.

When we walk past the homeless we are blind to their dignity, to their worth, to their suffering, to their fears, to their victimization, to their humanity. And in our blindness we allow the crime of homelessness to continue.

But there is hope for our world because Jesus has already come to bring recovery of sight to the blind. And we know that Jesus does make the blind see again. Blind Bartimaeus is a story that we are familiar with, and as Murphy reminded us in the August issue of *Hospitality*, it is folks like Bartimaeus--poor beggars who cry out in faith to be healed--who receive Jesus' attention. All of us, from the executives in the tall buildings downtown to the homeless who sleep in cardboard boxes, must acknowledge our blindness, must want to see the injustice and ugliness. Then we will cry out for sight, and Jesus will heal us.

And I believe that as healed people, full of God's grace and mercy, we can sit down together, look at each other, see each other, know what our needs are, and take care of each other. No longer will we have reason to be blind because we will all walk in trust and dignity and we will each recognize the other's humanity.

## Like a Thief...

by Mark Harper

**Editor's note:** Mark Harper is a student at Duke Divinity School and is a friend and former Resident Volunteer of the Open Door Community. We are grateful for his contribution to Hospitality.

"You yourselves know very well that the Day of the Lord will come as a thief comes at night."

1 Thessalonians 5:2

"No one can break into a strong man's house and take away his belongings unless he first ties up the strong man; then he can plunder his house."

Mark 3:27

To not be disturbed. To be able to sleep with the assurance that Willie Horton won't break into our houses and that our children will never be exposed to his cousin selling drugs in our part of town (how powerful the effect when the "enemy" is named, though God's grace and our repentance be mocked). These were the feelings etched in the faces and launched, like missiles, from the voices of an angry group of upper-middle-class homeowners in the city where I live. They were outraged by a recent housing authority proposal to build a series of homes for low-income families in close proximity to their own upscale development. One man, standing in front of a beautifully landscaped home, seemed to sum up everyone's gripe. "I wouldn't have bought this house if I had known that those kinda people would be moving in next door," he said. A child with one arm around his father's leg was holding a sign which read, "DON'T BRING DRUGS AND CRIME INTO MY NEIGHBORHOOD." Instead, we might read between the lines, keep it at a distance and keep "those kinda people" behind bars or at least out of sight.



This cardboard box was kept in Woodruff Park during the Festival of Shelters. Some of our homeless sisters and brothers are not even lucky enough to have a rude cardboard box to keep the winter winds out.

I sat watching all this on the evening news, wanting, in shame, to indict their thinly veiled racism, their well-fed selfishness--to cast the first stone. But I could not. Their fears, however misdirected, were genuine; I would know them, too, when an hour or so later, my wife--so new and precious to me--would walk to the grocery store for a gallon of milk. The store is only several hundred yards away, but the short-cut is through a weedy lot strewn with broken bottles, burger wrappers, an empty box of Pampers, and--sad, wicked artifacts--used syringes. Three low-income apartment complexes border that lot. Thumping radios from cruising cars and groups of idle young African-American men sitting on the curbs and shouting to friends in the thick August heat create a chaotic gauntlet en route to the store.



The errand would only take a moment, she had said. "I can go by myself, really."

I find some comfort in the fact that it is still plenty light, but curse the dense summer foliage that blocks my view from the window of the path to the store. It occurs to me that in the winter, the path would be visible. Funny: In winter, I long for the greening of this small part of the world. For in those bleak, entrenched months, all is exposed and I grow weary and disgusted with the ugly lot and the poverty that surrounds it. Now, like a tree standing bare with roots frozen in the January ground, I wait for her to get back, to come inside, and to believe again that we are safe and secure.

I look at the stone which I had held in my hand only a short time ago and notice that it has grown to be very, very big. Big enough, maybe, to roll in front of our door? Or strong enough to withstand You, O Lord? You, who Houdinied us all and rolled back the tombstone, escaping the inescapable? Did I see you sitting on the curb? Or more to the point: Will I be awake to greet You, slipping in through the back door, silent and disturbing, like a thief in the night? □

# Losses

by William Moore

*Editor's note: Billy Neal Moore is a friend on death row in Georgia.*

The only voice heard in the classroom was our teacher's. He commanded respect and most of all the fifth graders were afraid of him, and we were quiet. Suddenly everyone's attention had been grabbed by the school bells ringing. All of the patterns: the short burst for fire drills; two long rings for lunchtime; and the one ring to begin or end the day. Quickly confusion spread over every face in the class. No one knew what was going on.

With the sound still ringing in our ears we just sat there. It ended with the voice of the principal. He said, "School is out for the day, and all school children are to go straight home." No explanation, just the order and the intercom clicked off.

Fifty pairs of young eyes were trained on our teacher, waiting for the word to leave. He stood, closed the book, and simply said, "Dismissed."

It wasn't 3:30, and I was wondering what was going on. Normally, it would be a nice feeling to leave school early, but something was wrong, really wrong. As we filed out into the hallway there was a strange quietness--only the sound of feet on the hard wood floors.



Many teachers were around the principal's office, and every female teacher in that area was crying, not aloud, just tears flowing down their faces. Once outside, I decided to take the long way home since I had some spare time. However, there was chaos everywhere! Adults crying, cursing and stopping their cars in the streets, calling to one another about this terrible thing.



Sue Corbin

I overheard one man say, "It was the work of those damn Russians. There'll be a war now for sure!" Who were the Russians? I didn't know who they were, but war, fighting, and killing I did know something about and that got my heart to beating in another gear... fearfully! I ran the rest of the way home because if there were to be a war, home was the best place for me, with my mama.

Busting through the front door of the house, out of breath, wide-eyed I looked for Mama. She was sitting on the sofa watching the TV. I mean she was glued to the picture, which at a glance looked like a parade to me. But she was also crying.

"Mama," I said, "What's wrong?" She pointed to the TV set, then said, "Somebody shot the president, and it's believed that President Kennedy is dead."

I had heard much talk from the women when Mama would fix their hair. How glad folks were that Kennedy was the president, and how they looked to him as the savior--the one in whom Blacks felt they could put their hopes!

Watching her cry brought a very strange feeling over me. I knew that she was a strong woman and this had to really hurt to cause her to be so broken hearted. During the following days she would just sit around with a lost look on her face. She'd go through the motions to get all the needed things done around the house.

The only other time I saw that lost-in-time look on Mama's face was after the death of Steve, our dog. I'm not saying that both lives are of the same importance, but their deaths caused the same results.

Steve was half German Shepherd and half Collie. He had the Collie face and color but the short hair of a Shepherd and the large size. We got him when my oldest sister was born, and she's eleven years older than me, and I must have been around eight years old when Steve was put to sleep. He got so old that it was a real effort on his part just to walk across the living room floor before he was exhausted. Steve was Mama's mainstay for us boys. All she would tell him when we were outside was, "Steve, keep the boys in the yard," and he would. It wasn't a fenced in yard, and everytime one of us would attempt to go outside the yard, Steve would come and stand in our path to block the way, or grab a hold of our pants leg and pull us back into the yard. Truly, he was a great watch dog, and his death was the only other time I saw my mother cry and look lost as she was now after the death of the president.



## NOCTURNAL JOURNAL by Jack Alderman

*Editor's note: Jack Alderman is a friend on death row in Georgia.*

The darkness is never real or complete, not when you exist in a world of barred windows and locked doors;  
 Just as the silence is never sufficient, not when the anguish echoes off of steel walls and concrete floors;  
 Privacy is relative where the cameras are in constant motion and the officers maintain an hourly patrol;  
 You struggle for escape, if only for a moment, you seek to loosen the dehumanizing chains that shackle the soul.

You think odd thoughts, scenes from a simpler, freer life-- things like chasing butterflies and climbing trees;  
 Then the weight of reality breaks the heart as the quest for sanity forces you to your knees;  
 You call to a God that died to demonstrate the truth of mercy, forgiveness, compassion, and care;  
 You pause to re-examine the situation and then you wonder if you didn't miss the point somewhere.

A breath of freshness enters the cell, in the distance a crow caws in obvious protest;  
 It seems society hid this prison in the midst of his home, degrading an ideal and marring a forest;  
 A sophisticated slaughterhouse operated for the convenience of a conscience grown numb;  
 Government-sanctioned death is an equal-opportunity offender-- the bright, the dim, the old, and the young.

Returning to the small patch of night sky you search for a peace of the moon or a familiar star;  
 From the interstate beyond the barriers comes the roar of a truck, the rumble of a car;  
 So close, yet so far away, I am reminded of Justice, her scales, and the fact she is blind;  
 I understand the theory as I witness the application, the dichotomy confuses the mind.

It's hard to respect the arguments that murder is a proven curative for crime and violence;  
 We discuss deterrence but it's merely an excuse to slake the thirst for old-fashioned vengeance;  
 The balance is achieved as two wrongs make it right, there is that collective sigh of relief;  
 There is the ever-widening circle of tragedy, more pain, more sorrow, more victims, more grief.

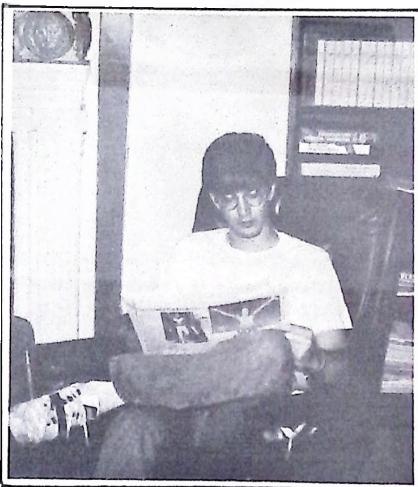
A bank of clouds drifts from the east, the lining doesn't appear to be silver nor is the number nine;  
 It's a challenge sustaining faith and supporting hope while your friends keep dying;  
 It's more involved than philosophical differences, theological abstractions, or opposing views;  
 It has something to do with someone named Jesus and something called the good news.

False dawns and doctrines, the peculiar gray light upon which another day will be built;  
 The juries will consider and condemn, the judges will sentence, and everyone will be spared guilt;  
 In a dusty field in north Georgia a grave will be dug and a burned body laid to rest;  
 And all of America will be safer, cleaner; and once again humanity will lose the contest.

There will be the mourners and the rejoicers and a host of those wavering in between;  
 They endorse with their indifference; certain life has no value, or so it would seem;  
 The sun will arrive soon and I will join the others, doing what I can to survive;  
 It's not as easy as you might imagine, this business of staying sane and staying alive.



## WELCOME!! TO OUR NEW RESIDENT VOLUNTEERS



Ty Brown

I came to the Open Door on April 15, from Nashville, Tennessee. I attended college for one year and my decision not to return (though influenced by financial considerations) marked my journey away from the mainstream.

My decision to come to the Open Door was based on my ever-growing desire to live simply among those whom our society oppresses and discards.

I hope my time here will be one of apprenticeship, of unlearning--a time to lay aside many of my cultural and social prejudices and to meet Christ in America's poor. And most of all, I want to fight a loving fight for justice.



Kim Rustay

Two years ago on New Year's Eve, my parents dragged me to the Open Door. I was scared to death; I wasn't sure what I was getting involved in. Well, I have to say, ever since then I have come back to the Open Door on my own. I finished college, so I came to the Open Door this past January to be a resident volunteer for a year.

I really enjoy the variety of work we do. It has opened my eyes to the world of the poor, which I never really knew much about. I have been able to become friends with lots of street people. Through the work I do, I have gained more confidence in myself and have gotten to know myself better.



Gladys Rustay

After trying for 57 years to save the world--through raising a family of four well-nurtured (I tried at least) children; supporting my husband as he "fought" the "War on Poverty" in Appalachia; working in the late '60's in the League of Women Voters to get more and better housing for the poor; and trying to work with parents in educating their five and six year olds, I have gained the great wisdom that all I can really do is try to be faithful in serving.

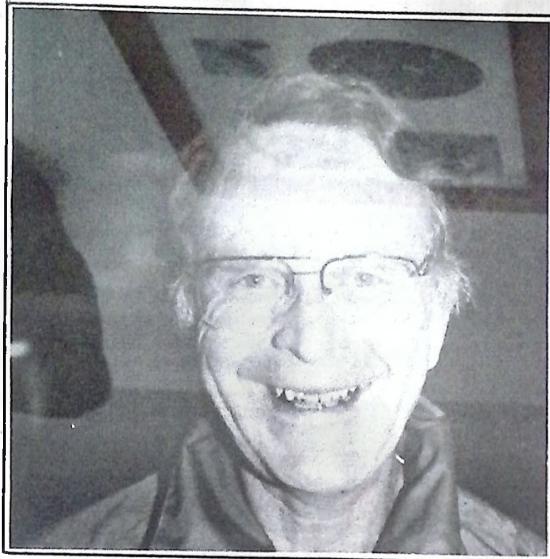
Why am I at the Open Door? Because I like the people who live and work here--their concern, crazy humor and energy. Because I feel things are not the way I was taught. I am saddened that my country, which can send a person to the moon, refuses to grant all its people the common right of decent housing. Instead we spend trillions on over-kill weapons systems.

I find it hard to live in a country that cares less and less for the downtrodden and more and more for making gargantuan fortunes (a lawyer for Pennzoil made \$450,000,000 last year!). It is a gift to be able to live and work at the Open Door with the support of those who care.



Carol Schlicksup

I'm Carol Ann Schlicksup. I know myself as a woman, a follower of Jesus, a partner in pilgrimage. I'm a Catholic sister, a member of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, whose headquarters are in St. Louis, Missouri. For the last twenty years, I've been involved in education, either going to school or teaching. At this moment on my journey, I've been led to the Open Door to learn, to serve in new ways, to listen. It is good for me to be here. . .



Dick Rustay

## Dick's Journey

Ten years ago.

It started inconspicuously with a short squib in Sojourners magazine. There was a plea for persons who were interested in staying overnight at a shelter for the homeless to please call a number at Clifton Presbyterian Church in Atlanta. I did.

That was ten years ago, and now, because of a single phone call, I find not only myself, but also Gladys and Kim, my wife and daughter, living at the Open Door.

This has been a long journey from being raised in the wilds of Idaho, attending college and seminary in Ohio, living in New York State and then moving to Eastern Kentucky where I worked establishing Head Start classes in former one-room schools far up the hollows of Appalachian Kentucky. Later I moved to Asheville, NC and worked with colleges and universities in the Southeast. That work had me commuting to Atlanta and returning 200 miles to Asheville on weekends.

My plush office was in the heart of Atlanta and seemed so incongruous with the Head Start work I was doing with impoverished children throughout the South.

It was in this context that I dialed the Clifton Presbyterian Church number and became acquainted with Murphy Davis, Ed Loring and Rob and Carolyn Johnson, who later founded the Open Door Community. Staying overnight in the shelter and feeding brought new and compelling meanings to Christ's statement in Matthew: "When I was hungry, thirsty and a stranger you welcomed me because you did it to the least of these, my brothers and sisters."

Gladys and I first spent a week together at the Open Door when it began. Gradually we stretched the week into a month and the holidays. Finally we made the decision to come live here beginning this past September.

Each day at the Open Door brings new insights. Two areas stand out. First, we are here to serve the homeless. This work forces us to depend more and more on God's strength since we realize we only achieve a small fraction of what needs to be done. We learn to live with failure and understand that God's grace covers us, not for what we do or don't do, but for who we are. Second, we discover that living in community forces us to look at ourselves and realize change must be made in our own lives. Our sinfulness can not be hid since life is no longer compartmentalized. Work, worship and play are all integrated, and it is impossible to hide your lifestyle and attitude from others. So change from within must take place. This change is painful yet community love supports it.

What started ten years ago with a single telephone call has brought me to a place in my life that is more useful and profound than anywhere I've ever been before.



Joan DeWitt

One of the newest resident volunteers of the Open Door family, I came from Lima, Ohio with my seven year old daughter, Alison. For the past 13 years I have been employed by Airfoil Textron as a secretary/travel coordinator. My spare time was spent among other things, working as a volunteer at the Samaritan House, a facility for homeless women and children. So when I came upon an article in our local newspaper of a visit by Murphy Davis to Bluffton College during Christian Emphasis Week, I read with interest about her ministry of serving the homeless and those in prison. After a four day visit to the Open Door in May, my desire to return was very strong.

I am here to give to others. To give my TIME in the soup kitchen; my GIFT to cut hair; my COMMITMENT of one year of service; my ENERGY to run errands; to be SUPPORTIVE to John Howard; and to PRAY for those that are closest to me; but most of all to LOVE by treating others as I would like to be treated.

Reading or listening to Alison read, running on the track at Grady High School and around Piedmont Park, and listening to people talk about themselves is how I enjoy spending my leisure time.



Alison DeWitt

I came to Open door because I want to. Serve The Poor and meet New ~~friends~~ friends. I like my ~~self~~ self School at Rising I like to read. Alison

## Nine-Ten

by Murphy Davis

Hospitality--the other way around. During our week on the streets for the Festival of Shelters, I was again reminded of how often homeless people--who have so little for themselves--are able to extend a spirit of hospitality and sharing. Several friends spent the entire week with us in Woodruff Park, huddling together and shivering by night, leafleting by day.

On the night I was out, Jesse went out and collected cardboard boxes. He flattened them for us to sit on the cold concrete and when it was time to sleep he carefully laid it out under the trees (You never know until you need to how much cardboard can do to block the cold from the ground.).

Charles came by about 8pm, his dark hands and shoes a dusty white from a day of concrete work. "Hey-hey I've got me some money. I'm goin' to buy you all some coffee." He brushed off our mild protestations and was off to Hardee's. Back in a flash, he carried a box of steaming cups of coffee which he distributed among us with the finesse of a waiter in a fine restaurant. Charles eats breakfast with us at Butler Street many mornings. That night, he was filled with joy to be serving us.

We were visited through the week. As word got around on the streets that Nine-Ten folks were in the park, folks would stop by to check it out, say hello, and sometimes join us for some lunch-hour leafleting.

Toward the end of the week the temperatures dropped to thirty degrees with a fierce wind. It was bitter and hard. Folks at the breakfast Friday morning seemed to assume that our folks would have given up the vigil. When assured that Nine-Ten had stayed through the night and were still there, people came by with encouraging and appreciative words.

We were joined in the vigil through the week by friends from Jubilee, Koinonia, and Emory.

These times on the streets surely do not teach us what it is to be homeless but, ah, what a taste we can get! And it's so good to be on the receiving end of the hospitality.

\*

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\*

If you've called us on the phone on a Monday afternoon you've probably had a chance to chat with our answering machine. Everybody else in the house is in a meeting.

1:30 Monday afternoon is time for Community Calendar Check. No matter what else is going on, the phone is switched to the answering machine and our friend John Barbour comes in to handle whatever other needs emerge. The rest of us--all thirty-two (minus the children)--sit down around one big table in the dining room to work out our schedule for the next nine days.

We usually have plenty to leave behind as we come into the meeting so we begin with silence, a scripture a prayer and a song (As Jay says, "A good song'll break up your tiredness.").

Then we jump in.

It is not an uncomplicated process. Tim or Bettina comes with a chart prepared before the meeting. Over a nine day period there are approximately 311 slots to be filled to get the work done. Most of the slots have a name filled in before the meeting, but we go over every single job and every name to be sure. For every day's schedule there will be additional activities and needs thrown in as we go along--clinic appointments, AA meetings, errands to be run, etc. We juggle, shift, adjust, and reschedule.

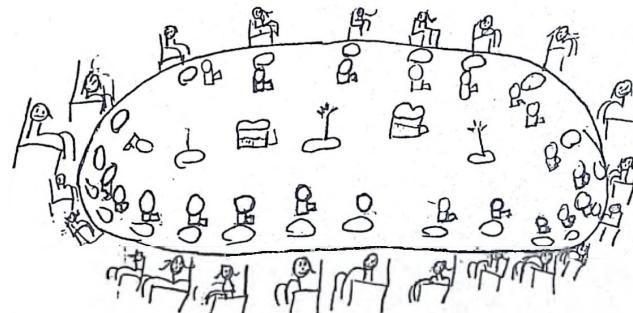
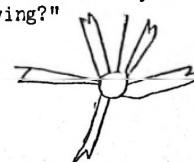
Every day begins at 4:30am when the Butler Street cook crawls out of bed and ends at 9 or 10pm when the public bathroom has been cleaned and the preparations made for the next morning's breakfast. In between there is food to be cooked, dishes to be washed, showers and clean clothes to be offered, hair to be cut, prison visits to be made, floors to be mopped, newspaper articles to be written, wounds to be bandaged. . . .

How we organize to get all this done has changed many times over the years. Only recently have we scheduled calendar check to include everyone in the household. But it felt like another important step as we keep struggling to break down race, class and gender lines. We must live our common life in a way that does not assume one set of people (white and college-educated) sits in a meeting making decisions about the lives of other people (black/white less educated). How that boils down in main-line institutions is generally that one group makes the administrative decisions, while the other group cleans the bathroom and takes out the garbage. One group is well paid; the other group is not.

To live as a family we struggle to break down these traditional barriers and work side by side.

Calendar check is cumbersome. It takes a long time. But it is well worth the trouble.

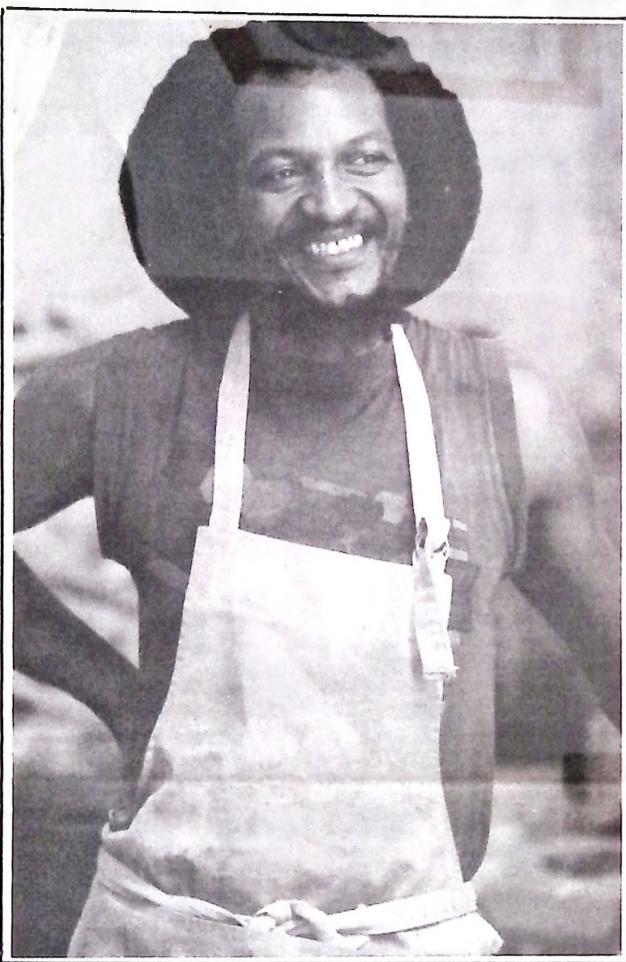
The first time we met together with the whole household Mr. Willie Dee Wimberly sat quietly through the first hour of the meeting, his hat on the table in front of him. Then he raised his ancient black hand and addressed Bettina who was moderating, "Excuse me please," he said, "but exactly what kind of a meeting is this we're having?"



The Community in a Meeting by Alison Dewitt

# Moyenda Hashim: Companion

by Ed Loring



A few weeks ago fifteen of us were returning from the Housing Now march in Washington, DC when suddenly a controversy broke out among certain members of our little raggedy family. "'Fellows' is an exclusive word that omits women," groaned one unhappy with that epithet. "Guys gets us all!" opined one fellow. Webster's New World Dictionary informed us that the colloquial meaning of fellow is "a man or boy." Then we discussed the historical origins of Guy Fawkes Day in England and the violent context out of which emerged the term guy--also a man or a boy according to Webster's.

Finally we came up with a term that everyone liked: companion. The roots of this beautiful word are "with" and "bread"--those who share their bread with each other. Not gender specific, this little compound word expresses the world toward which we journey and for which we pray. In fact there would be absolutely no hunger anywhere in the world if we would share our bread with one another: if we were companions.

At the Open Door we have the honor of having a companion in our good friend Moyenda Hashim. His name means "one on a journey," and his journey is baking and sharing bread and other baked goods. Moyenda runs the One Love Bakery at 1250 Virginia Avenue in our neighborhood. About a year and a half ago Moyenda began bringing his leftovers to us so that we might share them with our homeless and hungry friends. What a treat!! Bread and Krowns and cakes with no sugar and all whole wheat flour--these breads are wonderfully nutritious and a delight to us all. One Love produces many loves, and the sharing of food along the journey is Moyenda's gift to us.

We at the Open Door and the hundreds who share a meal at 910 are deeply thankful to Moyenda Hashim for being a companion with us. We are thankful for the One Love Bakery and the healthy foods and joyful bread we share.

THE OPEN DOOR ROTATION CHART, WITH SPACES FOR EVERYTHING IMAGINABLE

# The Dialogue Continues . . .

## READERS CONTINUE TO RESPOND TO ALTERNATIVES TO THE DEATH PENALTY

Dear Ed,

The September issue of Hospitality is a zinger. Elizabeth Dede's article is right on, an inspired piece of work. Ty Brown's article has great merit and feeling. I need to digest both of these articles.

I don't remember your article of September 1988, "Alternatives to the Death Penalty." I did read Bill Moulden's response. I want to say something about that.

A study of the Old Testament reveals that God never instructed Israel to build prisons or jails. The nearest thing to confinement were the cities of refuge where a person who accidentally killed another might flee. However, we note, even in such cases as this, the person must remain in the city of refuge until the high priest died, whether it be one year or fifty. This is how much value God places on human life even when death is accidental and no fault is found in the one who killed the other.

As I understand Scripture, God set up several levels of punishment: fine, restitution, flogging, and capital. I wonder why God thought this sufficient. One of my conclusions is that prison, long-term or brief, is cruel and unusual punishment.

The question for the Christian then is this: If God did not mean for God's people to build prisons, what are the implications for us today? I realize Israel initially lived under a Theocracy. I also realize we encounter prisons and jails in Scripture and by the time of the exile, or after the return, there were places of confinement in Israel, probably after the exile since we read that Jeremiah's holding tank was a cistern. We live under a republic today.

I can guess why prison systems are not God's way. There will be abuse and injustice. The poor will go to prison. The well-to-do will not. This is one way to look at it and probably the easiest to see. The second reason is that fallen humankind, living confined lives, will act out their depravity upon one another. There is a third reason which logically flows from the first two. There can be little or no rehabilitation under such conditions. The fourth reason is that when a person is released, the community does not want that person back.

There is the wisdom of God which says some criminals will not be coming back--capital punishment. The others never go anywhere--fine, restitution, flogging--all take place in the community. Punishment is swift and sure, and society is not burdened with the tremendous costs of prisons or attorneys. Unfortunately, I do not believe we can sell God's way to modern society.

Bill Moulden also quoted, "A life for a life, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." When God first said it, it was radical, and it still is because it is not understood.

What is meant is that punishment must not exceed the crime. Remember Watergate? The guard who discovered the break-in was, some years later, picked up in Stone Mountain for shoplifting a five-dollar item. His fine was several hundred dollars and a year in jail. This goes way beyond an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

Moulden also quoted, "'Vengeance is mine' meaning it is not ours." Vengeance is not ours, but it does belong to society, or maybe punishment instead of vengeance. Wasn't this what the Apostle wrote in Romans 13?



Dan Huber, Pacific News Service

In the end God's justice is going to flow like a river, and it is going to ignore wealth, social standing, race, the whole nine yards. If the poor person has lived an upright life she will be spared. If the rich person has lived an upright life he will be spared. But the poor person who is angry with the cards they have been dealt, who adopts a life of crime and violence against society is not going to like the justice God deals out. "Vengeance is mine," and it cuts both ways, for the poor person who has been dealt with unfairly and lashes out at others is taking vengeance into their own hands.

Ed, God bless you, Murphy, and all at the Open Door Community. Thank you for hearing me out.

Cordially,

George C. Karlbach  
First Presbyterian Church  
of Manchester-Warm Springs, Inc.  
Manchester, GA

P.S. I am told that in Sanskrit, attorney means "one who twists." □

# Grace and peaces of mail

Dear Ed Loring,

Thank you (and the nameless someone) who is responsible for my receiving Hospitality. I am sending a contribution partly to cover the cost of my copies, and partly to express support for the Open Door Community.

There is need for my dollars here in North Carolina in crisis assistance and homeless ministry, but I have a feeling some folks we help are helped along to you, and vice versa. And I am flush enough to support both way stations just this once!

I appreciate the writing, the layout and overall production of Hospitality. It appeals, even while its message often troubles. Thank you for the vision you all provide.

Matthew B. Horne  
First Presbyterian Church  
Concord, NC

P.S. Taketh not my name from the mailing list!

Dear Open Door:

I know about your organization only through its newspaper, Hospitality. From what I have read, I have been impressed by your work of band-aid ministry through feeding and prison visitation and your work to change the people and structures of society. However, I was disappointed in Elizabeth Dede's bitter tirade against education in the recent issue.

My wife and I have long worked to better education here on the Cumberland Plateau, believing it is the best chance for people to improve their lives. I agree that the current definitions of success are discouraging, but even they are better than the endless round of poverty that these people are raised in.

Furthermore, I hope that education can expand horizons of those who were raised with success. Our church operates a food bank and pays rent and utilities for the poor; we also provide scholarships for our young people to attend Presbyterian colleges. We hope that a broad education will open their eyes to see that things other than success are worthwhile. And perhaps even in those who come out yearning for success, a seed has been planted that will grow in later years.

I notice that some of Ms. Dede's classmates were moved to teach in the Peace Corps, and surely all they taught wasn't bad. I notice that most of the people at the Open Door have good educations, and I hope they bring pleasure instead of hindrance. If nothing else, they enable you to publish a literate newspaper that tells others of your work and the need for their work.

There are many ways of serving God and many roads that lead to service. Education is not the only road, but I deeply believe that it can be one.

Sincerely,

Don Padgett  
Allardt Presbyterian Church  
Allardt, TN



Public toilet in downtown Grenoble, France. It may not be very dignified, but it is free! Where are the free toilets in Atlanta?

## Hugo and Homelessness

by Bill Rogers, Jr.

*Editor's note: William Rogers is pastor of St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Hemmingway, SC. This piece was written by candlelight after Hugo stormed through South Carolina.*

It's the Monday morning after hurricane Hugo, and here I sit on the back steps of our manse, heating water and vienna sausages on an outdoor gas grill, yet my heart and mind are really seven hours further inland on Ponce. For several years I was among the homeless of Atlanta, and though I serve a typical rural middle-class Presbyterian parish presently, because of the effects of Hugo, this morning I can "relate" to my street friends on Ponce.

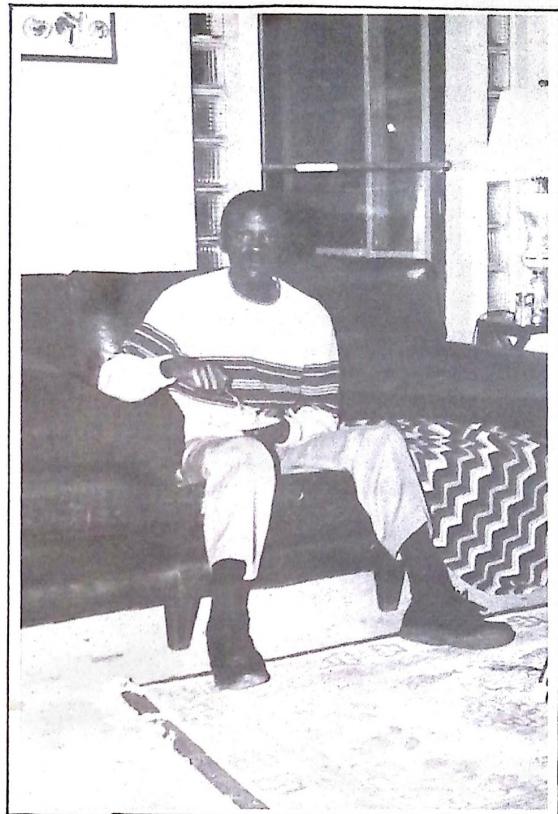
Now I am sure this hurricane will serve me and many of my colleagues well for many years to come with sermon illustrations, but if we try hard enough, Hugo can best illustrate for us the struggles of those who live under the Hugos of homelessness everyday. I am not insensitive to those folks who have been dealt very serious blows by this hurricane--my heart goes out to them. However, most of us here are more concerned with recapturing normality and property and erasing these brief moments of abnormality from our minds. What a shame, for when we do we will no longer be able to relate to those whose lives can only be described as a "disaster" every waking hour. I'm afraid, instead, that next January when we see the homeless on network TV, with the memory of Hugo carefully tucked away into trite stories, we will again simply shake our heads and not understand the suffering of the homeless. Instead of feeling in our hearts what it is like to be in chaos and "without," we will probably forget this interlude and make sure we have a power generator for "next time."

As for me, I want this memory of no running water, no power, no refrigeration, and these other things which make up my world, to be etched very hard in my mind, so that I won't forget, so that I will always relate. Because when I can no longer relate, like most folks I know, the homeless will stay homeless, the oppressed will remain oppressed, and I will simply fall back into the status quo pattern of doing things and try to avoid any other Hugos out there waiting for me.



Each year, larger numbers of homeless people live on the streets of modern cities. These people may be jobless workers, battered women, the untreated mentally ill, or simply those too poor to get by. They tend to be "invisible" to the rest of society, but they are a real presence of Christ the Judge in our midst, demanding charity and justice for the hungry and naked. They extend the incarnation of Christ, the Suffering Servant, in history.

This icon depicts the Mother of God as the mother of those on the streets. She is Black, as so many of the streets are also people of color. Her garments, and those of her Son, are covered with jewels and gold decoration, making manifest the hidden worth and dignity of street people, who are living icons of God.



John celebrating his 48th birthday.

## Play about Homelessness to benefit Open Door

THE UNDERGROUND RAILWAY THEATER

presents

**HOME  
IS  
WHERE**

play about home and homelessness.

"superbly crafted and performed... visual and aural modernism with a politically charged text... The Underground Railway Theater should roll into town more often." - The Los Angeles Times



Nov. 11 The Arts Exchange 8:00 pm

**\* Tickets \***

\$10.00 in Advance; \$15.00 at the Door; Sponsorships are \$25.00.  
For Ticket Information, call The Open Door: 874-9552  
For Reservations contact The Arts Exchange: 624-4211, or 624-1572  
All proceeds benefit The Open Door, and are tax deductible.

SPECIAL THANKS TO BILL FLEMMING AND THE P.A.N.D. BAND, ALICE LOVELACE AND THE ARTS EXCHANGE

## John Howard 1943 - 1989

We at the Open Door will miss our brother John, who died after a long battle with cancer. John was our brother, our friend, and our teacher. His lessons of gentleness and patience will not be forgotten by those fortunate enough to know him.



The sign that hung on John's wall during the last days of his illness was buried with him.

## NEEDED: SOUP KITCHEN VOLUNTEERS

We are in need of helpers to prepare and serve in our Soup Kitchen on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, 9am-12:30pm.

Please call Dick Rustay to volunteer:

876-6977 or 874-9652.



We desperately need a **Small**, low-mileage car. Can you help us please?

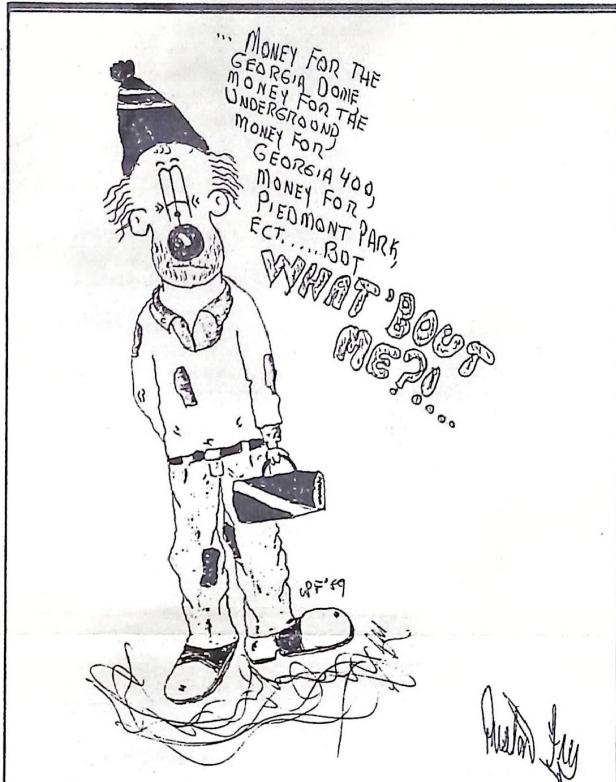
Call 876-6977 or 874-9652.

## MOVING?

WHEN YOU CHANGE YOUR ADDRESS, PLEASE LET US KNOW AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. SIMPLY PRINT YOUR COMPLETE OLD AND NEW ADDRESSES ON A CARD AND ATTACH A COPY OF YOUR MAILING LABEL. IT TAKES LONGER TO MAKE THE CORRECT CHANGE WITHOUT THIS INFORMATION. WE APPRECIATE THE OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE YOU. THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION AND UNDERSTANDING.



FOR OUR FUTURE, AND FOR YOURS  
**BOYCOTT GRAPES!**



Mr. Frey sometimes eats in our soup kitchen. The thoughts of his cartoon character are the thoughts of many folks we see daily.

On Sunday--

We no longer serve lunch. Instead, breakfast is offered to 150 folks, at 7:15. Our community is closed at noon on Sunday so we may observe the Sabbath. Donations will be accepted between 12 and 5pm on Sunday.



In the Yellow Pages, Drug Emporium advertises a coupon valid for \$2 worth of anything (e.g. razors, toothbrushes, toothpaste, etc.) without other purchases required. A friend and donor pointed this out to us as he brought four, 5-packs of razors at 2/\$1.

WE ARE OPEN. . .

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

OUR MINISTRY. . .

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WEEKEND RETREATS--Four times each year (for our household & volunteers/supporters): December 1, 2, & 3.

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

## Needs

CHEESE	BATH POWDER
MAYONNAISE	**MEN'S WORK PANTS**
VITAMIN C	MEN'S WORK SHIRTS
MARTA TOKENS	MEN'S UNDERWEAR
POSTAGE STAMPS	COATS, HATS, AND GLOVES
MEN'S LARGE SHOES (12-14)	MEN'S OUTDOOR COATS
COFFEE	MEN'S SWEATERS
DEODORANT	**CARPET**
HAMS AND TURKEYS	KITCHEN STOOL
DISPOSABLE RAZORS	DRAPERIES
SHAMPOO	LONG UNDERWEAR
FOOT POWDER	

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

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

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

## Open Door Community Worship

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



Join us!

November 5	Worship at 910
November 12	Worship at 910
November 19	Worship at 910 5:00 Eucharist 5:30 Music Night
November 26	Worship at 910
December 1-3	Advent Retreat at Dayspring Farm (No worship at 910)
December 10	Advent Worship at 910
December 17	Advent Worship at 910
December 24	Christmas Eve Worship at 910
December 31	Worship at 910

Four times each year the Community has a weekend retreat outside the city. This replaces our evening worship at 910 Ponce de Leon Ave.