



HOSPITALITY

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Providing hospitality to the homeless & to those in prison, through Christ's love.
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Alternatives to the Death Penalty

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

by Ed Loring

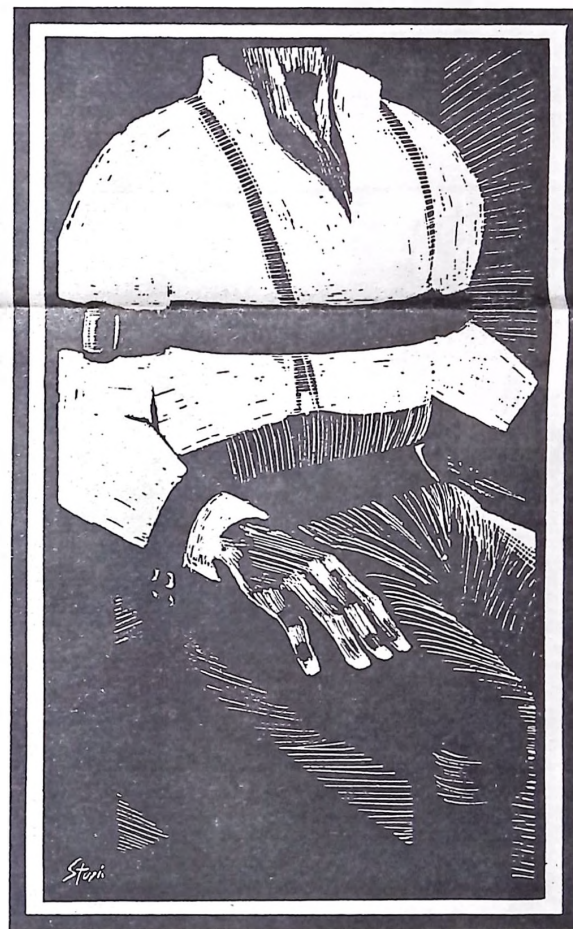
On August 7, 1988, retired Supreme Court Justice Louis F. Powell, Jr., standing before 11,000 US lawyers, called for an end to the death penalty. "Perhaps," Mr. Powell said, "the time has come for the Congress, as it is free to do, to take another look at a system that no other democracy deems necessary." This is the voice of a conservative who is calling for the reform of a system that does not work.

Today 2,048 people are under the sentence of death. On an average in Georgia, ten years elapse between the sentencing of a person to death and their electrocution. Mr. Powell sees the system as "imposed haphazardly" and he recalled many late night chaotic decisions on appeals just hours before a person was to die. Noting that the murder rate in the US is four times higher than in Canada, which has no death penalty, Mr. Powell suggested that the use of handguns are the source of the "soaring murder rate."

The good news in Mr. Powell's speech is this: it is indicative of a shift in the signs of the times. Increasingly, people are becoming disenchanted and tired of the death penalty and the pain and furor around executions. Government leaders, prison administrators and prison guards, as well as District Attorneys and defense lawyers are beginning to make decisions and articulate a point of view **opposed to the death penalty** for reasons of good government, use of fiscal resources, time involvements and staff energies, not to mention simple human fairness. Death row prisoners are predominantly poor, a disproportionate number are of racial minorities, and they endure a dehumanizing wait of eight to fourteen years for appeals and death. These facts lead more and more people to cite the unfairness of the death penalty, which is so complexly structured precisely to affect a fair and impartial outcome.

Another bright ray in the dawning of new light, not to be over-emphasized, but nonetheless important, is that two national leaders are opposed to the death penalty. Rev. Jesse Jackson has helped to underline the point that in the US the death penalty is a Civil Rights issue. At the Democratic Convention in Atlanta this year, the mantle of moral and political leadership was finally placed upon Jesse's shoulders—not only for the Black community, but for a significant portion of those who struggle for peace and justice. An anti-death penalty agenda among activists for social justice is emerging as part of their platform.

Michael S. Dukakis is also opposed to the death penalty: a political liability in this election year, many pundits believe. However, the climate is such that he has not qualified his position. Thus, as head of the Democratic Party he represents for millions a symbol of cultural values and a political position. This is especially significant given Mr. Powell's call for the US Congress to do something about the death penalty and its drawbacks.



Southern Coalition Report

The signs of the times are telling us that a new context for fighting the death penalty is emerging on the political and cultural horizons. Historical change toward justice becomes a "mighty act" when what is right (the death penalty is wrong!) gets tied to the self-interest of a class or a system. Frustration over excessive expenditures, diversion of time and energy from fundamental concerns of criminal justice, the economy and local needs, and the haphazard and unfair nature of the system is now providing an opportunity for new analysis,

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new coalitions, and an end to the death penalty in the United States of America.

PROBLEMS IN THE ANTI-DEATH PENALTY MOVEMENT

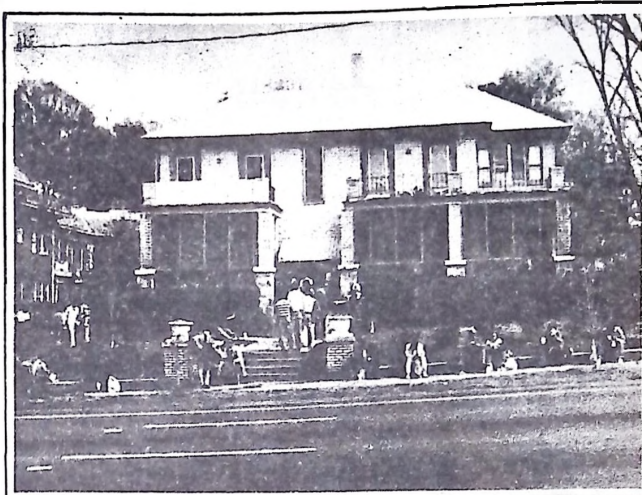
I have been part of the national anti-death penalty movement since 1976, when the US Supreme Court upheld Governor Jimmy Carter's death law as a model for the nation (*Gregg v. Georgia*). From the beginning, we have had two serious problems, which have not been faced, nor have proposals been made to overcome these hurdles. The move among those who are finding pragmatic reasons to end the death penalty gives us occasion to face our problems and propose new alternatives.

First, the public perception of anti-death penalty advocates is that we are unconcerned with victims, and we wish to mollycoddle prisoners. Most often our experience of that perception is the charge that we would have murderers go free (and DA's have used this charge to great advantage against us). This attitude is further embedded in people's minds by the destructive myth that the only alternative to a death sentence in Georgia is seven years in prison and then a free walk. In actuality the average time for homicide in Georgia is fourteen years, and, for former death row prisoners, that time is even longer. But we, as a movement, have not responded creatively or concretely to these images, and the movement has been damaged by our inability to address our reputation among the vast majority of the nation.



If the first problem is located outside ourselves, the second stumbling block is right in the center of the movement. Because the death penalty has been so popular over the past fifteen years (75% of the American people have been in favor), and the place in the agenda among Civil Rights groups, peace and justice organizations, and the other progressive forces and individuals has been very low, we have had one goal: Abolish the death penalty! However, the price for this unity and strategy among people with varying values and political means has been to agree not to offer an alternative to the death penalty. In order to avoid conflict among ourselves, we have become politically ineffective and subject to the deepening myth that we are anarchists who would set all prisoners free on the streets immediately. The time is at hand when we must develop legislative alternatives to the death penalty; and to begin to build coalitions between moralists and pragmatists who together can end the death penalty in the US. We must, with grace and patience, face our inner conflicts and step forward with a prison sentence proposal for first degree murder.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3



HOSPITALITY is published 10 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:

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Ed Loring—Correspondence & Resident Volunteer
Co-ordinator

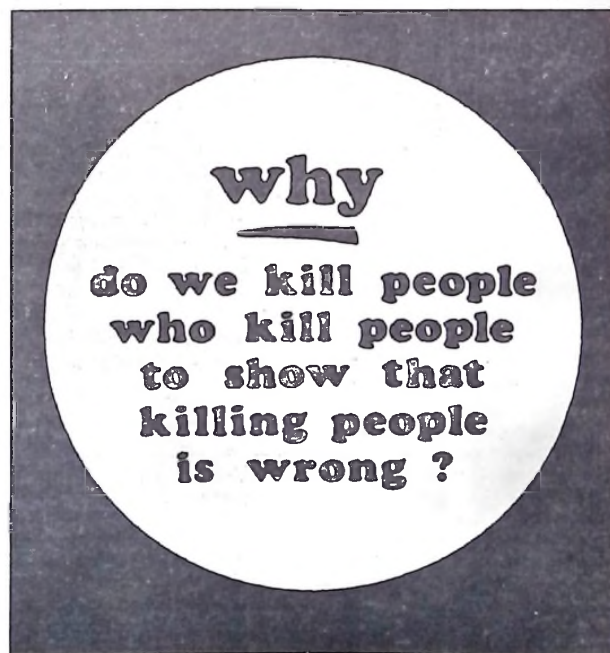
Joanne Solomon—Administrative Assistant (Volunteer
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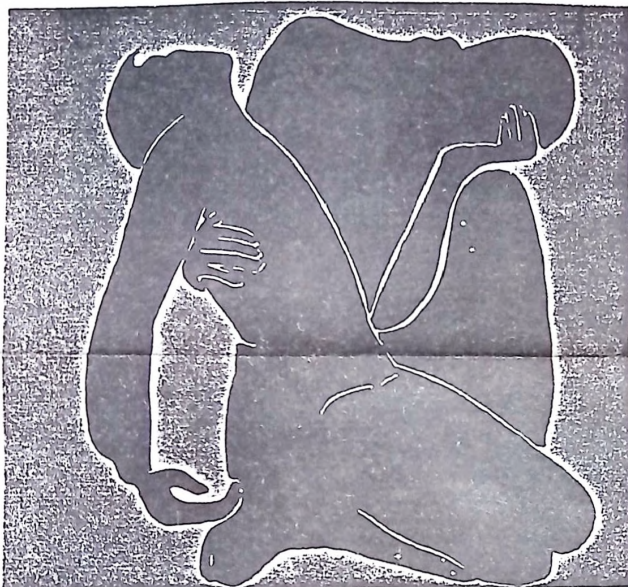


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TOWARD AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE DEATH PENALTY

As noted above, there are many different directions from which members of the anti-death penalty movement have come to join forces. The foundation is that we believe the death penalty is wrong. I come to this human value by way of the Judeo-Christian faith, and thus want to lift up two biblical norms which are basic to a consideration of an alternative to the death penalty.

First, the Bible is a book about the struggle and ultimate victory of life over death. Biblically informed people and traditions oppose death in all of its dehumanizing manifestations. A verse of Holy Scripture to which I attempt to submit my life and values is this: "I am now giving you the choice between life and death, between God's blessing and God's curse, and I call heaven and earth to witness the choice you make. Choose life." (Deuteronomy 30:19) Any alternative to the death penalty needs to be about human life in the deepest and most sacred dimension of the word.



Second, I turn to 1 Corinthians 13: 7— "Love never gives up." The Community of faith always holds the hope of repentance and a new life. This conversion is demonstrated by the fruits born in relationships and behavior. This hope for conversion sets people of biblical faith against the death penalty and against the closed-system sentence of no parole. No parole consideration, like death itself, is a hopeless and faithless position. However, prison without parole is always a valid option for those who have not demonstrated a change of character and behavior that warrants release from prison.

The two Biblical norms of commitment to life and the never-ending hope for forgiveness, reconciliation and new life must relate to political necessities. Security of the state (that is, controlling violence against citizens) and the possibilities of major changes within the criminal justice system are the two points we have to address to the satisfaction of a majority of state representatives and senators. Because of the developing concerns with government money, judicial over-load, and fairness of the application of the death penalty, we can now begin to work for new coalitions between progressive and mainline political interests. The formula for such a coalition must be an alternative to the death penalty, which is on the one hand long term, and on the other hand guarantees parole consideration at some predetermined point.

3

I suggest that the prison term for first degree murder be for life. In addition, after 21 years served (that is, a life sentence—21 years in parole board calculations), a prisoner will be considered for parole on the basis of their prison record and the resources available within the community (e.g., a place to live, friendships and associates, work, etc.). Of course, the word **considered** is as important as the word **parole** in my suggestion.

We at the Open Door and Southern Prison Ministry now are attempting to begin a conversation with you, our readers. We would like to hear your responses and ideas. Politicians, death row prisoners, prison guards and administrators, househusbands, college students, homeless folk, anti-death penalty advocates and those who now favor the death penalty: please write to us and help us chart the way for a workable alternative to the death penalty.

CONCLUSION: IN THE MEANTIME

As we wrestle to discern the signs of the times and to discover new possibilities for an end to our foe—the death penalty, we must remain on the front line of the battle and never ease up our fight for peace and justice, for reconciliation and new life. So as we wait for the concrete ways to work faithfully and lovingly in this world which belongs to our God, let us act.

First, we must pray for peace and the end of a system of violence and oppression. Also, we must live a life of resistance to the cultural values which choose death on so many levels of personal and national life. We need to write letters every week. First, get personally related to a death row prisoner by mail. Second, let us write to our representatives and newspaper editors especially concerning the cost and judicial chaos of the death penalty. Discover the role of your local district attorney. He or she is the ultimate person in death penalty cases for no one else in Georgia can initiate a death penalty trial. Does your D.A. work for life or death? What alternatives to the death penalty would she or he give serious consideration? At the terrible, terrible times of execution, please come to a vigil. We now have three across the state and hope for several others this fall: Atlanta, at the state Capitol; Jackson, on the prison grounds; and Americus, at the Sumter County Courthouse.

So, let us pray; let us live lives filled with hope and peace; let us act in favor of life as we build a movement with a concrete, plausible alternative to the death penalty. □



Nine-Ten

by Murphy Davis

Ed and Hannah and I have been away from 910 Ponce de Leon for most of the summer. In July, Ed and I spoke at a conference at Seattle University (jointly sponsored with the Archdiocese of Seattle) and the three of us travelled out and back on Amtrack: out through the Southwest (Hannah said, "a lot of brown sand.") and up the West Coast; back through the Rockies, Chicago, and D.C.

Seeing so much of the US was a real treat (the word vast took on new meaning for me). And Seattle was not only a beautiful place to see, but a good reminder that good public policy can make cities more suited for human beings.

For much of the rest of the summer we were at Dayspring Farm. With these months behind us our hopes for "the farm" are realized: having access to a piece of earth outside the city teaches us new life rhythms and renews us for the demands of life at 910 Ponce de Leon.

On Ponce four lanes of traffic never stop. For 24 hours every day the street roars with cars, buses, trucks and the sirens of police cars, ambulances, and fire trucks. Everything seems to be covered up with concrete or asphalt. Ghetto blasters and human noises start early in the morning and sometimes go late into the night. In the hot summer months you endure it with the windows open or risk suffocation.

It always seemed to me that the Open Door farm should represent some of the polar opposites of Ponce de Leon. Dayspring does. There is no traffic! The rutted dirt road ends in our driveway, so nary a car passes. The earth is covered with grass, flowers, trees, and yes, the rural scourge, KUDZU. But still, it's all green and produces lots of oxygen. There are no neighbors in hollerin' distance and the closest neighbors don't have loud parties anyway. In short, it's quiet. On a clear night we're reminded—away from the glaring city lights—that the sky really is full of stars.

So, we've spent a good part of the summer settling into the place. Others in the Community have been back and forth for days off, retreats, and work days. Ed has led the valiant battle against the kudzu and is now resigned to the fact that it will take a few years to get the jump on it. Next summer we'll find a goat to help!

In the meantime, life has rolled right along at nine-ten. We've been helped by a strong and steady stream of old friends and visitors who have come for a few days or weeks to pitch in.

Bruce Bishop started us off in May by coming for almost a month. He and Patti Ackerman had just completed an eight month tour around the US speaking (and singing) about the arms race and their experience on the Soviet/American peace walk last summer. Bruce is now settling in to the Washington, D.C. area for a couple of years with Mennonite Voluntary Service and some further art training. It was great to have him "back home at the Open Door" for some time. We have been gifted by his enthusiasm for community and the insightful connections he makes between the grinding poverty in the US and the arms race.

Extended community members Gladys, Dick and Kim Rustay spent a month of their summer (vacation?) working and generally building up life in the community. Every time they leave we scratch our heads and wonder how three people were getting so much done.



photo by Bob Campagna

BRUCE BISHOP AND PATTI ON TOUR

Mark Scott from the Azuza Community in Roxbury, Massachusetts, has lived with us for nearly two months and shared work and leadership. We celebrate the strengthened ties with Azuza and the African Peoples Pentecostal Church.

Bobbie and Mason Ellison, a retired UCC minister couple from Connecticut, came for the month of August. As they've left we've found many little things fixed, remote corners of the house cleaned, and all of us are reminded of how much it means to practice the thoughtful gestures and friendly words that "gladden the heart."

Former volunteers Rebecca Green and Mike Stoltzfus along with Jennie Dillon pitched in for two weeks and a good visit before starting their next college year.

Resident volunteers have come and gone. We said good-bye to David Roemer and Theresa (Strongboli) Weeks, Antioch College students who came as a part of the college co-op program and now return to the academic world. And we've welcomed Chuck Kane (from Goshen College), Bettina Paul (from West Germany), John Master (who came to us from time with the Hutterites), Peter Stinner (from Texas) and Joy Cameron (from North Carolina).

Neely Loring graduated from Norcross High School in June and we took him off to Warren Wilson College in mid-August.

As the fall rolls toward us we are filled with gratitude for the life that is pieced together here like a beautiful patchwork quilt. For all the faces, hands, hearts and feet that get the work done and share so much love for our friends on the streets and in prison we say—again and again, thank you!



In Memoriam: Johnny Denmark

by Ed Loring




Johnny Denmark's body was found last month in an abandoned building in Atlanta. Since Johnny was abandoned, too, I guess that makes a double abandonment. Really, Johnny Denmark's abandonment is one scene in the long, dramatic tragedy of dereliction within the human family, and the building was only a setting.

Johnny Denmark's ancestors were first abandoned in Africa where some European sold them for slave labor in the new world of freedom and agriculture-for-profit. Abandoned again were his forebears by 1789 when the final compromisers agreed that slavery was an American Institution expressly sanctioned by Constitutional guarantees. What cry broke forth from Johnny's mother's father when the writing on the wall was translated into freedom: "yes"—equality: "no" in 1876?

When Johnny Denmark was 15-years-old Martin King was murdered. A very few years later the Civil Rights leaders have moved from the the streets to the corporate board rooms. If in that shift from street to board table Johnny was not abandoned, nevertheless, he was neglected. The agenda of poor Black males in America hardly makes the list.

So it was that Johnny Denmark died abandoned in an abandoned building. He had lived with us at three times, and I love him very much. Once he came to us from Grady Hospital filled with broken bones and a crushed being. Johnny was a cheerful man with a little twinkle in his eye. We always greeted each other on the streets and in downtown parks.

I am so very sorry for Johnny's death. He will be missed by his friends at 5:30am labor pool gatherings and at the various soup kitchens in the city. I hope that God will continue to forgive us for not seeing and hearing the cries of the poor which shriek like sirens throughout every urban area in this nation. I believe that God will not only forgive us, but she will transform us into loving sisters and brothers. Rather than life and death in abandoned buildings and kudzu patches, we will so share our resources that everyone will have enough.

Thank you, Mr. Johnny Denmark, for your friendship. I miss you. 

Shelter Child

by Linda Hunt-Harper

My name is . . .
I don't remember.

I live at . . .
I don't remember.

My school is . . .
I don't remember.

I am . . .
I don't remember.

Shadowy memories of many faces
In many places,

Kaleidoscopic visions of surrealistic images

Snatch me away from my yesterday, and
Catapult me into Today, and
Abandon me to Tomorrow.

Tonight will be more faces in other places.

The nights . . . they know who I am
But they conspire with the morning dew
To rob me of myself.

They steal my horizons

And I cannot see my tomorrows.

I cannot find me!

My name is . . .

My home is . . .

My school is . . .

I am . . .

A child of the shelter.



[Rita Corbin

Editor's note: Linda Hunt-Harper is Development Director and Educational Services Coordinator at the Achor Center in Atlanta.

Hannah's Prayer

The following prayer was written last year when Hannah Loring-Davis was in the second grade.

Prayer by Hannah Loring-Davis
Age 9 Grade 2nd

To Ed Loring
Dad of Hannah

O Lord our
mother and father!
Thank you for this
Day!
Please be with
the people that
need you!
And the people that
are in prison and
on the streets!
Please make homes
for people that
need them!
In the way that
our Lord Jesus
taught ~~us~~ his
followers to pray!

Grace and peaces of mail

P.O. Box 517
Walterboro, S.C. 29985
Aug. 12, 1982

Dear Mr. Loring

I went to Washington, D.C., and saw lots of homeless people. I made friends with one man named Billy. I want to help the people like him, so I'm sending a tithe of the money I earned this summer to the Open Door. I'm praying for the homeless people and when I grow up I'd like to do something more to help.

Sincerely,
Morgan

Editors Note: Morgan is the nine year old son of Sam and Lily Cooper. Sam is pastor of Bethel Presbyterian Church in Walterboro, S.C. We are very thankful for Morgan's witness among us.



7

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

We're in our high humidity season and does it ever sap your strength! The trouble is that for 9-10 months a year we have low humidity—from 2 or 3 to about 15%. So we're never used to humidity above 50%. I guess you folks are more accustomed to it, and you just keep going and sweating and probably swearing.

It's the busiest summer we've had at the soup kitchen. Usually we feed around 350 this time of the year, but now it's between 400-650 each day which is almost our limit. It's not a surprise though. What is a surprise is that we don't have over 1,000 each day. We are also really lucky in that enough workers come. It takes from 8 to 12 volunteers to spread the work out, and almost always we have that many.

Thanks for what you do!!

In Solidarity and Love,

Jerry Robinett
Casa Maria
Catholic Worker
Tucson, Arizona

Hi Murphy, Ed and Community!

Greetings from Assisi! I am here as part of a Franciscan Prayer and Study Pilgrimage. I lit a candle for all of you and your intentions here in Assisi and I am remembering you in prayer. Also am praying for world peace here in the city of Francis.

I hope you are well and that the rains are falling.

Justus Worth, O.S.F

(Fr. Justus Worth is a friend who currently lives and works among the poor of Bolivia. He has visited and worked with us here at the Open Door and once preached a sermon entitled, "The Kingdom of God is like a Clothes Closet.")

Dear Open Door Community,

I have been receiving your newspaper for some time, and it continues to be new and refreshing each time I read it. The art work, too, speaks very loudly to me.

I am writing to say that you are in my prayers often, for you have given me great inspiration over the years.

Starting in September, I, another Brother from our community, and a Daughter of Charity will be starting a Rehabilitation Program for homeless people in Philadelphia. The area we are in is very poor and in much need of this program and the outreach that will take place, too.

Be assured that Hospitality will be lying around the house—hopefully to inspire and foster hope in these people we will be serving.

God bless.

Brother Howard Morgan, C.M.

Open Door Schedule

WE ARE OPEN...

Monday through Saturday, telephones are answered from 9:00 am until 6:00 pm and from 7:15 pm to 8:30 pm. The building is open from 9:00 am until 8:30 pm those days. (Both phone & door are not answered during our lunch break from 12:15-1:00. Please call in advance if you need to arrange to come at other times. On Sunday we are closed until 1:00 pm. Please do not make unscheduled drop-offs of clothing, food, etc. on Sunday mornings. Sunday afternoon our phones and door are answered from 1:00 until 5:00 pm

OUR MINISTRY...

SOUP KITCHEN - Monday-Saturday, 11-12 noon; Sunday 3-4pm

BUTLER ST. CME BREAKFAST - Monday-Friday 7:15am SHOWERS & CHANGE OF CLOTHES - Tuesday and Friday - 9:00 - 11:00 am (Be sure to call-- schedule varies) USE OF PHONE - Monday-Saturday, 9am - 4pm.

SHELTER REQUESTS - Monday-Saturday 9am - noon.

BIBLE STUDY - Alternate Tuesdays 7:30 - 9:00pm

WEEKEND RETREATS - Every 6th Weekend (for our household & volunteers/supporters) - Sept. 9, 10, 11

Open Door Community Worship

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

Join us!



September 4	Worship at 910
September 11	Community Retreat Friday-Sunday Dayspring Farm Planning for 1988-89
September 18	Worship at 910
September 25	Worship at 910 5pm Eucharist 5:30 Frances Pauley: Stories of Struggle and Triumph
October 2	Worship at 910
October 9	Community Retreat Dayspring Farm
October 16	Worship at 910
October 23	Worship at 910
October 30	Worship at 910

Every sixth Sunday the Community has a weekend retreat outside the city. This replaces our evening worship at 910 Ponce de Leon Ave.

NEEDS

HAMS AND TURKEYS

CHEESE

MEN'S UNDERWEAR

RUGS

MOUNTAIN BICYCLE

MAYONNAISE

MEN'S JEANS (URGENT!!)

DISPOSABLE RAZORS

COFFEE

VACUUM CLEANER

BLANKETS

SHOES

VOLUNTEERS ON MONDAY AND TUESDAY TO MAKE AND SERVE SANDWICHES

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



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

Name _____

Street _____

City, State, Zip _____