

HOSPITALITY

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Providing hospitality to the homeless and to those in prison, through Christ's love.
910 Ponce de Leon Ave., NE, Atlanta, GA 30306-4212 * 404/874-9652

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

September 1993

"But I, the Lord your God who led you out of Egypt, I will make you live in tents again, as you did when I came to you in the desert." (Hosea 12:9)

1993

The Festival Of Shelters

by Ed Loring

Holy Week comes and we shuffle out to the streets to live, a day at a time, in solidarity with our friends who are homeless. We walk with them, eat in soup kitchens, sit in labor pools, and sleep in catholes and shelters. In so doing, we often meet Jesus Christ in the flesh and voices of the poor. Our conversion is deepened, our love enhanced and our self donation and communion empowered.

The Fall Festival of Shelters comes and we move into Woodruff Park to be close to the well-to-do who work and play in the very heart of our city. There we give witness and share testimony to God's call in our lives to live in solidarity with the homeless poor and prisoners. We want to remember the coming winter cold and the increased suffering on our streets. We ask for love and justice to make housing a human right. Most of us at 910 have slept in beds since Holy Week, so it is good for us to "fast" our comfort so that we know in our flesh, as well as in our imaginations, something of the hell of homelessness.

Most important we come to the center of the city to observe the Festival of Shelters as a way to worship, praise, and petition our God for ourselves, the city and its leaders, the oppressed and the oppressor.

The Festival of Shelters is a biblical observance that got lost in the early church. Why? John tells us that Jesus observed it. The Festival relates the goodness of God the Creator at harvest time to the redemption of God the Liberator at freedom time. Bread and Freedom are not separated in this wonderful God and the covenantal life she gives us. But freedom and bread cause problems when you have them after the wilderness struggle is over. We might think it is our own technological expertise, or goodness, or military might that is the source of our bread and

freedom. These two gifts have seductions inherent in their possession. So God offers us a means to remember the history and sources of our identity (The Cloud of Witnesses): the Festival of Shelters.

During the wilderness march from Egypt to Palestine people ate manna and lived in shelters: both symbols of freedom from Pharaoh's slavery. This history experience is ever afterward to be a part of the felt history of people of faith--a source of compassion for the poor and a power for the demand for justice for all people.

So with Judaism everywhere we celebrate this Festival of Harvest and Liberation. We ask each of you to join us in our witness, presence, and liturgy as we prepare for the coming of our Lord and the winter weather.

Ed Loring is a partner at the Open Door Community.

FESTIVAL OF SHELTERS

IN DOWNTOWN ATLANTA

Sunday, September 26,
through Friday, October 1.

Worship daily at 5:00pm.
Leafletting at noon.

HOSPITALITY

Grace and Peaces of Mail



ED WEIR

910 Ponce de Leon

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

Murphy Davis--Southern Prison Ministry
Ed Loring--Correspondence
Ed Loring--Resident Volunteer Co-ordinator; Guest Ministry
Murphy Davis and Elizabeth Dede--Hardwick Prison Trip
Phillip Williams & Dick Rustay--Volunteer Co-ordinators

Newspaper:
Editorial Staff--Murphy Davis, Elizabeth Dede,
Ed Loring, Dick Rustay, Gladys Rustay, CM Sherman,
and Phillip Williams
Layout--Gladys Rustay
Copy Editor--Elizabeth Dede
Circulation--Phillip Williams and a multitude of
earthly hosts and guests
Subscriptions or change of address--Gladys Rustay

A \$5.00 donation to the Open Door would help to cover the costs of printing and mailing *Hospitality*.

PEACE

Deep peace of the running wave to you
Deep peace of the flowing air to you
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you
Deep peace of the shining stars to you
Moon and stars pour their
healing light on you Deep peace to you

GAELIC BLESSING

SALLY SANDERS GARRETT

Dear Open Door,

Sometimes I pick up your paper at Sevananda Health Food Store; sometimes I don't. I must remember to pick it up whenever I see it because it has so much to teach me/us whenever I read it.

Your story on Frances Pauley (March) was truly inspiring and beautiful. Regular, mainstream papers do not tell us about people like this, do they? These very special, angelic beings. I am sad and worried about many things but I still want to know about people like Frances.

Thank you very much,

Sandi Easley
Atlanta, GA

Dear Friends at Open Door,

As always many thanks for *Hospitality*, which I sat down and read immediately when I got it. Thank you, friends, for being who you are and where you are. May God continue to work in you and through you as you serve brothers and sisters in Georgia. Don't give up! Seeing what you're doing strengthens me in my efforts to live a Christian life.

In Christ's love,

Jeri Abbott
Chipenge, Zimbabwe

Hey Gang!

Greetings in the Son's name. I never knew what compassion meant until I became affiliated with the Open Door.

And yes, the articles about Frances Pauley are magnificent. What an interesting and courageous life!

I find myself excited in anticipation of the next issue to read about her adventures! There should be a book written and not just articles. Of course, I'm sure there will be.

One of these days I'm going to meet her. I've grown to love her so much these past few months.

The stories have so much content--talk about rich history!

Under His Wing,

Christopher Crisp
Lexington, NC

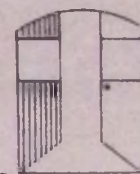
Dear Friends:

I was taken by the beauty of Elizabeth Dede's article, "Over My Head," in the July edition of *Hospitality* recounting a recent trip to my hometown of Savannah, Georgia. Working with the homeless in Savannah--more than 6,000 different men, women and children resided in shelters last year (most of them African Americans)--often prevents us from seeing the beauty of this city as it really is. I often stand at the beach and wonder in awe at the beauty of creation. I walk the cobblestone streets and attend many meetings in the First African Baptist Church. I am aware of the history of segregation at the beach, that slaves laid the cobblestones and that an oppressed community spent their nights building their own center of worship, but I often forget to appreciate these things. Ms. Dede reminded me of the heritage which surrounds me every day. I thank the Open Door for providing the mechanism for sharing through *Hospitality*.

The thoughts and prayers of the community in Savannah which works with the homeless are with our sisters and brothers of the Open Door.

Sincerely,

Rev. Micheal Elliott
Executive Director
Union Mission, Inc.
Savannah, GA



THE OPEN DOOR COMMUNITY

910 PONCE DE LEON AVE., NE. ATLANTA, GA 30306-4212 (404) 876-6977 OR 874-4652

FALL APPEAL

Dear Friends,

The hottest summer in recent years is finally winding down, and we are beginning to look forward to the relief of cool, crisp fall air. Our homeless friends have suffered the relentless heat build-up of the paved surfaces of our city, and many of our friends in prison have worked, sat, and sweated in cells and dormitories where the air barely moves.

Difficult as it is to believe on a hot, dry day, winter is coming. The cold of the winter cycle which brings rest to the natural order brings a threat to God's children who live without shelter. We remember the snow storm of last March and the death of our friend Wayne White, and we know that another winter will bring death and loss to some of the homeless men, women, and children of this city.

The problem is not the extreme hot or cold weather. The problem is homelessness. Everyone should be sheltered from whatever rain, snow, ice, heat or cold a day will bring. But because thousands live on the streets with no shelter from the storms, the beautiful cycles of nature begin to seem menacing.

And so we are preparing for winter, looking for coats, hats, sweaters and gloves to give out when the temperature drops; looking for money to pay the bills to keep the heat on and to put food in the soup pot. And always we seek a new way to say to our city and the powers that be: There is no reason for homelessness! Let us make room today for all those who are left out in the cold.

Thank you for the many ways you help us and our friends of the streets. Please help us now: the winter is coming.

Peace and blessings from
all of us at the Open Door Community--

Dick Rustay
Ira Tenell
Phillip Williams
Mark Rendon
Murphy Davis
Janice Evans
John Johnson
Jay Amundson
Erik & Lucie
CAB Banker
Michael Allen
Hannah
C M Sherman
Ed Loving
Lee E. Moore
Marcus "H"
Romme Brown
Christy Cole

Soul Brothers And Friends



by Donald Wester

Editor's note: Don Wester is a good friend of the Open Door Community, who volunteers regularly with the Butler Street Breakfast, drives on the Hardwick Trip, and recently has begun to help co-ordinate the Hardwick Trip. We are grateful for all he does with us.

Once a month a group of volunteers gathers in a caravan of church buses, mini vans, and cars to drive to the Hardwick prison in Milledgeville, Georgia. The purpose of the trip is to provide transportation to families from the Atlanta area for a monthly visit with their family members and friends imprisoned at Hardwick. The Hardwick trip has become a very defining part of my life, yet, I still find it difficult to explain the reasons why I volunteer. The trip in March forced me to put my reasons into words.

The revelations of the March trip actually began with the Christmas trip. The people riding in my van began to talk about Christmas music. Eventually, one of them asked me if I had any Christmas tapes. I reported that I had none. I listened as they continued to talk about their favorite Christmas music. I finally gained the courage to enter their conversation to ask what was their favorite Christmas music. The overwhelming response was a Christmas album by The Temptations called, "Give Love At Christmas." Later that afternoon while my passengers were visiting their loved ones in prison, I went out to the mall in Milledgeville and discovered that the music store carried a good selection of music, and found "Give Love At Christmas." The trip back to Atlanta became a mini van Christmas party as we sang Christmas songs with The Temptations. Maybe it was the music, maybe it was the season--something new happened on the Christmas trip to Hardwick.

I had a first-time rider three months later. She was a regular on the Hardwick trip. She always struck me as a woman who suffered with great difficulty the indignities of a prison system that dehumanizes everybody, including the visitors. I remembered her from an earlier trip when her patience had escaped and her anger had visited us all.

We have a ritual in my van. Whoever sits in the front passenger seat chooses the music. As soon as we left the Candler Park MARTA Station we were rocking and singing. The trip to Milledgeville was quick and enjoyable. Everyone was in a good mood. When we arrived, my first-time rider turned and asked me if I was a "soul brother."

Her question left me mute. As she stood at the door of the van, questions raced through my mind as I tried to formulate an answer. Was she accusing me of being a "wanna-be?" I learned the term "wanna-be" from my brother who married a Native American. It refers to those who wish they were of another race or culture, and through imitation seek to be what they are not. I am painfully aware that even if I was able to

overcome the genetic particularities of my freckled white skin I am still very much a product of the Southern white middle class culture of the United States. I would be foolish to try to be anything other than a white man. I hoped that she did not think me a "wanna-be."

Or was my passenger reacting to my enjoyment of Motown music? In the small rural towns of Oklahoma where I was raised, the top 40 stations were dominated by the Motown sound of the sixties and seventies. I was well into my teenage years before somebody insisted that there was a cultural and racial identity other than my own attached to Motown music. The possibility that she thought of me as a soul brother because of the music was certainly less threatening than the accusation of being a "wanna-be." But a shared love of music did not address how I sought to be in relation with her.

Maybe my passenger was simply asking if I was a soul brother in the sense of some form of spiritual or social connectedness, a type of connectedness that transcends race and culture. This is how I felt. But was that what she meant? Finally, out of desperation, I blurted out in an embarrassed and confused mumble, that I was just trying to be a friend. We went in to eat our lunch.

I have come to a partial realization that seeking to be a friend may be exactly why I continue to make the Hardwick trip. It may also be that being a friend is the best we can hope for at this time in the history of human relationships. It is true that I get tremendous personal satisfaction out of driving to Hardwick. In so many ways I receive a spiritual renewal through the giving of my time and van each month. It may also be true that some of the guilt that I feel for the way in which my class and my race continues to oppress the class and race of the people who ride with me is excised through a form of penance. But friendship is not, and cannot be a one-sided affair. Friendship is not something one gives in the same way one gives money, time, or even transportation. And friendship can not be formed out of guilt.

It seems to me that friendship requires some form of mutual relationship. And mutuality requires a meeting of people according to the concrete reality of their respective existence--a meeting that can not be accomplished from afar. The distance that stands between people prevents them from entering into mutual relationship. It is not only the geographical distance between the inner city and the suburbs, it is also the distance between our social, economic, political, cultural, and religious positioning.

On the Hardwick trip, in the confines of a Chevrolet Astro Mini-Van, the concrete realities of this white middle class male meet and engage the concrete realities of the families of Hardwick--Black, poor, and female. We are able to transcend, for at least the duration of the trip, the differences that distinguish between the driver of the van and the passengers of the van. These differences of class, wealth, and race are at times painfully real and difficult to overcome. And it is also very true that when we return to Atlanta, we once again return to our very different daily concrete realities that continue to separate and divide our society. Nevertheless, through the grace of God, on this once a month Hardwick meeting, the seeds of friendship are planted and nurtured. I hope and pray that somehow these seeds of friendship, like the biblical mustard seed, will evolve into a great universal community of friends where there is no hierarchy of race, class, or gender. A community where the prisoners are set free, where the hungry are filled, the naked are clothed, the homeless are homed, and the world lives in peace. Meanwhile. . . .

The gift that the passengers of the Hardwick trip give those of us who drive is just as important as what we give them. I choose to call this gift friendship! I want to say from my soul thank you to all of those who allow me to go with you to Hardwick each month. Thank you for allowing me to be a part of your most personal life. Thank you for sharing your smiles, your sadness, your hope, your anger, your joy of music. But most important, thank you for your friendship. And to my friend who asked if I was her soul brother, thank you for asking. The answer is, "Yes."

*

I Hear Hope Banging At My Back Door: Why Homelessness Exists In The USA

Section C:

Racism And Classism

by Ed Loring

Calvin Kimbrough is an artist, an advocate for justice, and a partner at Patchwork Central, a sister community. Calvin is a great friend and when he comes for a visit, entering by the back door, hope and joy are always flowing out of his camera cases.

Last October Calvin and I rode to Dayspring together. Somewhere along the highway leading us into beautiful mountains and past the ghosts of the Cherokees who were not rounded up for the Trail of Tears, Calvin asked, "Ed, do you think the city will ever house the homeless?" He continued, saying that he had recently read of a group who could rehab old buildings at much lower costs than building new structures. Did I believe, Calvin wanted to know, that with lower costs the cities, or the nation, would address homelessness? I responded, "No."

Houston Wheeler in his most helpful book Organizing the Other Atlanta has demonstrated that enough government money to house all the homeless in Atlanta has been given to the city over the last decade.

The reason we will not build houses for the homeless is the same reason we do spend millions and millions on prisons and have the highest incarceration rate in the Western world: **RACISM**. The lack of affordable houses is the availability of prison cells. You see an African American man hanging out on the corner of Edgewood Avenue and Butler Street after the Grit Line? Well, you see a man not on his way home. He is on the way to prison where a newly constructed little hell hole of a cell waits to devour what is left of his princely soul. Damn, that is stupid, tacky and rotten to the core! Why can't we white folks stop this rampant racism? Is our racism out of control? Is it chewing us up, too? Just who is the bossman, anyway?

Calvin turned his head slightly, dreamed of wolves and lambs loping together upon mountain pastures, and then pressed ever so slightly on the accelerator. Simply put: white folk do not want Black people around them. So we have suburbia, North Atlanta, Techwood, etc. But even more sadly, white people want Black folk to suffer and live on the streets, in dilapidated housing and prisons. USA public policy is to keep the majority of African Americans down and out so that the possibility of social equality does not arise. Housing the homeless is not fundamentally a housing issue. Please recall that there is no housing shortage in this nation.

Racism is not the whole story. If every poor and homeless person in America woke up white in the morning, there would be little change in public policy. Classism has, since World War II especially, been redefining the American Dream. A primary mark today of success and fulfillment is to be rich, and that is expressed by the capacity to increase the distance from the poor, the city, and all manner of human suffering. To justify this selfish and inhuman vision of life, the ideology of "blame the victim" is the deepest and most heartfelt social analysis for most



Americans. So as our racist system seeks to punish African Americans for being black (black is beautiful, isn't it?), the stinginess and judgementalism toward the poor contains the desire to punish the victim for their homelessness and poverty. All poor people are bad, failures, dangerous, lazy, criminals, and they bring it on themselves. Thus, if every poor person in the USA were white, we still would not have a public mandate to house the homeless.

"So," said Calvin, who had rolled down the sleeves of his shirt even as he turned into a county where no African Americans live and Jews are told not to purchase homes. We must continue to wait, pray, and work for federal mandates. Someday a leader, a new party, a rebirth of hope and wonder will happen in the American people. Someday the heart of stone will become a heart of flesh. A mighty voice will arise, crying and singing, demanding and rocking: "House my people, now! House my people now!" As we wait, watch and work for that day (or will it come like a thief in the night?) let us live out cultural values of community and co-operation instead of competition and individualism. Let us practice random acts of kindness, deeds of love, and secret events of compassion in our neighbors' backyard. Instead of racism and classism we can bring charity and equality into our lives today even as we await the structural shifts for justice which are on the way, in the wind and at the bottom of the sink holes.

"Ed."
"Yes, Calvin."
"We're home."
"Thanks for driving."
"I love you."
"Yeah, man. I love you, too."

Ed Loring is a partner at the Open Door Community.

*

Frances Pauley

Stories Of Struggle And Triumph

Part VII

Transcribed by Elizabeth Dede

Edited by Murphy Davis

Editor's note: This month Frances Pauley will celebrate her eighty-eighth birthday. On Sunday, September 19, we will continue the tradition of Frances' Stories of Struggle and Triumph after our worship service at 5:00pm. Then we'll eat supper together and have a birthday party. You're welcome to join us.

We continue here with a final (for now) installment of the stories Frances has shared with the Open Door Community over the years.

To stay in the movement we have to learn to live with disappointments and learn how not to be overcome with fear and hatred.

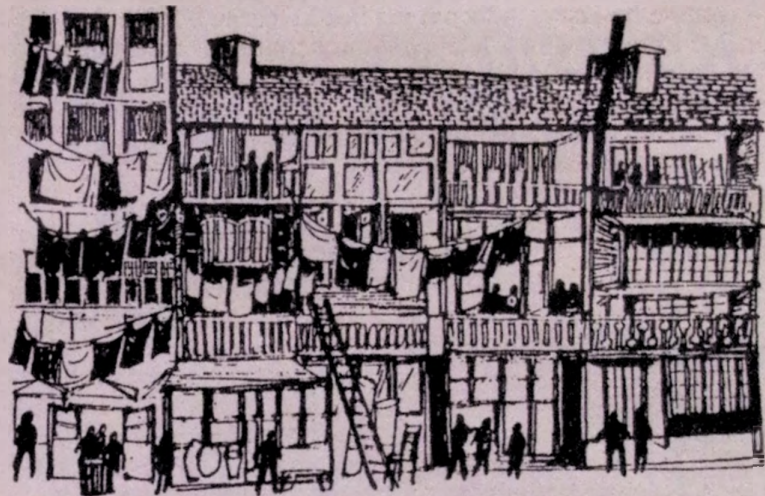
The Civil Rights Movement in Albany, Georgia taught me a lot about personal hatred: I mean the kind directed right at me. Early on I thought surely I could find some white people who would help in the movement there. I knew a couple who were old friends of mine: wonderful, liberal people. So I went to see them. Well, they had heard that I was in town and working with the movement, so when I got to their house they met me at the front door and said they'd prefer it if I didn't come in. These were my old friends! There I stood on that front porch, and I began to see the depth of hatred and fear that gripped so many people.

I went over to Tuskegee, Alabama once in the 1950's. I was organizing interracial discussion groups that would be about nice, neutral topics like modern art. This was not like working directly to desegregate lunch counters, but just trying to get groups of people together on a desegregated basis. We always had two discussion leaders, one Black and one white, and we tried to have the meetings in places that had never had an interracial group meeting before. So in Tuskegee I went to visit some white people and invited them to one of these discussion groups. Well, my name was mud fast! When I got in my car to leave, somebody had tampered with my brakes. Fortunately, I didn't hurt myself or anybody else. But when the garage repaired it, the mechanic told me exactly what had happened. So sometimes it was hard not to be afraid to go ahead and do these things.

I've had a hard time getting over my fear of police. I got a real personal fear during the work in Albany because I saw so many terrible things happen. It was something new at that point in my life because I'd never known what it was like to be hated.

One thing we have on our side is the truth. We're in the good position of never having to cover up a lie and then have to try to remember what we covered up and how we did it. Now I don't think it says anywhere that you have to tell everything you know. There's no obligation to volunteer information, but you certainly have got to be truthful. To build up that feeling that people will trust and believe in you is so important.

But the only way to conquer fear and hatred is to keep your mind on the goal. You can't possibly love and hate at the same time. I have a lot of trouble with the "love your enemy" commandment. I have to keep working on that one. I have learned a few tricks along the way--like trying to see something funny, even if it takes a long time.



Rita Corbin

Chief Herbert Jenkins was head of the police department in Atlanta for many years. He had a really good reputation, kind of like Chief Laurie Pritchett in Albany, and I never did see why people thought highly of him. We had a bad time once out in Perry Homes (housing project). I can't remember exactly how it all started, but it ended with the police killing one man and critically injuring a little boy. We saw it. We saw where the police officer was when he shot, and we saw where the victims were. So we drew it all up and decided to take it to the newspaper. But we thought we'd go see the Chief first. So we went in and showed him our diagrams and talked with him about what happened. First he said the police didn't do the killing. Somebody else fired the shot. We said, "But we were there, Chief. We saw it ourselves." After a while he said, "Yeah. That's the way it was. But you don't think I'm going to say that do you? You go to the papers and tell your story, and I'll go and tell mine. And let's see whose story is heard." As we got up to leave he said, "By the way Mrs. Pauley, I want to say another thing. You'd better be careful, or you'll end up dead." I said, "Chief, how am I to take that? Should I consider that a threat?" He said, "Take it any way you want to."

Well, I went over to live at Wesley Woods several years ago. After I'd paid my money and gotten my room, I went over to look it over and figure out how to get me and the bed and the computer all squeezed into that little room. As I came out of the room and got onto the elevator, I looked up and who was there but another inmate? That inmate being Herbert Jenkins! I said, "You aren't by any chance Chief Jenkins?" "Indeed, I am!" he said. Well, with that, the elevator gave a kind of shake and the door opened a bit, and I got out, the door closed, and the elevator was stuck. I got on the other elevator, I went downstairs, and I didn't tell a soul. I just smiled and went on out.

During the heat of the Civil Rights struggle there were always lots of hate calls. People would call up and threaten violence and say all sorts of vicious, ugly things.

My father lived with us until he died at 96, and at one point when lots of these hate calls were coming in, he decided to keep a log of all the calls and how often they came. So Papa always answered the phone and it became a great sport for him. He kept quite a log, had a lot of fun, and we all laughed.

Joe Frank Harris made me very angry one day down at the legislature when he was head of the Appropriations Committee before he was the governor. He really hates poor people and had cut the appropriations for them again. It was unusually bad. So I said to him, "Joe Frank, I'm surprised! I didn't think even you would go that far." And he said, "Well, I

never could please you with anything I did anyway." I said, "No, I guess not because you don't ever think about people. All you think about is brick and mortar."

Well, that night before I went to sleep I began to think, you know, that is his business. He and his family made all that money in the concrete business: paving and asphalt and all that. Then I was pretty pleased that I had hit the nail on the head. So I went to sleep chuckling to myself. I dreamed that Joe Frank was in a big, old cement mixer that turned round and round. His hair is always like he just came from the beauty parlor. So in the dream Joe Frank was in a fetal position holding his hands on his head to keep his hair in place. But he had this terrified look on his face as he was thrown around in the cement mixer. Well, since then, every time I see Joe Frank, or read about him I see him with that expression on his face, holding his hair. And I laugh so hard that I just can't hate him any longer.

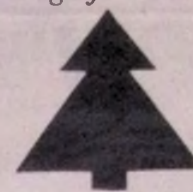
It doesn't look like God's going to let me die any time soon, so maybe I will live to love my enemies!

*



Happy Birthday, Frances!

Many thanks to the Church of Saint Andrew for celebrating Christmas in July for us. Our pantry is now filled with good things for the soup kitchen!



Students

by Gladys Rustay

Students play an important part in our lives at the Open Door. They bring us energy when we most need it. Their questions about our philosophy and policies cause us to reflect on our ministry. Hopefully, they in turn have gained insight about systemic causes of poverty and injustice as Ed Loring led them in a discussion group on Sunday evenings.

The students who joined us this summer are Bill Nelson from Appalachian State, Melissa Donahue from Vanderbilt Divinity School, Elaine Brewer from Memphis Theological Seminary, Amy Harwell from Emory University, Rachel Chmiel from Notre Dame Law School, and Ute Andresen from Heidelberg, Germany.

May they set the church on fire!

Gladys Rustay is a partner at the Open Door Community.



Vanderbilt Divinity students had a week on campus with Ed and Murphy and then spent three weeks at the Open Door. Don Beisswenger helped initiate the class. Back row: Don; third row: Ed and Murphy; second row: Steve Womak, Karen Smith, and Rachel Frey; front row: Stuart Brunson, Julie North, and Kenneth Townson.

The Open Door Community's total budget for 1992 was \$244,789.58.
This sum paid for:

120,000 meals

5,460 showers and changes of clothes and often shoes for homeless men and women.

1,432 prison visits

Full living expenses for 31 people (room, board, stipends, health care, entertainment, transportation, etc.). No resident of the Open Door Community receives salary, insurance, or retirement benefits. All long-term members of the community receive a \$50/month stipend.

150,000 copies of Hospitality.

150 visits to churches, colleges, seminaries and community groups to preach, teach, recruit.

Maintenance of a 62-room house which is home to 30+ people (half of whom are formerly homeless or former prisoners) and the site of our ministry.

Festival of Shelters

If you want to organize a Festival of Shelters in your community, we have information packets available.

Please contact:

Ed Loring
Festival of Shelters
910 Ponce de Leon Ave., NE
Atlanta, GA 30306
404/874-9652

Kinship

by Elizabeth Dede



RICHARD GARRISON

When Dick Rustay leads worship at the Open Door Community, he often prays that we will all be able to recognize our connectedness with each other. This is a good prayer because it implies thankfulness for God's gracious diversity in creation, and it seeks forgiveness for our foolish belief in our own superiority. Often in prayer at the Open Door we say, "Open our eyes so that we can see Jesus in each person," but I think this is not an easy prayer for God to grant because our vision is clouded by our strange notions of Jesus and by our unwillingness to see in a new way.

Flannery O'Connor wrote a story about kinship and recognizing Jesus called "The Partridge Festival," which, in O'Connor's humorous way, teaches us about seeing and about the pitfalls to watch out for as we look for Jesus. I read it again this summer with the new eyes that come with seven and a half years at the Open Door. I don't see in the same way I did back when I first read the story as a college student.

"The Partridge Festival" is about how two young people come to recognize their kinship with each other, with the ugly and vulgar, and with polite society, and when they see their family ties they are no longer able to condemn or romanticize, they can only accept the kinship. Calhoun and Mary Elizabeth are intellectual snobs whose chief interest in the Partridge Azalea Festival is a crazy man named Singleton who killed six of Partridge's townsfolk because they had cruelly made fun of him and abused him for his unwillingness to participate in the festival. Without a trial, Singleton was imprisoned in the mental hospital, and Calhoun and Mary Elizabeth intend to write an expose about Singleton, whom they see as a Christ-figure, innocently suffering for the guilt of others. Each one is disdainful of the other's intellect, and both condemn the townsfolk for their shallow interest in business and appearance, rather than human suffering and need.

Neither Calhoun nor Mary Elizabeth has ever met Singleton, but they are convinced that "he's the scapegoat. He's laden with the sins of the community. Sacrificed for the guilt of the others. . . . He was an individualist. A man who would not allow himself to be pressed into the mold of his inferiors. A non-conformist. He was a man of depth living among caricatures and they finally drove him mad, unleashed all his violence on themselves."

Often we are tempted to the same romanticizing of the poor. We want desperately for them to be completely innocent and blameless because the picture would be so much easier to look at if there was a clear villain and an obvious victim. But life is seldom that simple, and we along with Calhoun and Mary Elizabeth must recognize the ambiguities. Then we can forgive ourselves and others, without trying to blame or assign guilt. In forgiveness we are able to recognize our kinship with each other.

Before Calhoun and Mary Elizabeth come to that recognition, however, each one accuses the other of cowardice and stupidity, and they dare each other to go visit Singleton. Faced with the reality of a crazy man who has murdered six

people, Calhoun and Mary Elizabeth find that they can no longer be romantics about Singleton. Mary Elizabeth is afraid and Calhoun is appalled. But they cannot back out from the visit without appearing cowardly or stupid, so they go through with it.

The Singleton they meet is not at all the innocent they have imagined. He curses, swears, and yells at Calhoun, "Whadaya want with me? Speak up! My time is valuable." And when Mary Elizabeth explains that they "came to say we understand," Singleton begins to say lewd things to her, grabs at her, and lifts his hospital gown over his head to expose himself to her. Both Calhoun and Mary Elizabeth are shocked and frightened, and they jump up and run out of the hospital to get away from this man, who moments before had been their Christ-figure, a sacrificial lamb.

When Calhoun and Mary Elizabeth finally stop running, they stop to look at each other, and they are shocked to see Singleton in each other's face. This is the kind of recognition we have when we look at reality without romanticizing the poor. It is a recognition that leads to redemption because both Calhoun and Mary Elizabeth recognize their common humanity: they are bound to each other, to Singleton, and to the greedy townsfolk. None is innocent, and neither is any more guilty than the other.

Sometimes at the Open Door we have such real eye-opening experiences when it is no longer so simple to see Jesus in each person who comes through the soup kitchen line, when we can no longer find an easy villain, and when we no longer have all the answers.

Not too long ago Dick had one of these experiences of recognition at the Butler Street breakfast. More than likely before Dick left that morning he prayed that God would open his eyes to see Jesus in that line and to see his connectedness with everyone there. The answer Dick received to his prayer was a punch in the mouth. One of the homeless people who eats with us just didn't want to get in line for a breakfast ticket, so he hauled off and slugged Dick.

To be punched at seven o'clock in the morning will certainly open your eyes, but it's not usually what we have in mind in our prayers. Most of the time anger and violence don't help us to recognize Jesus. Such an experience causes one to pause and reflect. Sometimes you just have to ask yourself, "What am I doing here anyway?"

While reflecting on his morning at Butler Street, Dick asked himself, "What hit me? Was it a demon, or was it God?" It would be very easy to call this angry, violent man a demon, or at least someone temporarily possessed by a demon, and thus dismiss the episode as just one of those things that happens from time to time in this line of work. Perhaps it was that simple, but Dick received a revelation just like Calhoun and Mary Elizabeth. First, Dick learned about himself. He saw that while he shared a common humanity with this angry person, there were also some

key differences. Dick is a white man, from the oppressor race and class; he eats well, sleeps in a bed, has a place to call home, and doesn't have to line up to get a ticket for breakfast. Obviously, Dick knew all of this about himself, but it took the punch to open his eyes so that he could see himself in a different way: rather than seeing all of that in the mirror as he trims his beard, Dick saw all of that through the eyes of a young African American man who can't claim any of the things for himself that Dick claims.

But Dick's revelation didn't end with new self-knowledge. He also found new meaning in that prayer about our connectedness with each other. For a peaceful, non-violent person like Dick it's hard to see a connection with someone who punches you, and life at the Open Door sometimes makes it difficult for us white folk to identify ourselves with the oppressors. But when he came to understand the rage of this young man, who was sick and tired of being told what to do, and who had been left out of the privileges and rights of being a human in this wealthy city, Dick saw how he was connected through a racist system to this angry man and to the oppressors. A common humanity links them all together, and a common humanity empowers Dick to struggle, not only to continue to serve the Butler Street breakfast, but also to change the oppressive system so that everyone at that breakfast will eat well, sleep in a bed, have a place to call home, and not have to line up to get a ticket for breakfast.

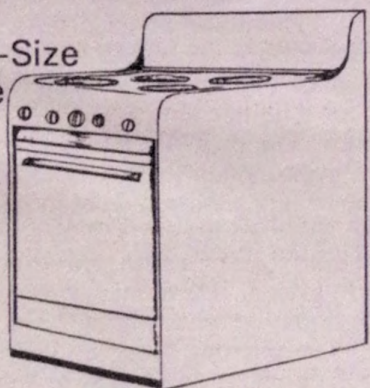
Finally, God's love was revealed to Dick. When Dick recognized that he was not struggling with a demon, he learned that God's love reaches us where we are, no matter how vulgar and ugly, no matter how angry, no matter how greedy, no matter how peaceful and generous. God's love is expansive enough to encompass all of us.

Like Calhoun in O'Connor's story, Dick saw in his own face and in the face of the angry man a "face whose gift of life had pushed straight forward to the future to raise festival after festival." And these festivals won't just celebrate flowers, but they will mark the day when all God's children live in justice and peace and there is no more hunger, no more homelessness, and no more death penalty. We will all celebrate our kinship on that day.

Elizabeth Dede is a partner at the Open Door Community.

*

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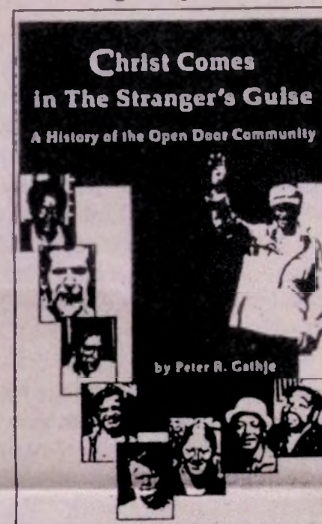
Death Is Killing Florida's Budget

Florida officials are wondering whether Florida will be able to continue to afford the death penalty. While workers are putting the final touches on a new \$9.5 million Death Row, the state is trying to come up with the \$5.8 million needed to operate it.

The *Miami Herald* reported that it costs an average of \$3.2 million to execute an inmate. That's five times the cost of keeping a person in prison for life.

(*Fortune News*, Aug. '92)

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Without The Rocks The Creek Don't Sing

by Mary Bailey Davis

Editor's note: This piece originally was presented as a meditation on February 18, 1993. Mary Bailey Davis is the mother of Murphy Davis, and we are glad to welcome her to these pages of Hospitality. September 25 marks the second anniversary of Warren McCleskey's execution. With this piece we celebrate his life and recommit ourselves to the struggle to abolish the death penalty.

When I was a young woman with my first real job in a small mountain community I learned that first afternoon when I arrived, hot and tired after an all-day train ride, that I would be living in a cottage beside a stream, which rushed down the mountain over huge boulders, middle size rocks and some small ones. I was filled with wonderment and awe with the beauty of the place, but more by the sounds of that first evening--birds sleepily singing their last songs of the day, crickets chirping, and the beautiful singing waters in the creek. It was music to the ears of that tired, excited young woman.

That was in Montreat, our Presbyterian Assembly ground. And do you know--that same creek rushes down that same mountain with the same beautiful sounds I heard so many years ago. Two or three summers ago in that same Montreat the sermon topic one Sunday was announced, "Without the Rocks the Creek Don't Sing." You probably would have had something of the same reaction I had--that is incorrect grammar and he should know better. Besides, how would he ever get a sermon from that? Very quickly we all learned, and the main point of it has stayed with me, reminding me often of the great truth it tells.

A traveler in a mountain cove fell into conversation with a local person beside a rocky creek and the conversation centered on the beauty of the stream with its many rocks. The resident said in her very wise way, "But sir, without the rocks, the creek don't sing."

If I say, "I don't like the rocks in my life," I'm sure I would hear you say, "Amen." All of us have rocks in our lives, and no person here would ever choose that. I don't remember anything that preacher said that day, not even an illustration, but I do remember his topic. I suppose you are wondering what that has to do with the Bible. There are stories all the way through which illustrate the point. Some of the most forceful stories come from the Apostle Paul. You remember that he spoke of his "thorn in the flesh." We don't know what it was, but it must have been some affliction that made life hard for him. He was a Roman citizen, which helped him in his work. Also, he was a well-educated Jew, very firm in his faith. He was such a zealous Jew, and so well prepared to do so, he became the leading person to persecute this new, young Christian religion which had come on the scene and was becoming a threat to Judaism. When Paul himself became converted, then he immediately became the most zealous of Christians and did more to spread the Christian message than any person of those early years. It was never easy, and always, he was even in fear for his life. He was imprisoned, kept in chains, beaten cruelly, and suffered the loneliness of standing by his convictions when his friends were against him. These were real rocks in Paul's life.

What did Paul do about his rocks? One thing--he was not a quitter--he kept at his work in spite of the hardships. Perhaps his most important treatment of rocks was when he was in prison in Rome he was at all times chained to a Roman soldier so that he

could not possibly escape. Every few hours that soldier was replaced by another so that over a period of time Paul had one on one conversations with his guards, and one by one he was able to present Christ and the Christian way of life to the pagan Roman. One by one the elite corps of the Roman military was converted to Christianity. It has been said that the Emperor of Rome became a Christian not so much from personal conversion as because by that time most of his army members were Christians and he knew it was necessary to keep their support.

Another thing that came from Paul's imprisonment was that as his friends came to visit they saw how Paul was responding to a rocky situation, and it made them more bold in their lives and work.

We know also that while Paul was imprisoned he wrote many letters which make up the bulk of our New Testament, giving us a framework on which to base our beliefs. What a wonderful way to take advantage of a rocky situation! If you and I use our rocks as stepping stones, we can in our own quiet way be of service.



I want to tell you about a young African American man, Warren McCleskey, who was in prison in Georgia on death row for 13 years. There is no doubt about his being guilty of being one of four men who robbed a store when one of the four killed a policeman. There was no conclusive proof to convict any one of them of the killing. After the first trial some information surfaced, showing that the prosecution made a deal with one of the four for a lighter sentence if that one would testify against McCleskey. The deal was withheld from the court, clearly an illegality, even though there was no actual proof that McCleskey pulled the trigger. Warren went to his execution, not as a cowering, defeated person, but as a triumphant witness to the power of Christ from a man who came to know the Lord during his days in prison. He faithfully attended Bible classes and was a living testimony to what Christ can do in a life. He realized he had taken many wrong turns in his life, leading to his situation in prison. His greatest desire was to help young people see that the only true satisfaction in life is through knowing Jesus Christ.

Minutes before his execution he spoke these last words from which I will quote: "I would like to say to the bereaved family that I am deeply sorry and repentant for the suffering, hurt and pain you have endured over the years. I pray that you would find in your heart to forgive me for my participation in the crime that caused the loss of your loved one. I have asked God to forgive me and pray that you will also. I pray that you will come to know Jesus Christ and receive his peace that passes understanding. I know that is the peace you desire, and I wish that this execution could give it to you, but I know it won't. It will give you temporary satisfaction. The only peace that is lasting is found in the light of God with Jesus Christ."

Then speaking to his family he continued, "I want to say to my family be strong and courageous and forgiving to all. I pray that you will go on with your lives; keep God at the center so that God can direct your paths."

He then prayed for his brothers on death row, saying, "Do not forsake the faith for what is about to happen to me--this is only the beginning of eternal life. The thirteen years I have been on death row have been productive years--years in which God has moved in my life and has inspired me to touch other lives. This is the service that will live on."

One of his friends said, "He was one of the most joyful people I've ever known." Truly a case of "the creek singing because of the rocks."

Whatever rocks you and I have in our lives, God can use them for God's glory. *

CANDIDATES FORUM

Monday, Oct. 4, 1993

At St. Luke's Episcopal Church

The forum will provide religious organizations and concerned citizens with an opportunity to hear the 1993 Mayoral candidates' positions on issues of poverty, housing, employment, and social policy. A light dinner will be provided free of charge at 6 P.M. in St. Luke's Soup Kitchen. The Candidates Forum begins at 7 P.M. in the sanctuary of St. Luke's. Free parking available. Address: 435 Peachtree St., N.E..

For more information call
THE ECUMENICAL HOMELESS ADVOCACY TASK FORCE
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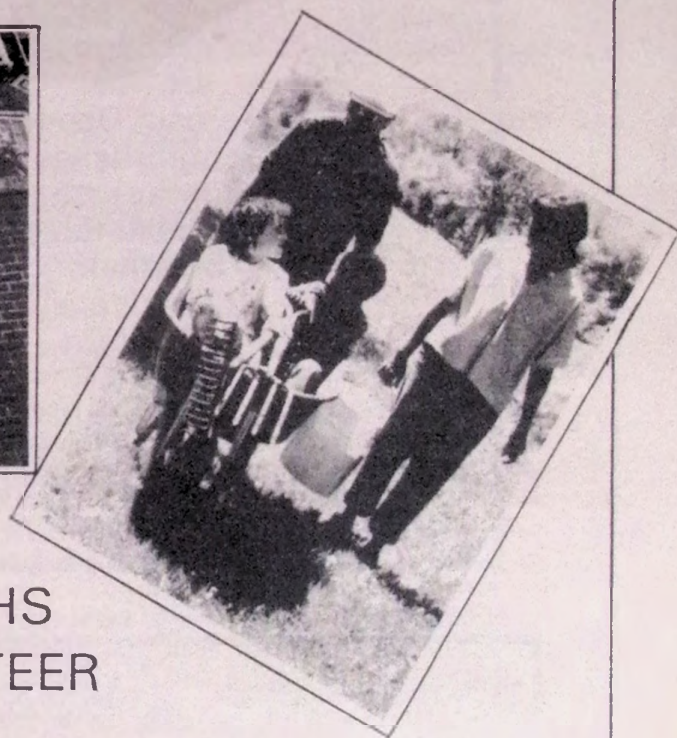
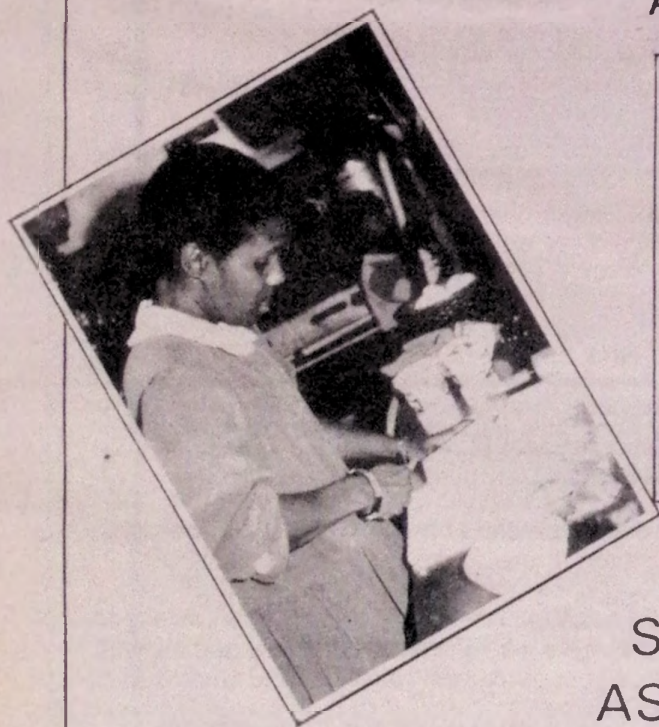
NO HOUSING -- NO JUSTICE

Sponsored by the
Christian Social Justice Committee
Southeast Conference
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Details in October Hospitality

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A North American Base Community



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

WE ARE OPEN. . .

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

OUR MINISTRY. . .

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WEEKEND RETREATS--Four times each year (for our household and volunteers/supporters), September 10, 11, 12.

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

JEANS

Men's Work Shirts
Men's Underwear

COATS & SWEATERS

Quick Grits

Cheese

Mayonnaise

Multi-Vitamins

MARTA Tokens

Postage Stamps

Men's Large Shoes (12-14)

Coffee

Non-Aerosol Deodorant

Toothbrushes

Toothpaste

Disposable Razors

Shampoo

Silverware

Toaster

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

Have A Grits Party!

Invite your church/Sunday School class to donate Quick Grits. We use 36 lbs. per week for the Butler Street breakfast.

Open Door Community Worship

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

Join us!

September 5 Worship at 910
Murphy Davis, preaching

September 10-12 Retreat at Dayspring Farm
No worship at 910

September 9 Worship at 910
5:00pm Eucharist
5:30pm, Frances Pauley:
Stories of Struggle & Triumph

September 26 Worship at Woodruff Park
(downtown Atlanta)
Festival of Shelters begins
Ed Loring, preaching

Please join us daily (Monday, September 27 through Friday, October 1) for leafletting at noon and worship at 5:00pm in Woodruff Park.



We Need Sandwiches

Can you help by making healthy, tasty sandwiches on whole wheat bread with cheese and chicken or turkey? For each soup kitchen we use 250 sandwiches.

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 make a six to twelve-month commitment as a Resident Volunteer at the Open Door. Please send more information.

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