

HOSPITALITY

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

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September 1998

Remember, As Though You Were With Them

The thirteenth chapter of Hebrews is one of my favorite descriptions of the vocation of solidarity for the community of faith. "Keep on loving...Remember to welcome strangers in your homes...Remember those who are in prison as though you were in prison with them..." This passage is often read in isolation, simply as an ethic, a mandate for certain acts of kindness and charity. But as is the case throughout the ancient law of Israel, the prophets, and the teachings of Jesus, this is not simply about ethics. This, if we read from the last part of the twelfth chapter, is a description of the life of worship. This is how God wants to be thanked. This is how Jesus wants to be honored and remembered. Jesus died "outside the city", and the appropriate response to that affirmation of faith is to "go to him outside the camp and share his shame." (13:12,13)

This passage is another of many that helps us to understand that to say we believe in Jesus the Executed without sharing his shame, without welcoming those who (like Jesus) are strangers and captives and suffering, is empty and meaningless at best, an abomination at worst.

I have at many points felt that if I did not believe the scriptures because they are the gospel truth, I think I would still love them for the sheer power of the political analysis and mandate. This passage from Hebrews teaches the Biblical understanding that our vantage point for understanding ourselves and our body politic is to be from the side of the most condemned and despised. It is from the place of the marginalized that we seek understanding of our common values, the basis of our social, political, and economic life and decisions. It is from the perspective of the suffering poor that we come to understand who we are.

With this understanding, I am deeply grateful for the 21 years of my work and life with and among the men, women and children of Georgia's death row. I've known all of the 23 men who have been executed in

Georgia. And there have been hundreds of other times that I have been privileged to be with other men, women, and children as they have walked through brutal, grinding days and hours of death watching. Some of them have seen relief. For some it did not come before they had lost their minds, their families, or their hope of salvaging a life and human spirit. Others, I am glad to say, have rebuilt and found healing, restoration and new life.

I have seen and known those who have walked off Georgia's death row having been proven innocent—Earl Charles, Jerry Banks, Robert Wallace, Henry Drake, Gary X. Nelson. Because of the mood of the courts, their chances today would not be so good. Three of them lived in our home for a time. I have known the retarded and the mentally ill, the addicted, the brain injured, the children, those with terminal military training, the disoriented, the unlucky, and perhaps worst of all, those whose keen intelligence and awareness render them conscious of every small detail of the tragic absurdity of their predicaments.

For each of them, for their

by
Murphy Davis



families and friends, and for all of us, death sentencing, death watching, and executions are an indescribable horror. This is a ritual so bizarre that it begins at times to make us think we're crazy, and there are days that

those who have given up, or gone completely mad, seem to make the best sense of it all. But these are my friends, and I love them. They have been, and continue to be, my teachers.

In a culture that avoids dealing honestly with death, I've been privileged to know many who look ahead with dignity and compassion, and those who have died with a mature composure that shames their executioners, and gifts us, their advocates, with renewal for this struggle.

Three years ago I was very ill with Burkitt's lymphoma, a rare and aggressive cancer. I was told after some extensive surgery that I was probably going to die. Looking back, one of the things I realized is that I knew immediately when I heard that news that if I had to die I could do that, and I could do it without losing

my humanity, or without disintegrating in fear. Because for 18 years up to that point I had been taught and taught well by people who supposedly don't have anything good to offer to our society.

These very same friends prayed for me, cared for me, drew home-made cards, wrote letters, sent messages, and helped me to heal. I cannot tell you how grateful I will always be for that. I cannot tell you how that deepens my commitment to stay in the struggle as long as I live.

In seeking a deeper understanding of the role of the death penalty in our socio-political landscape, I hope we can quickly put aside any notion that the death penalty is some kind of a quirk or aberration in an otherwise just or fair system. I think there is insight to be gained if we let our work against the death penalty become for us a sort of window for how we see and understand and interpret the culture in which we live.

The death penalty is not an aberration of an otherwise good and just system. It is the finely honed expression of our deepest values. The death penalty is not only a grotesque reality in our system and cultural psyche, but it is a metaphor for our system, a sort of cultural icon in our psyche representing our soulless values. It is an icon that says, "People are objects: *things* to be disposed of at will, to be used up and thrown away." The death penalty says at the far end of our system the same thing that labor pools say in the center of most urban areas: "People and their labor are to be used as we need them. And when we're through with them, they are to be tossed on a garbage heap."

In the 1980's into the 1990's, beginning with the Reagan years and into the Clinton years, we have witnessed a shrinking democracy, along with shrinking economic and social resources for the poor. And at the same time we've witnessed a vast, overwhelming, grotesque orgy of wealth and overconsumption for those

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("Remember..." continued from page 1)

at the very top of the economic order. In 1981, the Dow Jones topped out at an amazing 800 points. Today, in the days of the bull market, the Dow has broken 9,000; it would have seemed inconceivable a short time back.

From the vantage point of Ponce de Leon Avenue in Atlanta, we have witnessed a growing death row and increasing numbers of executions, along with shrinking legal resources for the condemned. At the same time we have witnessed unparalleled growth in homelessness, hunger, and shrinking access to affordable housing and other resources that are so necessary to sustain human life. But while death row has grown and the bottom has fallen out for the poor, the top has come off for the rich: many moderately wealthy folks have become millionaires, and more of the millionaires have become billionaires.

What death penalty law does to the imprisoned poor, death-dealing policy does to the poor on the street. Our homeless friends are death sentenced in their degradation and grinding poverty, because to be condemned to scratch out a life without the resources to protect and sustain life is a non-judicial death sentence. And the fact of the simultaneous growth of homelessness, death row, and the Dow Jones average in the 1980's and 90's is no coincidence. These realities are mirrors of our national soul.

In 1941, Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis wrote, "We can have democracy in this country, or we can have great wealth concentrated in the hands of a few, but we cannot have both."

I believe that a clear choice has been made in this country. It is a choice to have great wealth concentrated in the hands of a few.

This is inherently, according to Justice Brandeis, a choice to sacrifice participatory democracy and its institutions and safeguards.

If we take a look at the history of the death penalty in the United States, we find that it is always more heavily used in times of economic, social, and political dis-ease, in troubled times like these when fears are easily exploited and moral leadership is scarce. The peak use of the death penalty in the twentieth century U.S. came in 1935, when 199 men, women and children were herded through our death chambers.

In our day, with leadership from the storming hordes of Right Righteous Republicans and their so-called Democratic counterparts, we have shown ourselves clearly willing to sacrifice due process and fairness at every level of the system, and to give up any pretense of even-handedness to get the particular results we desire. There seems to be no need to even apologize for it anymore.

The constitutional process of the United States of America is being shot to hell in the interest of a narrow political agenda that advances the interests and benefits of a privileged minority. Justice Brandeis saw this as inevitable: that where wealth and resources are being concentrated, democracy will be increasingly viewed and treated as an impediment. Not that we ever say it straight out; we still speak the *language* of participatory democracy. But at every level of our local and national life, dissent is less tolerated and there is less access to accountability for official power.

The word privilege means "private law." It might be said then, that privileged people are a law unto themselves. And we would do well to think more carefully about how privileged people relate to the law. Perhaps one way to describe the

development of recent years is the privatization of the law itself. It is clear, perhaps without argument, that the law works for people who can pay their way and offers little for those without resources.

Tom Teepen of the Cox Newspapers wrote about a year ago, "The death penalty has become an act of class warfare, fought top-down against the poor and incompetent." It makes sense that as the focus and narrowing of the political agenda proceeds, that the judicial process will become ever-more politicized. It is no longer unusual for appellate judges to be tossed out in elections or for Federal judges to be threatened with impeachment, solely on the basis of decisions in death penalty cases—many of which do nothing more than insist that our courts abide by the Constitution of the United States.

But none of this even shocks anybody anymore, just as the juxtaposition of extreme wealth and extreme poverty does not seem obscene to us any longer because it has become so familiar. The death penalty is not some kind of weird aberration in our system. The death penalty is a crucial strategy, a necessary symbol, a metaphor, a cultural icon that is helping us move in a very clear and certain direction: controlling the poor and the marginalized, and limiting public space, public debate, and public dissent for the purpose of benefitting a certain few. If this sounds like a conspiracy theory, it is.

The word conspire means "to breathe together." And whether people are in some back room thinking all this up or not, there are sure enough a lot of people "breathing together." It seems to me that our whole system of police and courts and prisons is most aptly referred to as the criminal control

system, rather than the criminal justice system. Control is the point: control of the poor, control of people of color, and control of their labor. And of course, the death penalty is at the far end of the system, to exercise and symbolize ultimate control. "You get out of line, we can kill you."

The structural contempt for the poor and people of color is bad enough in and of itself, but how blind can we be? If the courts can treat African Americans, Native Americans, Hispanics, and poor white people with such disrespect and contempt, with such flagrant disregard for their constitutional rights and basic human dignity, then they can treat anybody like that. We just practice on the poor. And in the name of protecting ourselves from the "dangerous poor," we are sacrificing the basic system of democracy and due process.

But aren't most of the American people oblivious and complacent? We pour out untold billions of dollars into a failed and futile system that we know is unfair, violent, and self-defeating. It makes me think of Dolly Parton who says, "You wouldn't believe how much it costs to look this cheap!" We're not running this system this way because it makes sense. We do it this way because the criminal control system with the death penalty at the far end is a major tool in the program of consolidation of wealth, power and privilege.

It seems baffling that so many Americans who are otherwise well educated and politically aware are so ill-informed and unconscious of the role of prisons and the death penalty in the context of our broader political landscape. We are, I am afraid, committed to our ignorance. The criminal control system is important—the most important system—in controlling the life and labor of the poor.

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HOSPITALITY

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A "Routine Safety Check"

by Tonnie King

For my vacation I decided I would travel by bus to visit my friends Barbara and Paul in Black Mountain, North Carolina. The bus, as is common knowledge, stops in many small towns along its route. It is a six-hour ride from Atlanta to Black Mountain, so after a couple of hours into my trip, we had already stopped at several bus stations in various types of dwellings. One station was located in what seemed like a combination of a restaurant and taxi stand. So when the bus arrived in Anderson, South Carolina, and stopped under a bridge overpass, I was oblivious to the fact that this was another bus station.

After the bus came to a stop and I realized that this was another station, I noticed a uniformed police officer and about seven other men standing a little distance from the bus. At this point, I had no clue as to the business of these people or what was about to happen. The bus driver continued on with the business of either loading or unloading packages and luggage. I learned who these people were when one of the men entered the bus and announced that they were police officers and that they were about to conduct a regular routine safety check. The officer then proceeded to the rear of the bus and began asking each passenger if he could check their tickets and which piece of luggage belonged to them. Just before the officer got to the row of seats I was sitting on, he exited the bus. Another officer then entered the bus, came directly to me and asked me if I would agree to step off the bus so that they could ask me a few questions. I agreed to do so. Before the officer began asking me questions, a third officer stepped over to a car and removed a dog and entered the bus to let the dog sniff, I assume for illegal substances.

Then the questions began: my name, where I live, my destination,

reason for traveling, and could they search my bag. At this point I hesitated in answering the officer and asked him why they needed to search my bag. After hearing that this was a routine procedure again, I agreed to the search. My tote bag was retrieved from the bus by a fourth officer, thoroughly searched, and returned to the bus. I was then allowed to return to my seat, after which a fifth officer entered the bus and continued to check tickets and luggage. When the last passenger was checked, another officer entered the bus and made the announcement that just because they asked a person to step off the bus does not mean that the person is a criminal. It is just part of the safety procedure.

As the bus departed, I did not at that point consider the implications of what had happened. I was too enthralled with enjoying my vacation.

Upon returning to the Open Door Community and sharing this incident with fellow community members, a lot of serious questions were asked. The implication of how racism may have been an important factor was raised. There I was, an African-American male from Atlanta on a Greyhound bus in a small, rural South Carolina town. Maybe I was the most suspicious-looking character among the bus passengers. I now ask myself, what would have happened if I had not cooperated with the police? Ed Loring, I think, was not very pleased at the possibility that my constitutional rights had been violated when I was simply traveling by bus. Granted, I do not know all of the reasons for such a thorough "regular routine safety check," and why I was singularly chosen to be questioned.

If even the slightest hint of racism was involved, I would like to lift the city of Anderson, South Carolina, in prayer.

Tonnie King is a Novice in the Open Door Community.

For Sale Underground Atlanta

- Who will pay back the Federal money designated for the poor that was used to build Underground Atlanta?
- \$10 mil. in Urban Development Action Grant?
- \$8.5 mil. in Community

Development Block Grant?

- Who will cover the City of Atlanta's obligation for debt service payments, for which lack of adequate revenues leave the City with an annual out-of-pocket cost of \$5 mil.?

In June 1989, Underground Atlanta opened as a shopping and entertainment mall in downtown Atlanta. It is a place guarded by police from entry by "undesirables." Having experienced financial difficulties from its inception, Underground Festivals Inc. is now

trying to sell this white elephant. Because its construction was funded by certificates of participation rather than by a bond issue debated and approved by democratic process, the taxpayers of the City of Atlanta are liable for Underground Atlanta if it ultimately fails.

Join Us for the

Festival of Shelters

SEPTEMBER 13, 14 & 15, 1998

This year we shall observe the Festival of Shelters over approximately a 30-hour time period. The sequence of our activities is as follows:

Sunday, September 13th

5 p.m. Worship at the Open Door

Monday, September 14th

12 noon - 1:30 We will enter Woodruff Park at noon and leaflet, march and rally.

5 p.m. Worship and a bag supper with the homeless in Woodruff Park

11 p.m. We will keep a presence in the Park until 11 p.m. at which time we will go to spend the night beside the Butler Street CME Church and/or Trinity United Methodist Church

Tuesday, September 15th

6:30 a.m. We will all eat breakfast with the homeless at the Butler Street Breakfast

12 noon - We will regroup at Woodruff Park at noon with a presence similar to the day before, with the addition of disruption and civil disobedience with the theme:

NO MORE HOMELESSNESS IN THIS CITY!!!

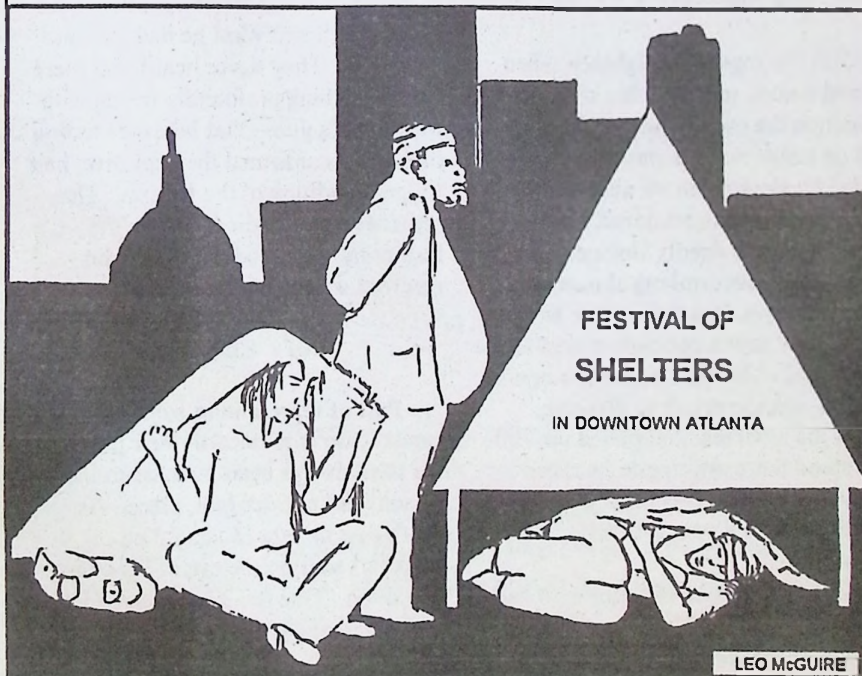
We will keep a presence in the park, leafleting and raising our voices as the Spirit wills.

5 p.m. Concluding worship in Woodruff Park

Plan to join us for some or all of this three day celebration

The **Festival of Shelters** is a celebration from ancient Israel, which commemorates God's instruction to Moses and the Israelites. It is a joyful harvest festival and a time of remembrance. After the Exodus from Egypt, God commanded the people: "You shall live in booths seven days; all citizens of the land shall live in booths. . ." (Leviticus 23:42). The Festival is meant to remind all of God's people, especially those who celebrate a prosperous harvest, that we were once homeless wanderers. God provided for us in our thirst and hunger, and as we remember, we are led to share of our bounty with the poor and homeless of our day.

So the people got branches and built shelters on the flat roofs of their houses, in their yards, in the Temple courtyard, and in the public squares. . . All the people who had come back from captivity built shelters and lived in them. . . And everybody was excited and happy (Nehemiah 8).



LEO MCGUIRE

by Jodie English

[Editor's Note: This article was originally published in July/August, 1998 issue of "Quaker Life Magazine." Jodie English has been a criminal defense lawyer for almost 20 years, and she was a law professor at Georgia State University's College of Law from 1985-1989. Though she lives in Richmond, Indiana, she retains her membership in the Atlanta Friends Meeting. Her husband, Lonnie Valentine, is Associate Professor of Peace and Justice at the Earlham School of Religion in Richmond, Indiana, and they are parents of Cady and Ben.]

"For these are all our children. We will all profit by, or pay for, whatever they become."

— James Baldwin

Introduction

We drove the five hours to Indiana's death row wrapped in the web of friendship. Gray skies over the hollow hulls of the cornfields. As the walls and razor wire loomed large, we steeled ourselves. I could feel the air between us go dry. Jan Dowling, one of several lawyers representing Gary Burris; myself, lead counsel for Bill Spranger. Both of us hoping that neither would suffer the agony of execution, condemnation to that hell where lawyers wake in the night to revisit what might have been done differently.

Two clients. Two lawyers. Two impending executions.

A little over a year later, both men are off death row. One executed. The other serving a sentence of sixty years. One, his ashes spread on the grounds of the Bloomington, Indiana Friends Meeting. The other, eking out his existence in the thin hard soil of a maximum security prison. But alive.

Bill Spranger's Crime

Bill Spranger was eighteen when he and a man, ten years his senior, set in motion the events that would place Bill on death row. It was an evening fueled by alcohol, an evening that accelerated so unintentionally from a simple prank to deadly violence. They'd been out drinking almost until morning when, less than a mile from home, they saw a car parked beside the road. The older man wanted to break in. Bill was too drunk to disagree. When the town marshal pulled up, Bill just stood there, waiting to be taken away to spend his first night ever in jail. But the man Bill was with felt differently.

Unbeknownst to Bill, this man had been convicted of robbery, and faced serious prison time if he was caught.

The man started to fight with the marshal, a fight that very quickly turned ugly. As Bill watched in a drunken stupor, the two men rolled over and over each other all the way across the highway. Finally, the officer got the best of his assailant. But the marshal didn't just put on the handcuffs and finish the arrest. The marshal started beating the man who had fought him. The man lost consciousness, but the beating continued. Days later, his body bore nightstick shaped bruises.

Bill just wanted the beating to stop. He looked around and saw that the marshal's gun had come unholstered during the rolling tussle across the highway. Bill had never held a gun before, but he picked it up and yelled for the marshal to stop the beating. The marshal ignored him. Then Bill cocked the gun, to show the marshal that he really meant for the beating to stop. A split second later, the gun exploded in Bill's hand. The two fled—Bill to the arms of the girl he was engaged to marry, the girl whom he told, within an hour of the shooting, his voice shaking, "I shot him, but I didn't shoot him—the gun just went off."

In 1983, when Bill was sentenced to die for the murder of the officer, the jury never heard what he had told his girlfriend. They never heard that there was something profoundly wrong with the officer's gun—that ballistics testing of the gun confirmed the explosive, hair trigger condition of the firearm. They sentenced him to die based on the testimony of his codefendant, who received a sentence of four years.

Bill's Childhood

Part of representing someone in a capital case is to unearth their past, for the past always bears witness to the reasons the murder took place. As death row inmate Michael Lee Lockhart said on the eve of his own execution, "One thing is certain: God did not create a murderer."

For months, Bill refused to open up.

Both his parents had died while he was on death row. What was the point of maligning their memory? It wasn't until I told him something of my own past that I got him to understand that it wasn't a question of blame, it was just a question of telling the jury the truth of who we are.

I told him of one of my parents' drunken arguments when I was nine. At three in the morning, I woke to the alarm of their anger. I huddled close to the heat grate on the floor of my room through which I could see into the room below where they fought. I watched as my father mangled my

mother in his strong hands, ripping a clump of hair from her head as she screamed, the ball of her hair moving along the floor in the air from the heat run. The bald spot. How she would comb her hair so carefully to try and hide what had happened.

My past was redeemed by the trust that came to exist between Bill and me. The horrible memories that used to haunt me whenever someone cracked their knuckles or I saw hair cleaned from a brush have less of a hold on me, for without them, I could never have told Bill's story so fully.

Bill was the tenth child, born in as many years. With his father either absent, working two jobs, or drunk, and his mother gone for months at a time caring for one of Bill's brothers who spent most of his childhood in hospitals due to kidney failure, Bill got very little attention. There was grinding poverty. There were times they ate popcorn for dinner. Times the family of twelve drove to church at the rescue mission all packed into a busting VW bug. The only thing there seemed to be enough of was alcohol. Bill's father thought nothing of letting Bill have sips of his liquor as a child, openly sharing his booze with Bill as a teenager. In the Spranger household, intoxication was manly. And intoxication was the catalyst for violence. Sometimes as a teenager, Bill would try to intervene—try to stop the beatings with whatever was at hand. It was a pattern that was

repeated the night of the marshal's death.

Gary Burris

Gary was tall, rail thin, black; with musing, caring, questioning eyes. Abandoned as a baby in a trash dumpster, Gary would never know the identity of his parents. He was raised by the pimp who rescued him from the refuse, by prostitutes and thieves. At six he brought clean wash cloths to the girls to wipe themselves for the next trick. At seven he helped sell liquor to the clientele of the whorehouse that was his home. Even though there were several police raids at the brothel, the law never cared that a nameless little black boy was living in squalor.

When the state finally placed him in foster care, Gary was described as quiet and good. Always appreciative. His only request for Christmas each year was for a birth certificate. He wanted to find out who he was, to have a birth date, some day of his own to celebrate.

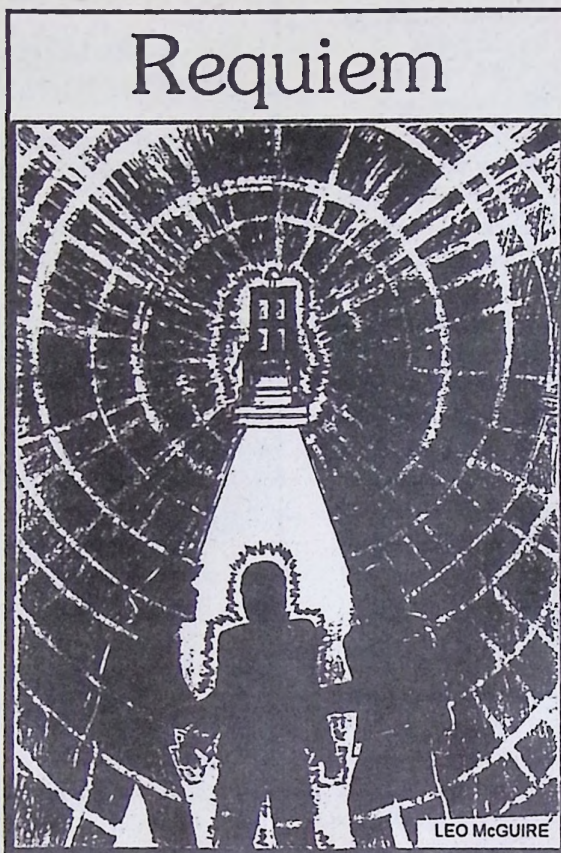
For a man denied the knowledge of the date he was born, Gary came to know several dates by which he was to die for his crime of killing a cab driver. In the decade and a half over which these appointments were set, scrubbed and rescheduled, he became something of a philosopher, reading constantly. His gentle manner disarmed those who guarded him. He was made a trustee on the row. When others lost their self control, his was a voice of reason. Around him, some peace was possible.

Two years ago, when he came very close to being executed, some guards came to his lawyer Jan, and with tears in their eyes, asked her to tell him good-bye for them. Faced with the possibility of imminent execution, Gary thought mostly of other's feelings—telling Jan that perhaps he should take his last words from the old Mr. Wizard, Tutor Turtle cartoon. Tutor would find himself in some awful jam and yell for help to his wise friend Mr. Wizard, who, waving his magic wand, would quietly intone: "Drizzle, drizzle, dradle, drone. Time for this one to come home." Then Tutor would be spirited back to safety. Gary hoped to bring some sanity to the prison's superintendent, who, though a strong supporter of the death penalty, did not believe Gary deserved to die.

Bill's Trial

The prosecution chartered a bus to ensure that the courtroom would be packed with law enforcement officers. By closing arguments, the courtroom was bursting with police. Standing room only. Wall to wall, an ocean of uniforms in navy blue and brown.

I hadn't foreseen this. A modern day Roman coliseum, the roar of the crowd, thumbs down, I hadn't



anticipated that I would be able to count the friendly faces in the courtroom on less than the fingers of one hand. But my fear dissipated in the face of the overriding need to tell Bill's story. Against their weapons, their anger, and the popular public hue and cry for vengeance, I armed myself with Bill's story. The story of the accidental shooting, the defective weapon. The story of how his father had started Bill drinking at age eight, and helped to make Bill a full blown alcoholic by age sixteen. The story of his efforts to make the best of himself on death row—including testimony from his GED tutor who, though her daughter was married to our chief of police, nevertheless described Bill's determination and hard work as greater than any other prisoner she had tutored. I felt the unmistakable sense of calling that comes when the Spirit moves me to speak in Meeting, but I didn't know if Bill's story would be enough.

Pictures At An Execution

The witnesses are confined to the chapel. The wait is interminable, much longer than officials had represented. Instead of it being thirty minutes before the end of his world, it has been over an hour. Schedules adjust, but only as to the moment of his ending, not the fact of his extermination. Death—that much is certain.

The witnesses are ushered to their seats. The curtains open. The body strapped, almost strait-jacketed. The long fingers that decades ago caressed a woman's cheek, that once grasped a gun as a man was left to die, now lift slowly and flutter his good-bye. The head turns. These are the last minutes of the world for him. And for the witnesses, who will never be as innocent and free again, who will order the events of their lives by the bookmark of his execution. No one speaks. No one moves. It is so absolutely quiet that each witness can hear the heartbeat of the person beside.

Then he vomits. Over and over. Purging himself of his last supper. The witnesses, forewarned that they will be banished if they speak out, barred from honoring his last wish for their presence, struggle to silence themselves, struggle not to gag. Tears fall, knuckles tighten, some fight to not throw themselves like birds against the plate glass of the execution chamber. In his mind's eye, one witness sees himself grabbing a weapon, freeing the man bound to the gurney, the poison poised on the brink of coursing through his veins, ripping out the IV lines, running ... free.

With the vomit cleaned from his face, the ship of death rights itself. This is the final act. The final curtain.

All is as clinical and sanitary as the showers at Auschwitz. His eyelashes, so long they brush his ashen cheeks, flutter, then still. The moth's wings shudder from the camphor. The specimen is pinned. That of God that existed in him is dead.

The ashes are spread by a tree. Those who knew him, who fought with the simple hope of knowing him still, stand beneath the branches. Some feel his presence, some are even sure he is there. For a decade and a half he'd longed to see a tree. None ever grew in the yard on death row. By spring, he will be part of the greening.

Not all of the lawyers who knew him were able to go on. One left the practice of law, left the state that murdered him. When the idea of writing this article was first raised, her reaction brought back the words of the Russian poet, Anna Akhmatova, who like so many thousands of others had lost her loved ones to executioners:

"I spent seventeen months in prison queues in Leningrad Beside me, in the queue, there was a woman with blue lipsshe suddenly came out of that trance so common to us all and whispered in my ear (everybody spoke in whispers there): 'Can you describe this?' And I said: 'Yes. I can.' And then something like the shadow of a smile crossed what had once been her face."

But even she has begun to move on. She hears his voice sometimes while walking in the mountains. After years of stooping to pick up the five smooth stones to slay Goliath, she bends to no one. She wakes early, follows the sun rise, and at times, carries him with her. And through her, freedom and love call in answer to the shrouded heart.

I'm Alive

When the judge uttered the words that meant he would live, the man just broke down and cried. His face was lit from deep within, he looked as innocent as a child, aglow with joy and he became new. The man who had struggled to breathe in the iron lung of a death sentence year after brutal, lonely year, was reborn. There is a childlike awe in his gaze as he whispers, over and over, the tears falling, "I'm alive. Oh my God, I'm alive."

His lawyer knew then, for the first time, what he had endured. How he had held his breath all those years in the Valley of the Shadow of Death. And she knew what she had lived under, not knowing all that past year whether she had been working on a cadaver, dictating an autopsy report, or whether her patient would survive.

"To have saved one life, it is as though you have saved the entire world." — The Talmud.

Christians And The Death Penalty

I wrote this article without telling you which of our clients lived and which was executed because I did not want this to be merely a piece about just my success or failure in saving Bill's life. I did not want Christians to conclude that a hard working lawyer, or a Quaker lawyer, could solve the problems inherent in the death penalty's profoundly arbitrary calculus of determining who should live or die.

It is easy to be against war when there is no war. And even easier to believe in forgiveness when there is no great horror to forgive. As Christians, much more is required. Our faith challenges us to practice nonviolence even during war, reconciliation even for the condemned, and to love rather than to kill our enemies.

Of course, Jesus was once asked to support the death penalty, the stoning of an adulteress. His answer was unequivocal: "Let the one who is without sin among you cast the first stone" (John 8:7). Would you have stoned both men to death? Probably not, as Christians. But would you have read of the imminence of their stoning in the newspapers and done nothing, offered no protest, spoken no truth to this lethal power?

The Killing Fields

Over three thousand men and women await execution in America. "I should like to call you all by name..." Some have no lawyers, and their fate is assured. Others are represented by hard-fighting, but soul-weary teams of lawyers and investigators, some of whom I know and care for deeply. Everywhere around me, eyes I love are closing on this final horror.

I do not know how to stop the bloodbath, the killing of our, not God's, mistakes. Those of us with any sense know we cannot hunt murderers to extinction when every day society's indifference breeds murderers anew.

But this essay is meant to be more than a voyeur's glimpse at the profanity of the death penalty. It is a call to action. I implore you, make a strong stand for life. These cases are being tried in your cities and towns. Your county prosecutors are pursuing these death sentences, sentences that are the vote of your neighbors. The death penalty is the greatest act of domestic violence, the ultimate example of our society modeling violence as a solution to violence. As Christians, is it not our sacred calling to see this societally sanctioned slaughter abolished? †

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Do's and Don'ts

*Some people do
Some people don't
Some people will
Some people won't
You ask me why I do
If you would do
Then, you would know
Don't make sense
Of course it don't
You don't do
So, you don't know*

- Ed Potts

Ed Potts is a Partner at the Open Door Community.

Christian Peacemaking in Hebron, West Bank

by JoAnne Lingle

(Editor's note: This past winter, JoAnne Lingle spent several months as a volunteer with the Christian Peacemaker Teams in Hebron, West Bank. Below is her reflection on that experience, immediately followed by a selection of letters written by other Christian Peacemaker Team members in Hebron while JoAnne was serving there. JoAnne is currently a Resident Volunteer at the Open Door Community.)

On the evening of December 10, 1997, I left Indianapolis on the first leg of my flight to Tel Aviv, Israel.

This was to be my first experience as a reserve member of Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT). I had committed to work part time in Hebron, West Bank, for the next three years.

CPT is an initiative of the historic peace churches (Mennonite, Brethren, Quaker) and offers prayerful, nonviolent alternatives to war and other forms of deadly conflict. Currently there are twelve full time CPT members and fifty-one part-time members.

The idea of CPT came from a 1984 speech by Ron Sider at the Mennonite World Conference. He said, "What would happen if we in the Christian church developed a new nonviolent peacekeeping force of 100,000 persons ready to move into violent conflicts?...Do we not have as much courage and faith as soldiers?...Unless we are prepared to risk injury and death in nonviolent opposition to the injustice our societies foster, we should confess that we never really meant that the cross was an alternative to the sword...I believe praying, Spirit-filled, nonviolent peacekeeping forces would, by God's special grace, be able to end the violence and nurture justice."

Getting in the Jesus Way of peacemaking includes getting in the way of violence through active nonviolence and other forms of public witness. CPTers continue to risk arrest in nonviolent direct action in their violence reduction projects.

In addition to maintaining violence reduction teams for much of 1997 in Hebron, Richmond, Virginia, and part of the year in Haiti, CPT sent numerous peacemaker delegations to Chiapas, Mexico, and Israel/Palestine. CPT plans to place a small team in Chiapas where paramilitary and military violence is rising.

Since June 1995, CPT has had a continuing presence in Hebron by invitation of the Hebron Municipality. In 1997 some of CPT's work included:

- fasting for 700 hours during Lent in support of Palestinians whose homes are threatened with demolition by Israeli authorities—more



Palestinian house demolition ordered by the Israeli government.

than 1,000 people in churches around the world participated in some way in the "Fast for Rebuilding";

- attempting to rebuild a demolished home on Good Friday, which resulted in the arrest of a CPTer, an Israeli rabbi, and two Palestinian Muslims;
- working with Israeli peace groups and North American congregations, linking them with Palestinians facing home demolition through the Campaign for Secure Dwellings;
- hosting Rebuilders Against Bulldozers delegations to Hebron to oppose home demolitions;
- blocking demolition of Palestinian homes and assisting in their rebuilding;
- providing a protective presence for USAID (U.S. Agency for International Development) road construction workers under attack from Israeli settlers;
- physically intervening to support Palestinians targeted by Israeli security forces or Israeli settlers;
- reporting on human rights violations and arbitrary arrests.

During the three months I spent with CPT, six to eight of us shared two apartments located in the old city of Hebron. We lived on "chicken street" in the market. Next to our apartments was a mosque and every morning during Ramadan, I was awakened with a Muslim call to prayer and the crowing of roosters. Remembering this now, I realize how much I miss these wonderful sounds.

Our daily routine started with worship and hymn singing in the park across from the Ibrihimi Mosque (Cave Machpela). This is the burial place of Abraham and Sarah.

After worship we walked the streets of the old city and the market, which are still under Israeli military occupation after thirty-one years. In this small section of Hebron (about five to six city blocks) there are six military check points where Palestinians are stopped for ID checks and routine harassment. There are four Israeli settlements, a military camp and a Yeshiva school here as well. Prior to being taken over by Israelis without compensation, these were Palestinian schools, a Palestinian bus station, and a Palestinian hospital.

The population of Hebron consists of 120,000 Palestinians, 400 Israelis (which includes 250 Yeshiva students) and 1,200 Israeli Defense Force (IDF) soldiers who are there for the sole purpose of providing "security" for the Israeli settlers. When Palestinians or internationalists are attacked, the IDF cannot come to their aid. They can only advise the victims to leave, as those victims are always seen as being the problem.

In time, I became accustomed to standing close to and engaging in conversations with soldiers carrying big guns. These are young men eighteen to twenty years old and trained for combat. However, what was really scary were the settlers walking the streets with M-16's and Uzi's strapped around their shoulders, some of them teenagers.

Whenever clashes between Palestinian youth and the IDF broke out, we were there with our cameras (video and regular), notepads, pens and cell phones. We were less concerned about being injured from rock throwing than being hit by rubber bullets. Bullets coated with hard rubber can break bones, put out eyes and kill if they enter the brain.

A special joy I experienced was friendship with Palestinian Muslims. Our Hebron friends were the most hospitable people I have ever met. On the streets we were continually greeted with "Welcome!", smiles and handshakes. When visiting a Palestinian home, hot tea, fruit and sweets were always offered. At Christmas we were given gifts and cakes from Muslims out of respect for our Christian faith. Also, we discovered that a short or abrupt visit is considered rude both to the host and to the guest, so our visits were always long and very cordial. Social engage-

ments and hospitality are most important in this culture.

When we received death threats from Kach (a Jewish organization banned both in Israel and the U.S.), one of our Palestinian friends, Atta Jabber, came to us and said, "I must take you home with me so I can protect you." His family of four live in a two-room house (with no indoor plumbing) that is under a home demolition order. His generosity overwhelmed us.

We visited his family along with six people from Peace Now, an Israeli group supporting both an end to the occupation and a recognized Palestinian state. The Israelis were welcomed with the usual Palestinian hospitality. What a blessing it was to witness Palestinians and Jews breaking bread together. Upon leaving, one of the Israelis (pictured in upper-right of photo on next page) said to me, with tears in his eyes, "It is an evil thing to make people live like this." If this encounter could occur over time, surely peace would come to this Holy Land.

Hebron: "My Name is Hate"

by Pierre Shantz

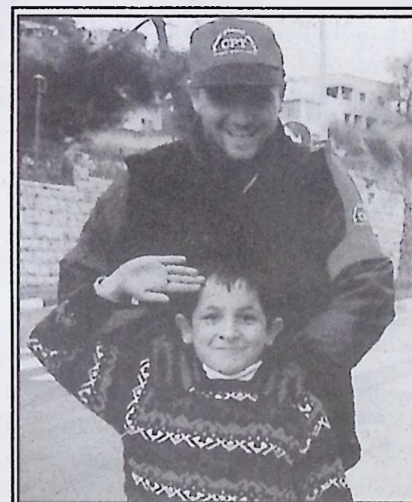
(Editor's note: Pierre Shantz is from Kitchener, Ontario, and has committed to three years of full-time CPT service.)

After an explosion, Cliff Kindy and I were patrolling to see if there were any problems. Everything seemed calm, the explosion was only a large firecracker, one of many that are lit during the month of Ramadan.

As we passed the Israeli settlement of Beit Hadassah, soldiers were detaining 3 Palestinian men so we stopped to observe. The men were released, but 3 more were stopped and checked. It seemed that the soldiers were going to stop a lot of people, so Cliff and I decided to stay

and watch.

We were talking with some of the soldiers about CPT. The soldiers were doing body searches of many of the Palestinians. When I tried to take pictures, the soldiers stopped me saying I was not press or TIPH (Temporary International Presence in Hebron). We then saw a soldier dig his thumbs into a Palestinian's throat, flip him around and then two other soldiers began kicking the Palestinian in the back.



A Palestinian boy, Anais, with his good friend and CPTer, Pierre Shantz.

Cliff and I made a move to intervene, but the soldiers we were talking to stopped us. Then out of nowhere a settler grabbed Cliff, pushed him, and yelled, "Leave, this is our street and you have no right to be here!" We decided to stay and continue observing the situation. The settler then came over and threatened, "If you don't leave, I will go in there (pointing at the settlement of Beit Hadassah) and get my friends to beat you up."

Because the situation was escalating I called TIPIH. The settler left to get his friends. We stood and continued to monitor the soldiers' treatment of the detained Palestinians. We decided that we would stay until TIPIH arrived. Four or five settler men, including the first one, returned.

Looking at Cliff, the man who had pushed him the first time said, "I want to bash your face in." Extending his hand, Cliff asked him "I don't think we've ever met, what's your name?" "My name is Hate and I hate you," stated the settler. He then pushed Cliff off the sidewalk.

We moved back a little — hoping they would leave, but they followed and surrounded us. One of the settlers repeatedly said, "You are anti-Semites." One of the other settlers looked at me and said, "I want to punch you in the face."

"Why would you want to do that?" I calmly asked.

"Because you are anti-Semite."

"That's not true, I don't hate Jews."

The same man who pushed Cliff then pushed me to the ground. Catching myself, I got up and moved back. A soldier made his way up and stood between us and the settlers. After speaking with them, he turned around and said, "You guys better leave."

"We are staying here until TIPIH gets here because the soldiers are beating a Palestinian down there." As I said this, I could see the TIPIH patrol arriving. We then left.

Israeli Settler Action in Hebron

by Cliff Kindy

(Editor's note: Cliff Kindy is a full-time CPT member from North Manchester, Indiana. He has been active in nonviolent resistance for many years, and was recently named the Atlantic Northeast District Brethren Peace Fellowship Peacemaker of the Year.)

Early in the morning of January 4, CPTers were told by one of the chicken shop owners on their street that something was happening behind the Avriham Avinu settlement in the lower Palestinian market. CPTers, JoAnne Lingle and I, went quickly to the area and found the tunnel alleys and rooftops filled with 50 Israeli soldiers and police. The Israelis were closing off the area to Palestinians and internationals.

From reports of journalists who had been there for hours, and shopkeepers in those streets, it was clear that Israeli settlers had occupied a Palestinian area during the night as they called for a closed military zone around the Palestinian shops and homes near the settlement. The settlers wanted it closed for security reasons, but during the night they had thrown stones and chemicals down on Palestinian pedestrians going to early morning Ramadan prayers, so it appeared to be a one-sided security. One Palestinian municipal worker, Nidal Awelweh, was taken to the hospital after being overcome by the chemicals.

The Israeli security forces removed 29 Israeli settlers, more than half of them women, from the area by mid-morning. In spite of provocations from the settlers, Palestinians behind the police lines remained calm. Reports indicated that 12 settlers were arrested and will be charged in the action. There have been claims from settlers of stone, bomb, and gun attacks near the settlement and they have accused the Israeli military of neglecting the security of the settlers.

Later that week, settlers were throwing stones from the rooftops and a Palestinian from the Sharabati family who was closing his window against their barrage of stones was hit in the eye by one of the stones. Four Palestinians were detained by Israeli police as they rounded up Palestinians instead of controlling the settlers. There have been no settlers injured in spite of all the reported attacks. ♦

What is the Open Door to Me?

By Sara Simpson

What is the Open Door to me? Before I applied to be a Resident Volunteer for the summer, it was only a place I had read and heard about from friends and professors, and a place I had visited a couple of times with groups from Presbyterian College, where I will be a senior this Fall. This Spring it was a place I discussed and even wrote a paper about for a class called Third World Seminar and Experience. And by March, it had become a place I felt so compelled to learn more about that I decided to apply for a summer internship.

Still, when the time actually came to arrive here in late May, it was a place—and a community—about which I still had many apprehensions. It was also difficult to describe to skeptical friends and relatives the exact nature of what I would be doing here when I wasn't exactly sure of it myself.

What I did know was that in my studies and experiences in the Third World class, I had just begun to learn about why people are poor, and why it is my responsibility as a Christian to work towards changing the systems of injustice that keep people in poverty. These ideas—better known as liberation theology—turned my world and my faith upside-down. I realized then, and more fully understand now, that much of what I'd been brought up to believe is myth. I saw that while our capitalist society teaches us to believe that if a person works hard enough, they can bring themselves out of poverty, the reality of poverty is just the opposite. So I wanted to learn more, and the Open Door seemed to me to be the best place to do it.

My summer at the Open Door has been, and this is no overstatement, the most memorable summer of my life. For someone like myself—a twenty-one year old white college student—the Open Door has been a place where I have been continuously challenged to rethink the meaning of things that I had never questioned, as well as things I had questioned: my privileged background, my education, my white skin, my gender, my faith, and my political views. This was the first time I'd ever lived in a racially integrated community, and the closest I've ever lived to the homeless. I also visited a prison, witnessed an action of civil disobedience (at Underground Atlanta), and saw police harassment in our own front yard—all for the

first time. Come to think of it, never before had I gotten up at 5 a.m. on a regular basis, as I did three or four times a week to serve breakfast at Butler Street CME Church. On a different level, living in an intentional community posed many challenges that I hadn't expected. Being used to an individualistic and consumer-oriented lifestyle, living in community made me realize that many of the things our society tells us are necessary—lots of money, cars, television, fancy clothing—really are not.

Aside from the challenges and sacrifices I've experienced at the Open Door, more often I've experienced ways it has enriched and made life more joyful. I've met and made friends with some of the most wonderful, unique, and faithful people in my life. I've come to know well many of the homeless people who live in our yard and whom we serve at Butler Street breakfast—enabling me to, as the people at the Open Door do, call them "friends."

My favorite day at the Open Door has been Sunday, because it's the day the community, both residential and extended, gathers for a Spirit-filled, prayerful, musical, and moving worship followed by Holy Communion, fellowship, and dinner. Neither will I forget the weekend we spent at Dayspring retreat center for the community's summer retreat. More than ever, I really appreciated the quiet and beauty of the country, something we students at my school (which is in a small town in South Carolina) often complain about. Mostly though, I loved living with a group of diverse yet committed Christians, among whom I could always find someone with whom I could talk and reflect on my daily experiences.

So now that I have just over one week left at the Open Door, I am faced with the question of how I will keep what I have learned a part of my life. I have no illusions that "re-adjusting" to life outside of the community will be easy. But I know that when I go away from here, I will be able to share what I have learned about Christ, about justice, and about how I more than ever want to spend my life working towards human rights. I'll also have many memories of a wonderful summer to carry with me for the rest of my life. Most importantly, though, when someone asks me what the Open Door is, I'll be able to tell them what it has truly been to me for the last two and a half months: home. ♦



Israeli Peace Now members (the two at left, and four at right) being welcomed at the home of the Palestinian Jabber family (center).

The Witness of Christian Martyrs: The Politics of Worship in John's Apocalypse

(Some thoughts on reading the book of Revelation, part 2 of 2)

by Stan Saunders

After this I looked, and there was a great crowd—no one could count all the people! They were from every race, every nation, from every tribe and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, dressed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!" And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, singing, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might belong to our God forever and ever! Amen." Then one of the elders asked me, "Who are these people dressed in white robes, and where have they come from?" I said to him, "Sir, you are the one that knows." Then he said to me, "These are the people who have come through the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. This is why they stand before the throne of God, and worship God day and night within God's temple. The one who sits on the throne will protect them with God's presence. Never again will they hunger or thirst; neither the sun nor the scorching heat will burn them; for the Lamb, who is at the center of the throne, will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." (Rev. 7:9-17)

In previous remarks about the importance of John's Revelation for those who work among the



ADOLPHUS VICTRUM

Rita Owens of Publix Supermarkets in Atlanta recently came to our lunch-time worship to present the Open Door Community with a generous donation. She is shown here with Ed Loring of the Open Door. We are thankful to Publix and the many other individuals and organizations who help support our ministry to the homeless and the prisoner.

poor and oppressed, I pointed to several factors that have made this book difficult for Christendom to accept. It is written from the perspective of and for those who experience oppression and the denial of dignity—people much like the poor and homeless today. In the face of the world's claims about power and reality, the visions of Revelation point to a "Lamb that has been slain" as the one true power in this world, and thereby undermine the pretensions and claims of the rich and powerful. Thus, for churches that have grown comfortable with the status quo, and for those who claim to be Christians but ignore the cries of the poor and oppressed, this book is deeply embarrassing. Little wonder that we have turned Revelation into an esoteric code book about the end of the world somewhere out in the future. No wonder John's visions of heaven seem to describe distant realities rather than the hidden dimensions of our own earthly experience.

Throughout this book, however, John's perspective is less focused on the "second coming of Jesus" or the "end of the world" than on the powerful, transforming presence of the crucified and risen Jesus *now*. In other words, history has already been transformed in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Lion of Judah, the Lamb who was slain. John's point is that we are no longer held captive to an experience of time that moves always toward death. While it is clear that for John, the present moment is a crisis of earth-shattering proportion—a crisis that is frightening even to the faithful—we now also live in the time when the Lamb reigns, in a moment of grace and transformation, in a time of resistance, witness, and building the reign of God. In this time, where there is apparent death, violence, oppression, and chaos, the more powerful reality is that God is present to bring healing, inclusion, and restoration.

The only appropriate setting for our perception of the realities John describes, as well as for a more accurate discernment of the message of Revelation itself, is the worshipping community of the oppressed—the martyrs who offer their very lives as testimony to the reign of the Lamb. We can see this clearly in Revelation 7:9-17. As is true of much of Revelation, the setting of these verses is worship. We know this first of all by the identification of the primary actors described in these verses. Who are these here gathered before the throne of God? John describes them as those who have come through the great ordeal and have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. Not merely the nice people, not merely those in clean suits and pretty hats. And these are certainly not respectable folks in the eyes of the world. Those who have come through the ordeal—the tribulation—are earlier described as those who bear the seal, or mark of the Lamb written on their foreheads. This describes not just a physical mark, but a belonging; the mark is put upon those who follow a way of life, behavior, practices that defy the idols of this world. The mark is upon those who have resisted the powers of this world to the point of death. They are the martyrs, those who witness at the cost of their lives the power of a crucified messiah. They come from every race, nation, tribe,

and language, defying the conventional divisions of the world. The ordeal they have come through is the persistent suffering, oppression, imprisonment, exclusion, violence, rejection, and finally death by which the system resists their worship of Jesus Christ. Theirs is not worship for the sake of impressions, but worship in the face of death. They now wear purified clothing, robes that have been soaked in the Lamb's blood.

It is crucial for us to recognize the political character of this worship in the words spoken by the martyrs. The worship language that John cites in these verses may sound rather ordinary to us, but for John and the rest of the first century church, this language was the cultic and political language of the Roman empire, which claimed that salvation and peace were the gift—the grace—of the Caesars, that faith was a matter of putting one's trust in the Emperor, that justice and righteousness consisted in being a good citizen of the empire, abiding by all its laws, and finding one's right place, whether as free or slave, within the existing social structures. This language wasn't borrowed by the Empire from the Christians, but by the Christians from the empire. What we have come to know as religious language was in fact the political language of the reigning powers of this world. What the Christians like John did was take the words being spoken about Caesar and the Empire and relate them to Jesus.

As the passage points out, they believed real power lay not in the hands of the emperors, the rich, the powerful, or the military leaders, but with the "Lamb who was slain." In other words, where the world wants to turn words like peace, freedom, justice, faith, and grace into empty platitudes, John wants to use these terms to describe another reality, the rule of the Lamb. The cry of those gathered around the throne of God in v. 10—"Salvation belongs to our God, who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb"—is not Church talk, but a social and political claim about who the real ruler of the world is. Verse 12: "Blessing and glory and wisdom and honor and power and might belong to our God forever and ever." Again, this is not vapid doxology, but real praise in the face of the contrary claims of the Roman empire.

The opening of the sixth seal, of which these verses are the culmination, describes reality not only in the first century context of John's community, but the present reality wherever and whenever the poor and the oppressed endure the chaos of life in the hands of the empire. Does Bill Gates have the operating system of the future? No, the Lamb who was slain does. Does Central Atlanta Progress know how to make a beautiful city? No, the Lamb who was slain does. Does the Criminal Justice System know how to make our streets safe again? No, only the Lamb who was slain. Can we trust Prudential to provide a secure future for our families? No, only the Lamb who was slain. Is Coca-Cola really the real thing? No, only the Lamb who was slain. Blessing and glory and wisdom and honor and power and might belong not to the powers of this world, but to our God!

In the end, Revelation is not only an account of John's visions and convictions, but more

("The Witness," continued from page 8)

particularly a book of prayer. We are living today in a time of crisis, not unlike the time when John experienced his visions of heaven and earth in ultimate crisis. We ought to be concerned about what lies before us, just as the first readers of this book were. We are witnessing unprecedented ecological, political, social, and economic crisis. Meanwhile the powers are telling us that the economy is getting stronger, that global warming cannot be proven, that our lives are better than ever before, and that the poor are that way because they choose to be. Revelation warns us that things are getting worse, and the worst is yet to come. It warns us that it is those who are already poor and oppressed who will bear the brunt of the suffering to come: We have every right to be afraid. But it also assures us that God is working to reclaim what has been broken. Despite all appearances, the Lamb who was slain now rules. This is not a conviction that should lead us to passivity, but rather a vision that calls us to continue to witness faithfully to the one who sits on the throne. And so I invite us to pray with John that our witness may be with words that are true and with bodies that are strong to endure whatever suffering the world puts before us for the sake of the Lamb. Let our hope be set on the day when,

"The one who sits on the throne will protect us with his presence. Never again will we hunger or thirst; neither the sun nor the scorching heat will burn us; for the Lamb, who is at the center of the throne, will be our shepherd, and he will guide us to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from our eyes." (Rev. 7:15-17)

And let the prayer we give expression to, both with our words and our bodies, be the prayer of the martyrs: "Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb."

Stan Saunders is Assistant Professor of New Testament at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia.

Something To Think About:

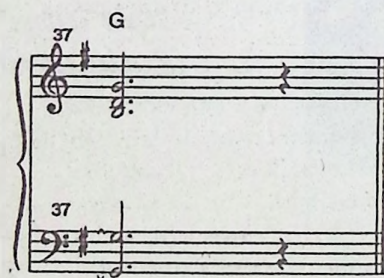
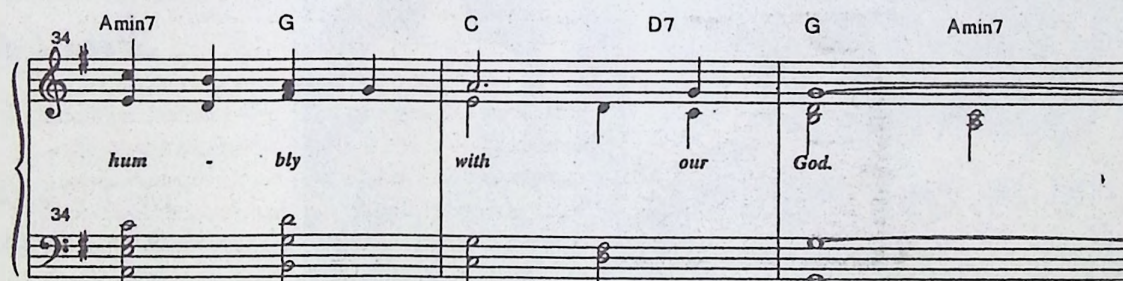
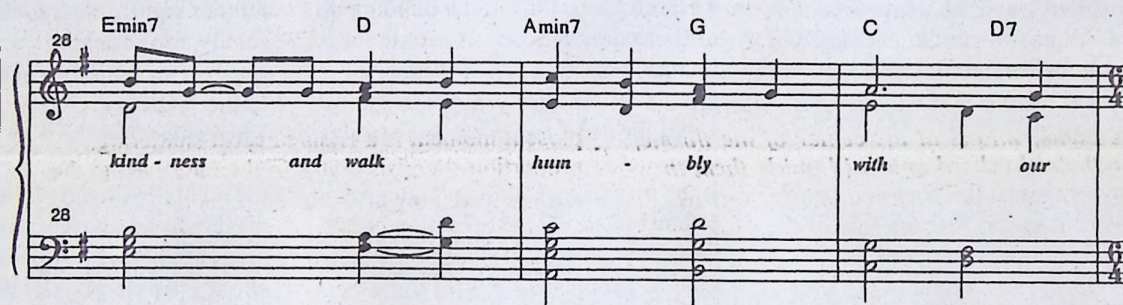
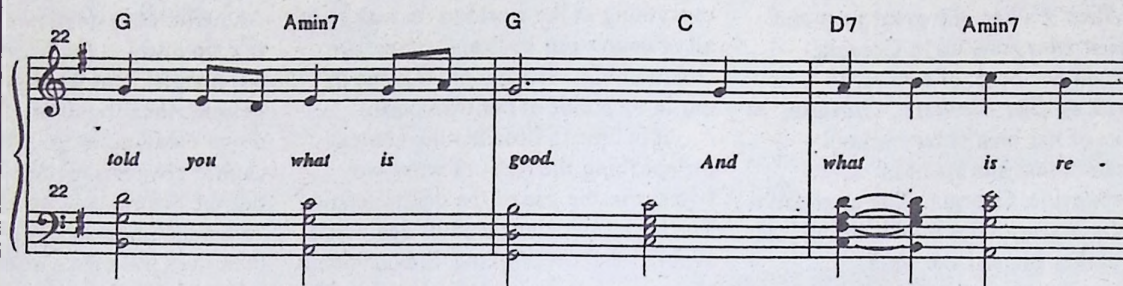
"...if the richest one percent of Americans were taxed in 1990 under the tax laws that were in effect in 1977, they would have paid \$39 billion dollars more in taxes in 1990. This money, says a study by the Children's Defense Fund, would be enough to lift every child in the country (there are 12.6 million of them) out of poverty."

We would do well to remember the words of President Dwight D. Eisenhower: "Every gun that is fired, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and not clothed. The world in arms is not spending money alone, it is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, and hope of its children."

Micah

by Clyde Tipton
1998

moderato



A gifted composer of many works, Clyde Tipton is a Professor of Music at Georgia College and State University, and Director of Music for the First Presbyterian Church of Milledgeville. This piece is the third of three musical settings he wrote in response to Open Door Community Calendars.

("Remember..." continued from page 2)

It physically controls the poor through the use of prison, jail, probation and parole. It exerts political control by taking voting rights from convicted felons. And it stands as a constant threat to poor people, and especially poor people of color: "If you step out of line we will take your freedom, or kill you."

Alice Walker, the great poet and novelist who grew up in Georgia, writes in her book of essays, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*, of a year of her elementary school education that she spent in Milledgeville, Georgia. She attended a shabby segregated school in a building that earlier housed the state penitentiary for men. Every day she walked through the building over a distinct circular imprint in the wooden floor. She came to learn that the imprint on the floor marked where the state's first electric chair had stood. It went without saying, perhaps, that hundreds of men, the vast majority of them Black, and one Black woman had died by judicial decree in that very spot. Walker seemed to know without being told why the imprint was never sanded down or painted over by the powers that be of the white school board. A not-so-subtle message was meant to be communicated as small black feet passed that way several times each day.

The death penalty is an act of terrorism against the poor and people of color. It seems that the role of the criminal control system and its symbolic and real threat in the lives of people of color is one of the hardest things for white people to recognize and understand. It is about instilling fear and acquiescence. It is the brutal assertion of white supremacy and white control over the lives of African American children and adults.

The abandonment of the poor is a necessary part of this process. The death penalty is a crucial underpinning of the cultural assumptions about the "bad poor," the "undeserving poor." If anybody had used language like that 25 years ago we would have been horrified. But it is common parlance today.

All this is to say that how we use and administer the death penalty has everything in the world to do with how all of us live our lives and shape our common life. We ignore its place in our body politic at our own peril.

It is time to broaden the context for speaking the truth of what we witness in the use of the death penalty. The hack politicians lead us again and again to shallow thinking, ill-considered emotional response, and—in the legal arena—a focus on procedural trivia rather than substance and meaning. Those who use the death penalty for their own political advancement are setting the terms and the parameters for the discussion, and we cannot let them continue to do it. We must insist on some wide space for public discourse, and not be afraid to point out that we are asking the wrong questions and settling for a mean spirit and shallow vindictiveness in place of a search for healing and a building up of the common good. It is time for mature, reasoned public discourse around issues like "What would it mean for us to recommit to a standard of fairness in the public arena? What is the meaning of truth and integrity in public life and in the operation of our judicial and political systems? What kind of people do we want to be anyway?"

We might not be the ones who are going to undo this horror. We might not be the ones to unravel the many levels of terrorism built into this deadly system. It will probably be left to others to reap the harvest of the seeds

that we sow. All we can do is the best we can with the time and resources available to us. That is good news. It's also terrible news, because our time and resources are too limited, and the lives of particular human beings hang in the balance. And the soul of our culture hangs in the balance. In the short run, we are going to keep losing people to the chair, the needle, the gas, the noose. And with each death we will continue to chip away at the heart and soul of our people. But if we give into despair, then the lives of those who go down mean nothing. Maybe we cannot always see their lives spared, but they can live if we let the tragedy, and sometimes even the triumph, of their lives live inside us until their bones and their lives and their voices become a smoldering, hot, loving anger burning inside of us and fueling our actions.

In every possible time, in every possible place, we must tell the simple, undecorated truth. The truth that the death penalty is wrong. The truth that the death penalty is racist, and it always discriminates against the poor and the most vulnerable. The truth that the death penalty is a system that distorts truth, destroys human dignity, degrades the human family, robs our spirit, and drains our hope. The truth of what is happening to the poorest and most vulnerable among us. The truth about how willing we are to dispose of children, the mentally ill, the physically disabled, the unattractive, the disfigured, the not-like-us. The truth about how we are steadily dismantling the structures and institutions of democracy. We must tell the truth about what is happening to the withering, cracking soul of our common humanity; because if we do not speak up, we die.

Dr. King said that we die any time

we refuse to stand up for what is right. We die when we refuse to take a stand for that which is true. And the people who are the most alive in this day and age are those who share with others some common understanding of our plight, and a commitment to do something about it.

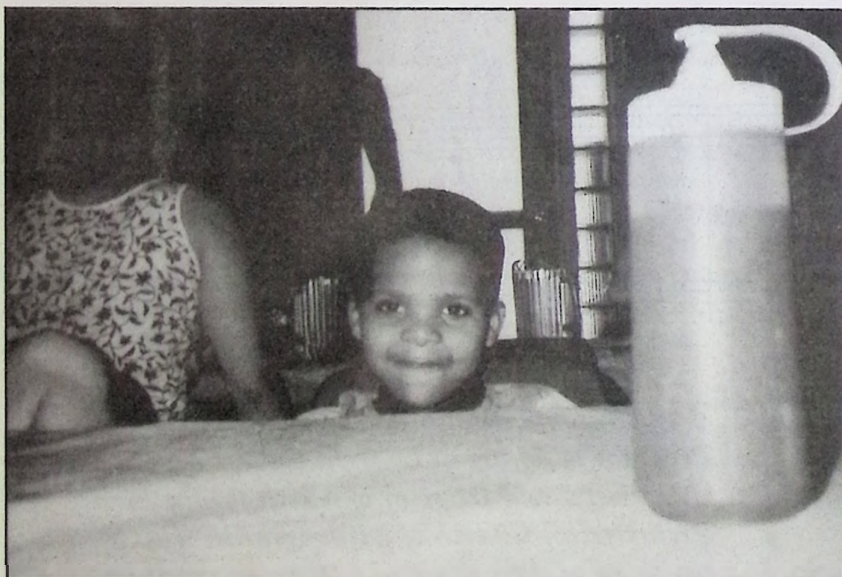
From inside the struggle we can learn some pretty simple things: The struggle itself gives life and builds hope. When you struggle to keep hope alive in somebody else, you find that you keep it alive in yourself. Gratitude for life, vitality, and struggle is an essential part of what makes us human. The experience of human solidarity is healing. When we live in solidarity with our people in their lives and in their deaths, there is healing for all of us. It might not be what we want. We want the executions stopped. We want the death penalty abolished. But even in the meantime there is healing and life in human solidarity.

In this movement, friends can spring up anywhere and everywhere. And so can enemies. Those who cannot live with having enemies are usually not around for long. But the amazing thing is the friendships. At so many points in this journey we walk with companions who are sources of hope and healing in our lives. Here are gracious resources to help us rebuild our commitment.

Jesus, the writer of Hebrews tells us, died outside the camp. We show our faithfulness by going to him there and sharing the shame he bore for us. It is from that place that we remember those in prison as if we were in prison with them. This is the solidarity that is the basis for our discernment and the life-source of our thanksgiving and praise.

Murphy Davis is a Partner at the Open Door Community.

Join us as a Resident Volunteer!



MURPHY DAVIS

A smile from Damien Lee—lunch time at the Open Door Community.

Spend 6 to 12 months as a Resident Volunteer

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

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

Dear Open Door Community:

This letter is two-fold. The first being the address correction mentioned above, so there won't be a delay in my getting my next copy of "Hospitality" that I look forward to so much. Second, and most important, to tell you about a wonderful blessing the Lord has bestowed to all the fathers at Macon State Prison in Oglethorpe, Ga.

About four months ago, I read in a newspaper about a women's prison in Illinois that allowed the incarcerated mothers to read books on cassette tape to their small children, outside prison walls. This allowed them to hear "Mommy's voice" read them a bedtime story. I felt this was a great idea. In Georgia, we aren't allowed tape recorders; only tape players. If mothers are allowed to do this, why not incarcerated fathers? I prayed about this and the Lord showed me that the work of a father, just as the work of a mother, is not replaceable. He led me to many statistics that the secular world would understand, if only they would listen. In the secular society, men are not viewed as important to the development of well-adjusted children. The problem with men is viewed as an absence of money, instead of the absence of a father. A welfare check is more reliable, and is nowhere near as potentially annoying as an actual man. The family unit is seen as a woman's rights issue, rather than an issue of what is best for our children. But the facts show that our prisons contain an overwhelming number of men who grew up in a fatherless home.

Just as boys are handicapped by growing up without a father in the home, so are girls. Girls raised only by their mothers, according to a major 1986 study, are 53% more likely to marry as teens, 111% more likely to have pre-marital births, and 92% more likely to dissolve their own marriages. What is the bottom line? The value of fathers is vastly underestimated in society. And because of this, all of us are losers.

I went to Chaplain Harriston with the idea and statistics. He thought it was a great idea. It was then presented to Warden Garinger, who also thought it was a great idea. It was then put forth to Atlanta D.O.C. (There is no doubt in my mind that God's hand was in this because,) Atlanta approved it!

Danny Smith from "Dove Ministry" of Buford, Georgia, has donated four cassette recorders and 100 blank cassette tapes so far. More in the future when needed. A local Mennonite congregation is going to donate a large quantity of children's books.

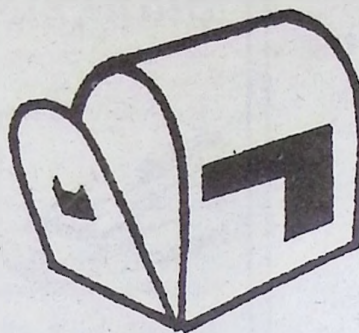
It won't be long before the fathers in this prison will be reading to their children, letting them know "Daddy" is thinking about them, and loves them very much. Praise God! Isn't this a great blessing?

Grace and Peaces of Mail

Thanks again for the wonderful work you do in God's name.

In Christ Jesus,

Jim LeMons
Macon State Prison
Oglethorpe, GA



Dear Ed:

I received my July edition of *Hospitality* and enjoyed your article. Thank you very much for keeping us on your distribution list so that I can read valuable information about your agency.

Sincerely,

Marvin S. Arrington
Arrington & Hollowell
Atlanta, GA

Murphy,

I have read your article in *Hospitality* about North Carolina and Andrew Jackson at Waxhaw ["Where is Everybody?" August 1998]. I'm from that area, too.

[The Jackson family's] log cabin where he lived was in Waxhaw and he considered this his home. But his mother was visiting someone in South Carolina when he was born. And that is the reason that both states claim Andrew Jackson.

I thought you would like to know that.

Christine Staten
Atlanta, GA

(Editor's note: The following ad was mailed to us in response to Ed Loring's "Questions for Our Readers" in our July issue. It was sent to us by Calvin Kimbrough, United Methodist minister and member of the Tennessee Conference, and it appeared in SEJ United Methodist, May 1998.)

Ed asked,

Do you play golf? Do the members of your church? What is the relationship, if any, between the number of hours spent on the golf course and the lack of Christians jailed for actions on behalf of human rights, civil rights, resistance to the state, and justice?

Clergy Golf Retreat Slated

The Intentional Growth Center [IGC] will sponsor a golf retreat for SEJ clergy September 7-11, 1998. ... The event will include 54 holes of golf

at three area courses, and daily worship and study...

...The director of the Intentional Growth Center, explained the rationale that led to this offering. "A few years ago IGC helped sponsor research ... regarding leisure and its relation to ministerial effectiveness, satisfaction, and burnout. The results clearly indicated that the church needs to offer more opportunities for combining worship, study, and recreation for its pastors. This event is one such response ..."

Another response to Ed's Questions...

Dear Ed:

I do NOT — emphatically — experience any contradiction between being a faithful Christian and being a citizen of the United States of America. Tension ... yes, certainly; but with the limits of ultimate loyalty to God I am proud of the political ideals embodied in our republic. Yes, the actual falls far short of the ideal ... that goes without saying. But in the historical dialectic represented by Christian attitudes toward the state, I am not one who stands *radically against* secular political loyalties. At various times in my life, as you know, I have opposed the actions of our republic, and also of several sovereign states of that republic, in the name of my Christian faith (and also in the name of the political ideals which our republic professes). Do you recall what Dietrich Bonhoeffer replied when asked how he could justify, as a Christian, participating in the plot to assassinate Adolph Hitler? "I did not do this as a Christian; I did it as a German citizen." I believe it is possible, and I am committed, to have a viable public political discourse that is not the sole prerogative of any single faith community. Your questionnaire at least suggests that such an attitude is somehow "un-Christian." There we simply part company.

Nor do I think that the flag of our country is an "idol," or a sign of contradiction to the faithful Christian. I display the flag at my home on national holidays — the flag we use is

the burial flag of my uncle, my Mother's beloved brother for whom I am named, who was a decorated navy veteran to the Pacific theater of WWII. My aunt gave it to me after his funeral. I respect Christians who cannot, in conscience, declare any kind of penultimate loyalty to a secular state, and who refuse to participate in any of the political rituals of our republic. But again, to suggest that such a stance is the *ONLY* faithful Christian possibility seems to me both historically and theologically untenable.

I do not think that the flag of our republic belongs in the sanctuary of a Christian community — many Christians feel differently, as you know. Nor do I think that Santa Claus or the Easter Bunny belong in the life of a Christian congregation — although I wouldn't say that no Christian family could entertain these relatively harmless fantasies as a part of family life.

I don't think Jesus is at all "harmless" in our public life. Virtually every political upheaval, every significant reform movement, every attempt to check the pretensions of the state to absolute power or its claims to ultimate loyalty, have been informed by faithful followers of Jesus. I think it is tragic that so many who profess to follow the way of Jesus pay so little attention to the claims he makes on our lives ... but that is another issue. Perhaps your question is simply an expression of your frustration that so little seems to change in those areas of our public life where you are committed and engaged ...?

Yes, I play golf ... regularly, as a form of recreation and exercise. I find it a healthy, uplifting, and relatively harmless pastime, endlessly fascinating, and I find some kind of strange "connection" with nature in that damn silly game ... make of that what you will...

Ed, I found the tone of your questionnaire very disturbing ... I guess you think it will unsettle comfortable, middle-class Christians who feel no tension between their faith and their culture. But it suggests a very simplistic resolution of that tension ... one which often tempts us when we see the gulf between Jesus' vision of God's rule and secular political authority ... which I think is a possible Christian stance, but by no means the only viable Christian stance, and I think you know this, on both historical and theological grounds. What's going on here ...? I need help ...

Peace,

Bill Swain
Tallahassee, FL

(Editor's note: Bill Swain is Service Professor of Religion at Florida State University, and a friend of the Open Door Community.)

WE ARE OPEN. . .

Monday through Saturday: telephones are answered from 9:00am until noon, from 2:00 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 noon prayers and lunch break from 12:30 until 2:00). Please call in advance if you need to arrange to come at other times. On Sunday we are open from 7:00am 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, 2:00pm-5pm
 CLARIFICATION MEETINGS: Alternate Tuesdays, 7:30-9pm.
 WEEKEND RETREATS: Four times each year (for our household and volunteers/supporters), next retreat is our Advent retreat in December.

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

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

____ Please ADD to the Hospitality mailing list.

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

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

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

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ St _____ Zip _____ + _____

Phone _____

Blankets!

As we near the end of summer we must look ahead to the cooler days of fall and winter, and here at the Open Door, the needs of the homeless change. Blankets become one of the essential items needed by our city's homeless. Your generous gifts of blankets would be appreciated.

Open Door Community

*We gather for worship and Eucharist on Sunday evenings followed by supper together.
Please join us!*

- September 6 5 p.m. Worship at 910;
Chris Glaser, preaching
- September 13 5 p.m. Festival of Shelters Worship at 910
- September 20 5 p.m. Worship at 910
- September 27 Worship at 910;
5:00 - 5:30 p.m. Eucharist
5:30 Celebration of Frances Pauley's 93rd Birthday

Brenda Bynum presents a reading of her play "Notional Women" which celebrates the life of Frances Pauley and three other remarkable women.

Are You Moving?

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

Thank you!

Clarification Meetings at the Open Door

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

Volunteer Needs

Soup Kitchen on Wednesdays or Fridays
 Butler St. Breakfast
 Hardwick Trip
 Sunday Morning Breakfast

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

Open Door Community Needs

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

Meat for the soup in our Soup Kitchen
 Sandwiches
 Table and Floor Lamps
 an Accoustic Guitar to be available for visitors to play at our Sunday Worship
 Vacuum Cleaners
 Toothpaste
 Blankets

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

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

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