

HOSPITALITY

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

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September 1999

MARCH FOR MEDICINE & HEALTH CARE



TAKAONO

On July 22, several hundred Atlantans gathered to march from Woodruff Park to Grady Hospital and then to the State Capitol in affirmation of access to health care and medications as a basic human right. We delivered a letter to Governor Roy Barnes urging his swift action to provide state funds to assure the health of Grady and other public hospitals in the State. On July 26, members of the Grady Campaign Coalition were in attendance as the Fulton-DeKalb Hospital Authority Board voted to "suspend indefinitely" any/all proposals to impose a co-pay or other charges for medications and clinic visits for Grady's poorest patients.



ELLEN SPEARS

(l-r) Pat O'Brien, Mrs. Mona Robinson, Ed Potts, Elise Witt, and Ralph Dukes listen to rally speakers in front of Grady Hospital. Mrs. Robinson, 79, was born at Grady and has been a Grady patient all of her life.



DICK RUSTAY

Luz Roman of the Fulton-Atlanta Community Action Authority translates for tourists from Spain who saw us gathering at Woodruff Park and joined the march. The couple, a nurse and her husband a minister, are part of the same movement in Europe and spoke powerfully at the rally of the need for access to health care for all.

(story continued on page 2)



GLADYS RUSTAY

Mark Johnson speaks at the Capitol on behalf of the march contingent from ADAPT, a grass-roots organization for disability rights. Jeff Graham holds the bullhorn.

MARCH FOR MEDICINE & HEALTH CARE



ELLEN SPEARS



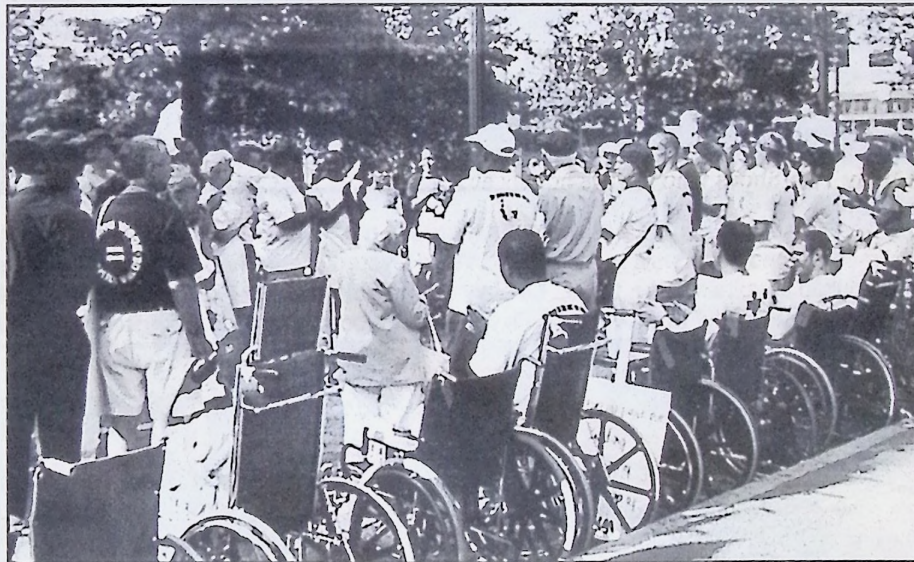
ELLEN SPEARS

Lelia Spears and Bill Cozzens rally at the corner of Gilmer and Butler Streets.



DICK RUSTAY

While marchers rallied in front of Grady Hospital, a theater group from Empty the Shelters opened the "Arm and a Leg Pharmacy." Want your medicine? It will only cost you an arm and a leg!



ELLEN SPEARS

Wheelchairs lined up in Woodruff Park ready for marchers who are elderly or have disabilities.

HOSPITALITY

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

Brenda Smith—Volunteer Coordinator; Group Work Project Coordinator
Ed Loring—Correspondence
Elizabeth Dede—Resident Volunteer Coordinator; Guest Ministry; Hardwick Prison Trip
Murphy Davis—Southern Prison Ministry



PHOTO BY GARY BECK

Open Door Community

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Frederick Douglass Taylor

30 Years on the Journey

by Murphy Davis

(Editor's note: Stories edited from a transcription by Elizabeth Dede.)

In July, our friend Rev. Frederick Douglass Taylor celebrated 30 years on the staff of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. To honor his leadership in our life and the life of the Movement for justice and the Beloved Community, the Open Door initiated an award that we have called the Frederick Douglass Taylor Human Rights Award. On Sunday, July 18, Fred Taylor was the first recipient of this award from the Open Door Community, and he shared something of his life in the Movement during our worship service.

We have known and been associated with Fred Taylor since the early 1980s. The first time I spent significant time with him was in the summer of 1984. I had been visiting a young man named Ivon Stanley on death row for five or six years. But when Ivon was given an execution date, I realized that, other than his family and his lawyer, I was the only person outside the prison who could speak up for Ivon. The problem was that I already had a reputation as Miss Goody Two-Shoes who always hollers about executions. We needed help, and we needed it fast. I called up Dr. Joseph Lowery, the Director of SCLC, and he agreed to go down to the prison with me to visit Ivon, and then to help "represent" Ivon and his family, pleading for his life in the glare of the press as the execution approached. On the day of our scheduled visit, Dr. Lowery arrived, and Fred Taylor was with him. Fred came to drive us down to the prison and support us as we went in to visit Ivon Stanley. It was such a typical thing for Fred Taylor to do. He came to help as a quiet, steady, sustaining presence in the face of the awful deadly power of evil. Well, Fred is not always so quiet, but he is always steadfast and supportive.

Since that meeting with Fred Taylor fifteen years ago, we have been with him time and time again at meetings, demonstrations, marches, and vigils, on picket lines and going to jail, preaching, praying and singing. Oh yes, the singing! Fred is a song leader extraordinaire! He can sing anywhere and anytime. He can make anybody want to sing and march, march and sing. And he can sing more verses of any movement song than the rest of us could think up or remember in a lifetime. And he's always ready to pray.

Ed Loring tells the story of a cold December night two or three years ago when a group from Concerned Black Clergy gathered at Woodruff Park to protest the new "Urban Camping" Ordinance. There was a large group of ministers ready to get arrested, but the police left them alone. Finally the demonstration dispersed and nearly everybody left. Only Ed and Fred and Joe Beasley were left. The police suddenly swooped in and arrested those three

for being in the park after 11:00, p.m.! So off they went to jail. Ed reports that they were taken from the squad car at the jail and brought into the alleyport. There were police officers bringing them in and jail officers there to receive them. While they were all crowded into the entrance, Fred Taylor said in his best preacher voice (with GREAT authority), "Let us pray." They joined hands, bowed their

ened. There he is, ready to wear out some more shoe leather marching for freedom and justice—laughing and singing all the way.

Here are some of the stories of his life that Fred Taylor shared with us:

"I was raised by my grandmother and grew up in Montgomery, Alabama. I was 13 years old when the bus boycott started after Mrs. Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on the city bus. I found my role in the movement passing out leaflets for the mass meetings that were held each night to organize and sustain the boycott. But I had to do this Movement work without my grandmother knowing what I was doing. She was a maid, a "domestic," for the Simpsons, a white family. And if Mrs. Simpson found out that "Mable's boy" was passing out leaflets for the Movement, then my grandmother would have been fired. So when I went to the Mass Meetings and would come home late at night, my grandmother would say, "Son, where have you been?" And I would say, "I've been with Rev. Abernathy." Rev. Abernathy was my grandmother's pastor, so that would seem okay to say I had been with him.

I also did some work for the Simpson family. On the week-ends I sometimes cut their grass. But in the boycott meetings, I began to learn some things. White people always called Black folks by their first names, no matter how old they were. And Black people were always supposed to say, "Yes MA'AM," and "No SIR," to the white folks. Well, Dr. King explained to us that this was not right. So one day when Mrs. Simpson asked me something, I made the "mistake" of answering her simply, "Yes." So she fired me, and she explained to my grandmother that she could no longer use me to cut her grass.

When I was a senior in high school, I took part with all the seniors in an oratorical contest on the anniversary of the founding of the Montgomery Improvement

Association. The plan was that each student's English teacher would help them write their oration, and we would practice with the teacher. My teacher was insistent that I give a speech that would not upset anybody by threatening the status quo. So I wrote the kind of speech that she wanted and practiced it with her. But I wrote *another* speech that I called my militant speech, which I practiced on my own and with my friends. But on the night of the contest, I avoided a conflict with my teacher, because I forgot *both* of my speeches.

In the ninth grade, Mrs. Preston was my civics teacher, and she taught me for the first time about the importance of voting, along with how old you have to be to be the President, how representatives are elected to Congress, and all that. She impressed upon our young minds the necessity, the great importance of voting. She said, "You have to promise me that you will register to vote, because when you become a registered voter, as my

(continued on next page)

The Frederick Douglass Taylor Human Rights Award



Given this 18th day of July 1999
to the Rev. Fred D. Taylor
with Deep Love and Appreciation
and in Honor of Your 30 Years of Service
with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference
from the Open Door Community

heads, and Fred began to pray. And he prayed. And he prayed. Ed said finally one of the officers hissed, "How long is this going to go on?!" Well, it went on until Fred was finished with the prayer. And said, "Amen."

He has been arrested for countless actions of civil disobedience. And he has marched the streets of cities, towns and highways all over the United States, but especially in the South. In fact, he reports that one of his friends said that he had earned a Ph.D. degree! That stands for "Public Highway Demonstrator!"

Fred is a Baptist minister, Associate Pastor of the West Hunter Street Baptist Church, and he is a mighty fine preacher. But I really think of him as a preacher who mostly preaches sole-sermons. What I mean by that is that Fred's sermons are preached mostly through the soles of his feet as he takes the Word into the streets wherever God's children are left out, put out, put aside, put down, wherever human life and human dignity are threat-

Frederick Douglass Taylor

(continued from previous page)

preacher says, you'll be able to vote and help to bring about some of these changes that we need." Mrs. Preston was a member of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church and sang in the choir there, and Dr. King was her pastor. I have known ever since that time that if I don't vote, I'll be letting Mrs. Preston down.

So in 1960, I was a senior in high school, and I got to be old enough to vote. Black people had to pay a poll tax in order to qualify to register to vote. So I went without lunch for a week so that I could save my money to pay my poll tax and become a registered voter.

After I went to college at Alabama State, I went over to the public library of Montgomery. The librarians denied me the opportunity to use the public library. So I became a plaintiff in the suit which led to the desegregation of the Montgomery Public Library. That case was heard and decided in Judge Frank Johnson's court.

These were the days that George Wallace became Governor of Alabama, and he was so very vicious in his racism. The Christian faith, as I learned it from Dr. King, is about redemption and forgiveness, and Dr. King felt that our anger should not be directed toward individuals, but toward the powers and the evil which create the kind of individuals like George Wallace.

During my junior year in college, the Civil Rights Act was passed, and some of us at the college made the decision to go downtown and test the new law at the lunch counter at H. L. Green's Department store in Montgomery. So we went down to the lunch counter and sat down and said that we would like to look at the menu. The waitress replied, "We don't serve n-gg—s." "Obviously, you don't know about the Civil Rights Act," we said. Well, she sure hadn't heard about it, because she said it again, "We don't serve n-gg—s." She went off to ask her manager what to do, and he must have told her that she had to serve us, because when she came back, she growled, "What do you want?" We had planned this out, so I said, "Well, we'll take some soup." I guess she had to open the can of tomato soup and heat it up on the hot plate. She came back and put the bowls in front of us and said, "I suppose you'll want some crackers with that." And I said, "No, we don't like crackers, ma'am. But we'll take some saltines."

In January, 1962, I acknowledged the call to the ministry and

started preaching under Rev. Larry H. Williams. When I finished college, he encouraged me to go to Gammon Seminary at the Interdenominational Theological Center here in Atlanta.

Rev. Williams had been to Gammon, but he said I didn't need to tell anyone else I was going there. But I wanted to have the blessing of the moderator, Dr. M. C. Cleveland, pastor of the Day Street Baptist Church in Montgomery, so I explained my situation to him. He muttered, "You don't need to go to no ITC. You'll graduate and come out a weak Baptist."

T. R. Rogers, Director of the Ministry Program for the SCLC recruited me to come work for SCLC. In my senior year of seminary he asked me what I was going to do when I graduated, and I told him that I was weighing my options. I thought I was something. I thought I had the world in a jug and the stopper in my

hand. The Presbyterian Church was looking for ordained Black preachers, and I was considering a church in Danville, Virginia. I decided to go to SCLC, work for two years, and move

on. The two years have turned out to be 30 years!

It has been a great journey. And I am grateful for the things that I have been able to do. The only thing that I haven't done that I still want to do is to write my memoirs, especially for my daughter and my granddaughter. I'd like to record my

memories and a sort of How-To on the struggle: the organizing, the demonstrating, and all the work. I'd like to do this for my family and for those who continue the Movement. And I will continue to give it my best shot as I work to do whatever I can in the struggle.

These days I find myself going to Piedmont Park a good bit.

(Growing up, I was denied the opportunity to go to the park.) One night I got to Piedmont Park before dark, and as the darkness set in, I looked among the trees and I saw a lightning bug, and I thought about this story: Two fellas were challenging an old man. They wanted to know why the lightning bug lights. One of the fellas had finished Harvard, and he was a physicist. He gave a formula and solution as to why the lightning bug lights. The other fella was a chemist and he finished Morehouse. He gave a chemical formula as to why the lightning bug lights. Then they asked the old man, "Why does the lightning bug light?" The old man said, "Fellas, I'll tell you like this: the lightning bug lights because of the *stuff* that is in him."

So long as the *stuff* of God's breath is in me; so long as the love of God abides in me; so long as the peace of God that passes all understanding abides within me; so long as the Spirit continues to comfort and guide me, I'm going to stay on the walk because of the stuff that is in me. The Lord has not required me to be successful in what I have done, or what I am doing, but the Lord does require me to be faithful. And the Lord preserves the faithful. Let God be the stuff that is in us."

Murphy Davis is a Partner at the Open Door Community.



MICHAEL GALOVIC

Open Door Partner Phillip Williams presents Rev. Taylor with the award on behalf of the Community.

MORATORIUM 2000

In anticipation of the new millennium, Sister Helen Prejean and other notable U.S. abolitionists have formed an organization called Moratorium 2000 and issued a worldwide call to suspend use of the death penalty next year.

In a letter to anti-death penalty activists and organizations, Sister Helen said the group's mission is to reach out "to friend and foe alike to convince them to join us in our efforts to obtain and ensure the full protection of human rights for all as guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights."

In the fall of 1999, Moratorium 2000 plans to rally at the United Nations in New York City and to present the world body with a truckload of national and international petitions and letters supporting an international moratorium on executions. According to Sister Helen, the organization hopes to use the event to obtain passage of a U.N. resolution calling for a worldwide moratorium.

Sister Helen, who wrote the anti-death penalty book, *Dead Man Walking*, is Moratorium 2000's honorary chair. Its chair is Michael Radelet, a professor at the University of Florida and co-author of *In Spite of Innocence*, a case study of hundreds of cases of innocent men and women convicted of capital

crimes in the U.S. Vice chair is Richard C. Dieter, director of the Washington, D.C. based Death Penalty Information Center, which studies and reports on capital punishment in the U.S. Magdaleno M. Rose-Avila, a longtime activist for economic, social, and criminal justice who once headed up Amnesty International's U.S. efforts to abolish the death penalty, serves as Moratorium 2000's executive director.

The group's mailing address is 8306 Mills Drive, #607, Miami, Florida 33183; its email address is mavila@gte.net; its phone number is (305) 596-7293. Those persons wanting to participate in the petition campaign should contact Moratorium 2000.

Sister Helen points out that the U.S. remains one of the foremost practitioners of state-sanctioned murder. "Currently, the United States stands isolated with a few countries such as Iran, Iraq, Nigeria, and China that refuse to respect human rights and continue to execute their citizens," she said. She noted that the American Bar Association recently took the step of calling for a moratorium on all executions in the U.S.

Moratorium 2000 is a non-partisan, non-denominational effort to ensure the protection of human rights for all.

Comments on Power, Privilege and Privatization

(Editor's note: This letter from attorney Donald Juneau is in response to the article by Murphy Davis titled "Power, Privilege and Privatization" in *Hospitality*, July 1999.)

Dear Murphy:

I have been following the story about Grady Hospital's attempt to freeze out poor people, and I read your article in the July issue of "Hospitality," which strikes me as a statement of prophecy such as one gets when one reads Amos or Jeremiah in the Scriptures. Out of modesty, you may demur, but remember that Amos himself expressed some surprise when the Lord settled the prophetic mantle on him, "What, said Amos, I a prophet? Nay, not that nor a prophet's son either, I am one that minds cattle, one that nips the sycamore-trees; I was but tending sheep when the Lord took me into service." Amos 7:14. Your prophetic discernment is the truth, now slowly emerging, that the next issue of burning interest will be health-care, and that spectacles like that which was beheld in the United States Senate the week before last when the Republican majority, by six votes, beat down the rather modest and quite minimal attempts to give patients some rights against the medical and insurance bureaucracies. It was such a display of contempt and antipathy towards these very small steps (some called them even ineffectual) which still would leave the corporate forces pretty much in firm control over our health. The health-care issue will one day be regarded in the same way as those volcanic debates which used to rack the Senate over slavery, or child labor, the right of women and blacks to vote: how could these educated men marshal such strenuous arguments defending a position that is so obviously indefensible?

As I mentioned above, and as you noted, this nascent awareness hasn't really penetrated very much into the media. Very few publications in the media discuss it, and when they do, it is on a superficial basis at best, and is often downright misleading. It isn't even mentioned on the talking-head shows on the cable news channels, much less is it the fare of Oprah or Ricky Lake or the McLaughlin Group or even Meet the Press. This is all the more strange because it affects each and every one of us. None of us is untouched by it, and everyone is the worse because the slender Senate majority was able to stymie the minimalist reforms ad-

vanced by the Senate Democrats plus two Republicans. It's rather like the Emperor's new clothes, because no one can be unaware of the serious dysfunction of public and private health services in this country today, and of how completely the insurance companies have corrupted the politics of the issue.

Of course, you put your finger on one of the salient aspects of this willful ignorance: race. The fact that Blacks are more affected by the Grady Hospital policies because there is a high percentage of poor folks who are black is no accident. But all of this is really a continuum, and the black people function as the miner's canary: all of us, white and Black, poor and rich, are or soon will be victims of the system. Now it is Grady Hospital, but soon it will be the turn of your insurance carrier to put the screws in all of us. For example, my cost of health insurance has increased 660% over the past 12 years, and my carrier has just told me that there will be another 6% increase next month. Of course, I'm getting older, but I am and have been in good health. The realistic prospect is that the premiums will continue to increase, even though my income will diminish with retirement or age. These politicians who have sold out to the insurance companies, most of whom are beneficiaries of generous federal government health-plans, have been completely debauched by the insurance companies, and uncritically do their bidding.

One of the bitterest ironies of this whole situation is that it has been brought about by the tax and fiscal policies of the federal government. The worst example of this is the hospitals. Just look around you: every hospital, private or public, is in a new facility, has state-of-the-art machines and instruments, and are in brand spanking new buildings. There are no exceptions. And why is this? It is because of something called the Hill-Burton Act. This was legislation passed as a part of the Great Society program of Lyndon Johnson back in the '60s. Among other things, Hill-Burton addressed a perceived need for new buildings, new facilities, new capital structures for the health-care sector of our society. Shortly after the passage of Hill-Burton new hospital buildings began springing up all over the place. In fact now one would be hard put to find a hospital in an old building, or one which hasn't been drastically revamped and modernized. All of this construction and refurbishment of these hospitals, is in quite dramatic contrast to those other public

buildings—our schools, or the public transportation infrastructure, to cite but two examples. We all know that there are many schools, especially in the cities, which are inadequately staffed, the buildings often in a poor state, and the teachers poorly paid. One can't say the same about hospitals. (Even though some hospital workers are paid minimum wage or slightly above, whereas administrators and other apparatchiks command six-figure salaries, carpeted offices and blonde Scandinavian furniture.)

The reason why I am so intimately acquainted with Hill-Burton is that in 1984 I handled the attorney-fee application in a successful lawsuit filed against Ochsner Foundation Hospital which had received a ton of Hill-Burton grant money. Hill-Burton had a provision, which was completely ignored by Ochsner. It said hospitals had an obligation to provide free medical services to poor patients. It was put there to keep hospitals from being profligate in its generosity, the free medical services could be limited to a figure amounting to 10% of its paying clientele. Of course, when a medically indigent person presented himself or herself to Ochsner, its doors were slammed in his/her face, even though they were obligated, as a condition of receiving their totally free Hill-Burton grant, paid for by the taxpayers, to treat these applicants. The result was a lawsuit filed in federal district court in New Orleans which ended up in an injunction against Ochsner, and other hospitals in the area, requiring them to take in these patients. I came in on the tail-end of this rather creative lawsuit and my job was to convince the federal judge to grant attorney fees to the winning plaintiffs' attorneys, which was a consortium of legal services programs and health-law

projects. I had to review a huge amount of documentation, as the lawsuit had been going on for more than 10 years, and come up with a figure of how many attorney-hours were expended in the case. I shall never forget the deposition taken of the nun who was the Mother Superior of the Sisters of Charity, the Catholic order which ran a hospital, now merged with Charity Hospital, called Hotel Dieu. The attorneys for Hotel Dieu, unlike the more savvy lawyers representing Ochsner, aggressively fought against the injunction, even though Hotel Dieu had been founded as a charity hospital for the poor. The Sisters of Charity were set up by St. Vincent de Paul to care for the poor people of Paris in the XVIIth century. The Mother Superior was quite irate in having to give her deposition, and exclaimed that she didn't care whether the patient was Black, white, Hindu, American Indian, Chinese or what, they wouldn't be admitted if they didn't have an insurance card! When I read this I had an image of poor St. Vincent de Paul revolving in his grave.

So, Murphy, it's even worse than you think, our political system has been so prostituted by the insatiable demands of the corporate state that official governmental policy is furthering, even ardently encouraging, by copious infusions of taxpayers' monies, that market-driven, for-profit system intended to build the privilege of the few and increase a sense of powerlessness among the rest of us. It's the law of the land; if you doubt it, go look at Hill-Burton which is but one of many examples: their name is Legion.

Faithfully yours,

Donald Juneau
Hammond, LA

Prison Slaves Removed from Garbage Detail

In the article "Power, Privilege and Privatization, Part II" in the August 1999 *Hospitality*, Murphy Davis reported the use of 36 women from the State Prison in Pulaski County, Georgia, to sort garbage for recycling for a private, for-profit waste treatment facility in Crisp County, Georgia. In response to complaints from the Prison & Jail Project, the Crisp County Watchdog Group, and the Southern

Center for Human Rights, Georgia Attorney General Thurbert Baker ruled that the prisoners were working under a contract that "clearly runs afoul" of a Georgia law that prohibits the use of convict labor for private profit. This is a victory, but also a reminder of the need for constant vigilance as prison labor is increasingly viewed as an easily exploited and disposable free source of labor.

My Birmingham Bible

by Ed Loring

In the winter of 1982 I was 42 years old. I sat one morning in the Grady Hospital waiting room watching and listening to the crowd shuffle toward their prognosis. I loved the Bible then as I do now. My copy was open to the Gospel of Luke. I understood then, as I do now, how the forces of evil and innocence use the Word of Yahweh to injure and oppress. Not only am I haunted by God; I am also haunted by the enemies of the Word. A few years earlier I had completed a Ph.D. dissertation on the pro-slavery argument. I had wept in the mid 1960s when assent to biblical authority and belief in the gifts of the Spirit were code words for Jim Crow not Jesus Christ. The inferiority of my Black sisters and brothers and the subservient place of all my sisters were established through biblical studies as the will of the white male [racist and sexist] God, named by believers as "the father of the Lord Jesus Christ." In popular jargon this mighty One was referred to as "the man upstairs."

The Christian faith, I had been told, was about souls saved from hell fire and damnation. Justice and politics were anathema. Rev. Billy Graham preached worldwide in those turbulent days that such heresy would lead the practitioners to perdition. "You cannot mix faith and politics [read race and women's equality]" he and his disciples confessed on the White House lawn

while chasing golf balls. Within my adopted family of Presbyterians these beliefs took institutional life in the founding of the Presbyterian Church of America.

I received my first "grown up" Bible from the L. O. Dawson Memorial Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama. Our family lived in Birmingham for the last 6 months of 1948. I was in the third grade. At this period in southern history the spirit of Jesus was very busy in Birmingham forming the character and shaping the guts of Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth. The demonic powers were taking no Sabbath rest either. They found a vile nesting place in the wounded heart of Police Commissioner Eugene "Bull" Conner.

I loved that Birmingham Bible. It was a personal gift to a little boy from his Sunday School teacher, and it was the Word of God. My mom and dad were wonderful and obedient in requiring me to go to Sunday School throughout my childhood. Thank you! I would likely not be one of the Levettan 7—arrested, jailed, and charges dropped—without Sunday School and the Bible. Today that very Bible sits upon an upper shelf in my office, an emblem of a long haul journey in faith-seeking justice.

In 1951-52 I was in the 6th grade at Myers Park Elementary School in Charlotte, North Carolina. Freddie Barnett and a small group of big boys began to bully Sandy Saunders and me on our bike rides to and from

school. I was terrified, miserable, and awash in shame. I did not want to go to school. Often I feigned illness; and over a year and a half I became a coward. My Birmingham Bible became a source of comfort and a tool of survival for me in the terror of those days. I read and re-read, as I do today some 47 years later, the 23rd Psalm:

Yea, though I walk through the valley
of the shadow of death
[which was Beverly Drive]

I will fear no evil:

For thou art with me: thy rod and thy
staff they comfort me.

The Word of God helped get me through the valley, but I have spent years reweaving the rent fabric that left me with rags of rage and hideous anxiety. And Freddie Barnett was not all. Once the word is out, more fists fly and evil laughter cackles like a hen wolfing a worm. Craven and cringing I ran through those lonely and horrible years. Jesus held my hand, and I have not run my race in vain.

I have discovered a tunnel through which to crawl toward others. Like the basement of the Butler Street CME Church, gone astray, my tunnel is below street level. I crawled toward Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold as we learned of their forsaken and bullied lives through the terrible tales told of the Columbine High School Massacre. I can smell the rank sewage of heartless laughter and innocent hate slithering down the high school halls toward the outcasted and rejected ones dressed in black. I have seen in the middle of my night the incandescent idea malignant and maggot-like. Why! We have 20+ men and women asleep and tortured by the god of dereliction in our front yard right now. Violence begets violence. Some must, Jesus' forgiveness notwithstanding, reap what they sow. When we spit into the wind, the phlegm will fill our faces. Hosea, prophet among Hebrews, speaking on behalf of the God of the Oppressed, keeps saying: "For they sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind" (8:7).

What a blessing it is to have a Bible, go to Sunday School and to be led to great teachers, for they shall be given non-violent love to transform Goliath.

Blessed are those who grow up in homes without guns, for they shall learn to walk through the valley of death toward the mountaintop of peace and justice.

I have met Isaiah Shoels' mother and father. I have wept with them. Isaiah was the only African American slaughtered by Eric Harris

and Dylan Klebold. They lynched him with lead because he was a Black invader of white affluent suburban America. White affluent suburban America where so many have houses, yet so many are homeless. The always working/playing parents rob their children whose souls bleed white like pus. How can we not shout out as we share these words, beloved reader? Does the prophet Amos not slosh in the marrow of our bones? But...through the subterranean tunnel, stygian, I hear the cry of bullied boys. I see Vietnam reenacted with Lieutenant William Calley as our Nixon-paroled savior. I hear the groans of prisoners whose chains clank against the steel bar cages. I count caskets for 13-year-old clients, consumers, customers, and convicts.

My Birmingham Bible taught me how to weep and moan and rage against the wind:

Look, O LORD, and consider!
To whom have you done this?
Should women eat their offspring?
The children they have borne?
Should pastor and prophet be killed
In the sanctuary of the LORD?

The young and old are lying
On the ground in the streets;
My young women and my young men
Have fallen by handguns;
In the day of your anger
You have killed them,
Slaughtering without mercy.

(Lamentations 2:20-21 adapted)

And in Atlanta in the hot month of July we have beheld two massacres. In Adamsville, a family affair of six homicides and one suicide was the worst mass killing in Atlanta since Sherman burned us down. (Does this include the Atlanta Race Riots of 1906?) And then the clock struck 2 and in the mostly white, mostly affluent, northern section of our city—The Buckhead Massacre—a day trader killed 12 (including his family) and then himself. In the meantime our greatest public debate centers around tax cuts. How many billion shall it be? While, as in the days and nights of Jeremiah the heart-broken prophet of the crucified God, the homeless hurt, the hungry faint, our children are caged and casketed, the preachers talk of the blessings of air conditioning, the poor get no medicine, the elderly go to casinos for fellowship, and the choir practices the closing hymn. Who will say the benediction?

Ed Loring is a Partner at the Open Door.

Facts on Gun Violence International Comparisons

The United States has weaker firearm regulations and higher numbers of deaths involving firearms than all other industrialized—and even most developing—nations, according to a 1997 study by the United Nations. The study surveyed 49 nations on their firearm legislation, manufacture, and trade regulations, as well as on their rates of firearm crime and death. The following are some comparisons between the U.S. and other nations, found in this study and others:

- The United States is one of only two countries—the other being the Czech Republic—that does not have a firearm licensing system. Thirty-five percent of households in the United States possess at least one firearm, over three times the average of other countries surveyed.

- The United States is among only 22% of nations responding to the UN survey that do not have regulations regarding the storage of firearms.
- While the United States rarely

- imports illegal firearms, it is one of only three countries who reported "frequent" instances of illegal exportation.

- The total firearm death rate in the United States in 1995 was 13.7 per 100,000 people, three times the average rate among other responding countries, and the third highest, after Brazil and Jamaica.

- In 1995, 11,225 people in the U.S. died from firearm accidents. This figure is over three times higher than the average rate of other responding countries.

- The U.S. had the highest firearm suicide rate of all the countries surveyed, 7 per 100,000 people in 1995, nearly seven times greater than the average among other responding countries.

- Children in the U.S. are 12 times more likely to die from firearm injury than are children in other industrialized nations.

Reprinted from *Coalition to Stop Gun Violence*, Washington DC;
www.gunfree.org

The New South Africa

(Editor's note: Our good friend, Ellen Spears, spent a month in South Africa in May and June, working with the Association of Black Journalists of South Africa. She wrote this letter on the eve of the national elections. Ellen is Director of Publications on the staff of the Southern Regional Council and is a doctoral candidate at Emory University.)

Dear Open Door Friends:

On May 29, 1999, Trinity Sunday, I attended the Solemn Sung Eucharist at the Cathedral of St. George in Cape Town, South Africa, Archbishop Tutu's former church. The church sits at the head of St. George's Mall about a block from the Independent Newspapers. I worked there at the Cape Argus, one of the two main papers in Cape Town, with a group from the Journalism Program at Emory University.

The service was a special one, with the St. George's choir and a small orchestra performing Missa in Augustus, translated 'Mass in Time of Anxiety,' the 'Nelson' Mass (for Lord Nelson, the British admiral, not Nelson Mandela) by Franz J. Haydn. The familiar Anglican liturgy followed almost exactly the Episcopal language I grew up with at home, except the Book of Common Prayer (printed in 1961) prays to "affirm that thy Servant Elizabeth the Queen, her ministers and parliaments may truly and impartially administer justice." In the spoken service, that language has been replaced by affirming the State

President [Nelson Mandela, now Thabo Mbeki]. The music was glorious.

The church building itself was extraordinary, supported by columns that would take four people to surround with arms outstretched and only the tips of their fingers touching. The winter Cape Town sun pouring through the leaded glass windows stained the rough stone walls with brilliant purples and reds. The linoleum tile floor and the wooden linked chairs suggested a simplicity borne of necessity or practicality.

Posted on a stand at the entry of the church was a prayer for the second democratic elections in South Africa on June 2nd that read:

O God, Creator of the world and Father of many-nations. We thank you for our land, South Africa, with its beauty, bounty, peoples and potential; we commend to your mercy our forthcoming national elections. Give us grace to conduct the elections in peace and integrity. Free us from intolerance, shameful actions and evil and bind us together as one nation with the common purpose of building up the common good. We ask this through Christ Jesus our Peace. Amen.

The excitement about the elections had been growing since we arrived three weeks earlier. The elections were hotly contested in the Western Cape province, where the ruling party under apartheid, the National Party, still has a remarkable

level of support. Election day was hot, with long lines, but calm. Despite the fact that the ANC won the largest number of parliamentary seats in the Western Cape, the National Party coalesced with another smaller white-dominated party to retain the premiership in the province after June 2nd.

The new South Africa has achieved so much, but anxiety persists because of the sharp contrasts in living standards between whites and blacks that are evident everywhere. A reporter we traveled with explained that more than one-half of the residents of Cape Town do not live in houses. According to the 1996 census figures, 21.3% of black South Africans live in "informal dwellings" or are homeless. (This figure does not include people living in traditional dwellings. If traditional dwellings were included, the figure would more than double, to 45.9%). By contrast, .001% of whites live in "informal dwellings" (.008% if traditional dwellings are included). The new South African government has built close to 750,000 homes in the past five years—small cinder block houses with cold running water and electricity. But so many more are needed.

The health care crisis exceeds anything we see at home. In the city with a world-class hospital where the first heart transplant took place in 1967, access to health care for the vast majority is non-existent. TB and HIV/AIDS rates are soaring, creating a public health crisis of devastating proportions.

I came away feeling that people in the U.S. cannot stop paying attention to South Africa just because apartheid has formally ended. Just as the Civil Rights Movement victories laid the groundwork for the next stage of struggle, the legal end of apartheid simply provided the basis for transformation. But so much work remains. As before, the U.S.' role is critical.

Here's just one specific thing we can do: It represents a global reflection of the battle that the Grady Health Care Coalition is fighting—South Africa's Medicine Act permits policies that can lead to less expensive drugs. But the United States/South Africa Binational Commission (chaired by Vice-President Al Gore) is attempting to block the South African government's measures designed to make pharmaceuticals more affordable. Support the South African government's insistence on the right to require drug companies to comply with South African laws that bring drug prices down. For a short, straightforward explanation of the drug policy issue, see the June 1999 Public Citizen's Health Research Group Health Letter. Tell Vice President Gore to recognize the immorality of the U.S. government's policy toward health care in South Africa. Call (202) 456-2326 or e-mail him at: vicepresident@whitehouse.gov.

Thanks for all your work for justice,

Ellen Spears



GLADYS RUSTAY

Joe Hinds and Kazy Blocher were recently married and are our newest Resident Volunteers. Joe graduated from Columbia Theological Seminary last spring and Kazy is entering her senior year at Columbia this fall.

Join us as a Resident Volunteer!

*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)

Angela Howard

by Angela Howard with Liz Clasen

(Editor's note: The following article comes from an interview of Angela Howard by Liz Clasen. Both Angela and Liz were summer interns: Liz a Senior at Davidson College and Angela a Senior at Guilford College. Angela will be studying in Ghana this Fall. We thank God for the light and sight that she has brought to us here at the Open Door. What follows is Angela's story.)

I have an eye disease called *retinitis pigmentosa*, which causes the gradual deterioration of the retina, so I have been blind since I was three. Until I was twelve, I had a fair amount of usable vision, and it was not getting any worse. When I hit my teenage years, the rest of my vision began to deteriorate.

Growing up, my experiences as a blind child in public schools were pretty typical of what blind kids who have some vision go through. I was not taught Braille, or the use of a cane, or how to use any alternative techniques that blind people use. I used large print books in school, which were very difficult to manage. They weigh a lot, and I could not read them very well because I could not see much. So I was reading probably 50-60 words per minute and trying to struggle through getting all my homework done, and putting in a lot of hard work, which never seemed to pay off. Not using a cane, I always worried about things that should not have been a worry. I remember starting to school, and the whole morning on the way there I would worry about coming in from the bright sun into the dark hall—would somebody's books be in the way and I'd trip on them? Would I be able to see? I had a lot of worries that were really unnecessary if I would had been given the proper tools to manage as a blind person.

Also I learned very early from what my teachers and my family said that it was not O.K. to be blind. People would never use the word blind. They would say, "Oh, she is not blind; she is visually impaired;" or "partially sighted." So I learned that the word blind was very negative, and I should avoid not only the word, but anything that had to do with blind people at all costs. People would also tell me, "Oh, you are so lucky that you can see some." They meant it as a compliment, but it really told me that they think I am superior to the few people in the world who cannot see at all, and they think I am inferior to the

majority who have sight. I learned all those messages at an early age, and I internalized it.

I learned at a very young age to pretend that I could see. I remember when I was about six, I was riding in the car with my grandparents on Christmas Eve, and they said, "Oh, look! Look in the sky! Do you see Rudolph's nose?" I had already learned to just pretend I could see even when I couldn't, so I said, "Oh, yes! I can see it! I can see it!" And I remember being very embarrassed when I found out there was not a

which is an organization of about 50,000 blind and sighted people who work for equality, opportunity, and security for blind people. It's basically summed up as a civil rights organization. The Louisiana Center that I attended is one of three training centers that is run by leaders in the Federation who believe that if blind people are really going to achieve full participation in society we need to have good training centers that will give blind people the skills they need to be independent, or interdependent, and to be able to live successfully in

not do. And I remember feeling angry that nobody had told me before that I could be a teacher or a doctor. It was in early high school that I started thinking, "If people hid the truth about blindness from me, then probably they are hiding the truth about other people from me." By my sophomore year of high school I knew that I wanted to go to a school where people had more progressive values. I was tired of being in Bosier City with my neighborhood kids. So I applied to the Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts. When I was at that school, I had an amazing history teacher, who taught from the perspective of women and men of different minorities.

I spent seven summers altogether at the Louisiana Center for the Blind, skipping a few years during high school because I had a boyfriend. There are many training centers like this one all over the country, although the Louisiana Center is much more progressive than the others. To graduate from the adult program, we had a Home Economics class, and everything we cooked had to be made from scratch because if you can cook it from scratch, then you know that you can cook it from the mix. We had to cook in all the different methods: fry, bake, broil, boil, deep fry. We had to cut up a whole chicken and fry that. Then we had to cook a meal for four and serve it. Then we had to cook a meal for 40.

In my cane travel class, we learned how to cross all different kinds of streets. We learned how to take buses. There were no buses where the Center is because it's a very small town, so they would drive us to a town 30 minutes away and drop us off. The first time we did it with someone else, but after that we were on our own. They dropped us off, and they did not tell us where we were; we had to find a bus stop and get from the bus stop to the mall. Then we all met at the mall. That was pretty scary. We would do that once a month. To graduate from the cane travel class we had to go on three drop routes, where they put us in a van, drove us all around the town, and dropped us off without telling us where we were. We had to find our way back without asking anybody any questions. For the final graduation project, we had to take a Greyhound bus to a city where we had never been before and that we were unfamiliar with. From the Greyhound bus station in that city we had to take a city bus out to eat, or shopping, and then come home.

(continued on page 9)



GLADYS RUSTAY

Angela (right) serving grits to volunteer Trudy O'Connell at the Open Door's morning breakfast for the homeless.

Rudolph. I realized that they caught me in that lie.

I had a very rough year in school my sixth grade year. That's when I started losing the rest of my vision. So there was a period of about six months when I could not read at all, even the large print, and I was struggling through school, making bad grades, even though I would come home and literally do homework all night. I was having a lot of problems. My mom got a pamphlet in the mail about a children's summer program that was starting up at the Louisiana Center for the Blind, and she was very interested in it and said that she had a feeling that it was something that I needed to do. All my teachers said, "Are you sure you want to send her there? Now they're pretty radical down there." But my mom wanted to, so she sent me kicking and screaming there.

Going to the Louisiana Center for the Blind really is what changed my life, not only by what they taught me there, but also by introducing me to the National Federation of the Blind,

society, and not be funneled into workshops, or other programs that really segregate blind people.

I attended my first Convention of the National Federation of the Blind during my second year at the Louisiana Center. I went through the children's program the first year. The second year they opened a teenage program, so I went through that, too. Part of the teenage program was the opportunity to go to National Convention. It was in Dallas, and it was the 50th Anniversary. It was the most exciting week that I ever had in my life. I heard the most amazing speakers. I met people who really believed in me as a blind person. And I remembered all the things that the doctors and teachers had told me that I would never be as a blind person: I would never be able to be a teacher, or a doctor. I met so many people who were those things. It was a life-changing experience, and I have gone every year since.

I remember feeling very angry when I found out these truths about blindness and what I could and could

At the Center we have a wood shop class, and we had to complete some projects in that class. Most of our teachers are blind. The wood shop teacher is not blind, but he's been a member of the Federation because his ex-wife was blind, so he got involved, and even after they were divorced he kept coming to conventions. He was not hired because he was blind. He was hired because he has good attitudes about blindness. He believes in blind people so much that he built all the shelves in the wood shop blindfolded.

We also do extra activities, such as rock-climbing and white water rafting. We go roller skating and other fun things. Everything we do is under sleep shades so the people who can see some have to experience total blindness. This is a radical concept. Most training centers emphasize using what vision you have. But Federation philosophy is that any amount of sight you have is convenient, and you can use that when it is effective, but most blind people are encouraged to use it even when it is not effective, so you need to learn the alternative techniques of learning to trust and learning that you are competent. And the only way to do that is to do the activities blindfolded. When you take the blindfold off, you can make a rational decision about when is a good time to use your vision, and when is a good time to use alternative techniques. I believe this training prepared me for college and volunteer service.

At Guilford College I have been on the Women's Studies Committee, the Peace and Conflict Studies Committee, and I was one of the Student Coordinators of the Conflict Resolution Student Resource Center. I have done some volunteer work throughout my time at Guilford. I worked in a homeless shelter for a little while. I volunteered as a tutor at a prison.

I first came to the Open Door Community last year during Spring Break, and I really loved it a lot. It was hard for me to go back to school. I had also been working for the past three years at the Louisiana Center as a counselor in the same programs I had been a student in. I felt that it was important to work there in order to give back what I had been given. I taught for the same number of years that I attended, so I felt that I had paid my dues, and I was ready to do something new. I knew I would love it at the Open Door.

When I went to the National Federation for the Blind Convention this summer I felt as if I was going through culture shock. We get cheap group hotel rates so we get to stay in

really nice hotels. Coming from the Open Door to a plush hotel made me feel dizzy. There is a 70% unemployment rate among blind people, and a lot of blind people have made a living in sheltered workshops, so there is a big emphasis on taking pride in the blind people who are successful, to raise up other blind people, and to be good role models. Most of the chosen speakers are not living in poverty, but people who are living a successful American life. That's a struggle that I'm still thinking about. I'm someone who wants to challenge those ideas, on the one hand, but on the other hand, try to recognize that not everybody wants to challenge those ideas and that I want blind people to be able to make their own life choices. There is a difference between chosen lifestyles and forced lifestyles. That is something I really struggle with.

A big source of joy for me at the Open Door has been seeing the guys in the house and in the yard slowly change how they feel about blindness. When I first got here and would walk down the steps outside, they would all get up and move out of my way. Now a few of them still do that, but most of them just stay where they are sitting. If I walked outside when I first got here, everyone would want to help me, and everyone would shout out, "Watch out! She's coming! Watch out!" After I'd been here for a couple of weeks, I walked outside, and someone said, "Watch out for her! Watch out!" And someone else said, "She don't need no help!" That made me really happy just to see that change. In the National Federation we say that blind people are just a cross section of society, and you cannot really put certain characteristics on us as a group because we are just as diverse as any cross section. I believe that's true of homeless people, as well, and their reactions to me as a blind person are just the same as those of people in a middle class neighborhood. It has really strengthened my belief that I can work with any population even though people have expressed great doubts that I could.

Last year at the National Federation of the Blind Convention the second vice-president called about six students, and she said that the leadership of the Federation was worried that my generation, which is soon to be the leaders, is not in touch with our history. She said, "For instance, when I was your age and in the Federation, I knew a woman who had been sterilized because she was blind. You don't know any of those people anymore." That kind of put a seed in my head. Then our leader

The August 9/16 issue of *The Nation* magazine features an article by our friend and colleague, Neil Shulman, M.D. on the Grady Hospital campaign entitled "Prescription: Protest." Dr. Shulman details the issues and organizing in response to the financial crisis at Grady and the attempt of administrators to impose a \$10 per prescription co-pay on the poorest of the poor. Get it. Read it! Or look it up on the web at <<www.thenation.com>>

Dr. Jernigan died in October, and that really devastated me, so I grew to want to know more about our history. As a sociology major, studying about other oppressed groups, I found that blind people and disabled people were never mentioned. So I asked my teacher if I could do an independent study, and she agreed to help me. That study turned into a thesis. The foundation of my thesis was that lives of blind people are not shaped so much by the physicality of not being able to see, but by social factors, by negative attitudes held by professionals that they pass on to their clients, and by attitudes of the current society that get embedded in the minds of organizations. Then I also created a history of the movement using the different songs we sing, and investigating the stories behind these songs. I knew the words to these songs, but I did not necessarily know the stories.

One day I was talking to one of the guys in the yard and he asked me what my major was. I told him sociology, and he joked that's why I was at the Open Door: to write a thesis about the homeless. I said, "No, I have already written my thesis." He wanted to know what it was about, and he was very interested and said, "What do you mean, blindness is not about not being able to see?" I started to explain to him the different ways that blind people are treated, both in the system and just walking down the street. He was quiet for a minute, and then he said, "Well, that's kind of like homeless people." So I thought it was great that he could make that connection between what it's like to be stigmatized as a homeless person and what it's like to be stigmatized as a blind person. He wanted to read my thesis, and I gave him a copy, and later he told me that he liked it.

There was another interesting person in the yard who really embodied all the negative attitudes about homeless people and about blind people. I was outside one evening, and he came up to me and said, "Do you know that you're talking to homeless people?" On the one hand he could not believe that I would

want to talk to homeless people. On the other hand, he thought that since I could not just want to talk to homeless people, the reason I was doing it was that I'm blind, and of course I couldn't be aware of my surroundings. I thought that one question embodied so many negative attitudes that we are taught about people.

There will always be struggles in my life because people are going to say things that are strange. It's usually not meant to be that way, but it's based on stereotypes, or a negative attitude, and even I have those thoughts, too, that I have to work on. I do not find those problems here at the Open Door any more than I would find them anywhere I go, even with my family, or with myself.

In my immediate future I will be going to Ghana, and I am terrified but excited. I am not sure what I hope to get there, but I want a completely different experience. I felt stagnant all year, as if I was not pushing myself very hard. I was so comfortable at Guilford that I did not have ways of pushing myself. So in going to Ghana, I hope to stretch myself really far. The focus of the program is to study how the slave trade affected the continent. We will be traveling, looking at slave castles and structures of buildings that were designed during the slave trade as a way of protection, and hearing lectures.

In the future, I know that I will be going to graduate school, and I want to study social movements, but I am not sure what focus that study will take.

Postage Stamps

Used postage stamps ordinarily thrown away, can be sold to raise money to feed the hungry in the US and abroad. Large commemoratives (like Olympics, Black Heritage, Lighthouse, etc.) and all foreign stamps wanted, along with any collections (no standard issues such as Flags, Love, etc.) All proceeds go to ministries like the Open Door.

Send stamps to: Arthur M. Field,
2124 Hwy 280 West, Plains, GA
31780.

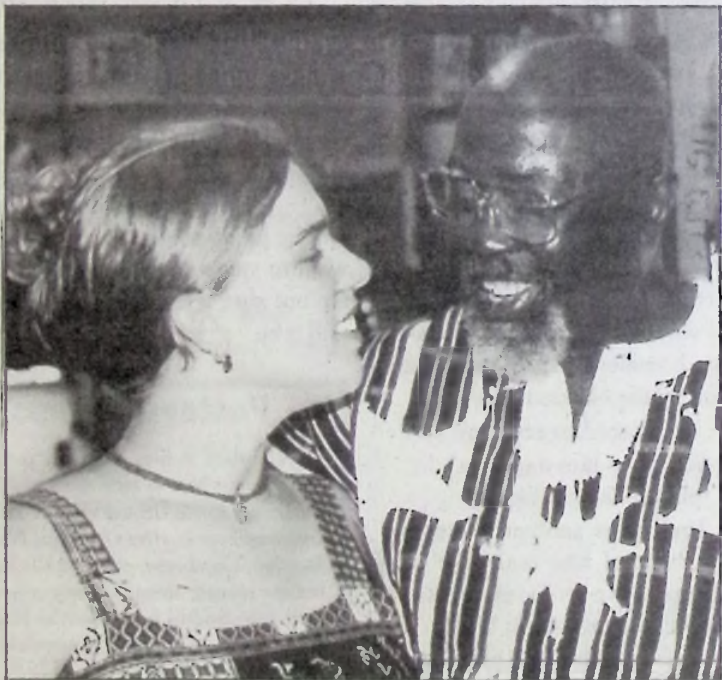
Open Door Community's Travelogue



Open Door Partner Adolphus Victrum recently spent 10 days in Nicaragua as part of a delegation organized by Presbyterians Answer to Hunger (PATH) from the Greater Atlanta Presbytery. Adolphus is shown here assisting villagers in building window frames for their new houses. Ninety five families live in the village where the PATH team worked. The devastation brought on by hurricane Mitch made the need great in Nicaragua. Only 21 new houses will be ready by the end of August. It will take 2 years to get all 95 families into new homes on a site which is safer from the flood plain.

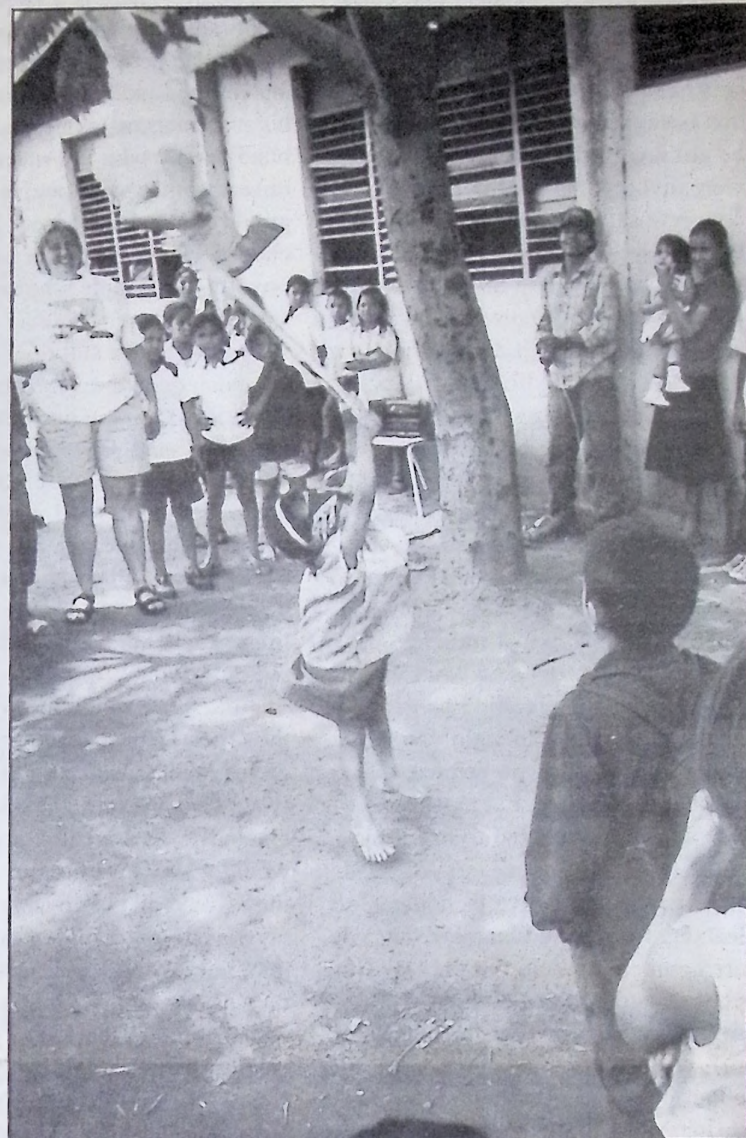


Adolphus met up with Ken and Kim Brown and their children. Ken and Kim are missionaries for the Presbyterian Church USA in Managua, Nicaragua.



GLADYS RUSTAY

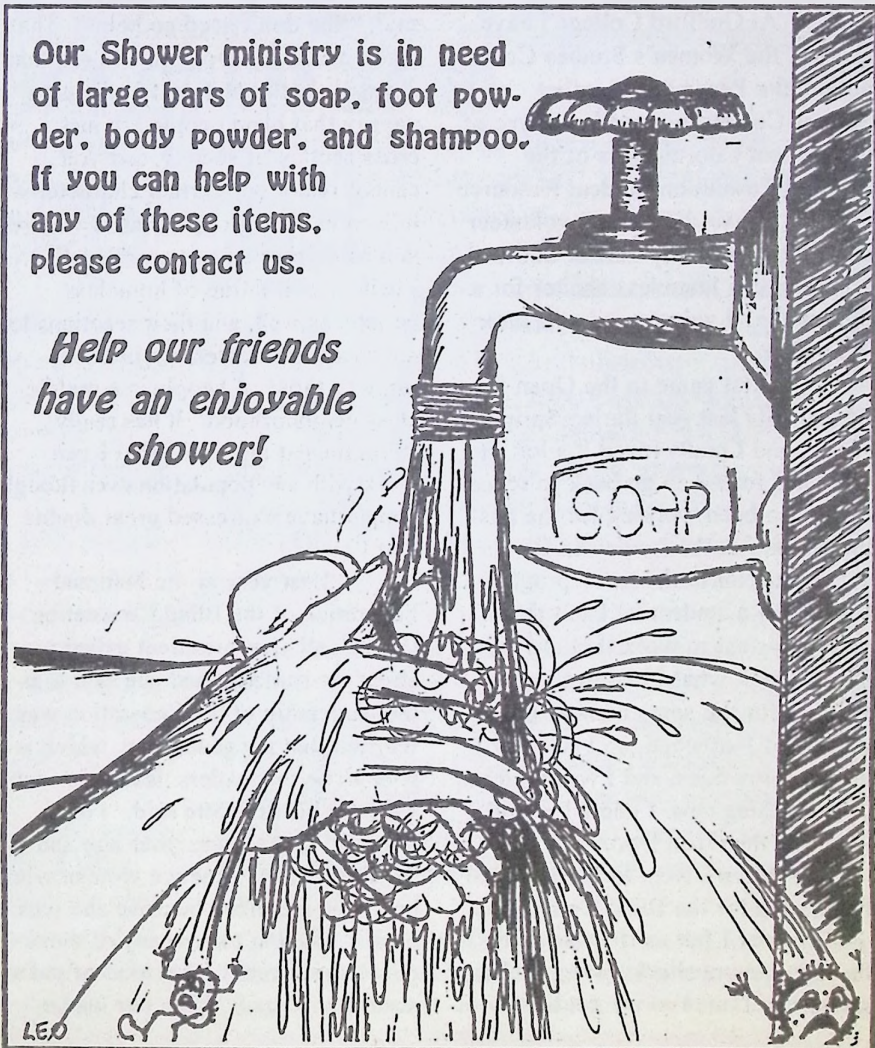
Just as Adolphus returned from Nicaragua, Hannah Loring-Davis returned from five months as a student at the University of Cape Coast in Ghana, West Africa. The two are shown here dressed in Ghanaian clothes and welcoming each other back home.



A young girl hit the pinata during a celebration held upon the completion of the PATH 10-day project.

Our Shower ministry is in need of large bars of soap, foot powder, body powder, and shampoo. If you can help with any of these items, please contact us.

Help our friends have an enjoyable shower!



Dear Elizabeth,

I hope that this finds you and everyone there doing well. As for me, I am doing the best that I can.

I wanted to take a moment to write and address the issue of capital punishment. For years the Soviet Union (Russia) was heralded as a brutal country with a poor human rights record. The Russian leaders executed countless thousands of people. From time to time political leaders from the U.S. would point out the brutality of the Russians. They were considered barbarians!

"We in the U.S. have a policy of executing our condemned criminals," as we told ourselves this, we would pat ourselves on the back and rather boastfully point out. But we are more civilized than those horrendous Russians.

Well, in today's newspaper was an interesting article. The title tells it all: "Yeltsin Commutes 716 Death Sentences." It seems that the leaders in Russia are calling for an end to capital punishment in their country.

Apparently, they are not as cold-hearted as our leaders have told us. In fact it seems that the truth of the matter is that we in the United States are the cold-hearted barbarians. To say otherwise would be to deny the truth, and that, my friends, would make us also a nation of liars.

If a nation that we have maligned and reviled for years as a harsh nation that is unfair to its citizens can change, maybe it's time we changed also.

Capital Punishment does not solve society's problems. It belittles all of us and places each of us a little closer to the title of being the true barbarian.

I will close for now wishing you well.

Warmly,

a friend in prison

Dear Ed and Murphy:

I just completed reading the May 1999 issue of *Hospitality*, and gave thanks for the protest and witness challenging the decision regarding health care at Grady [Hospital]. Thank you for your continuing witness.

I resonated with your comment Murphy: Can't someone else pick it up this time [page 4]? But there was no one else at the moment, and so you pushed ahead. Thank you.

We have our own struggle with health care for the poor here in Tennessee. Tenn Care seeks to exclude more and more people, to deal with cutting costs. The Tennessee Health Care Campaign keeps the issue alive and does a fine job. They got front page coverage on a hearing where poor folk spoke about their need for Tenn Care. They were potent and articulate. Tenn Care is quite a fine program if it is not reduced. But the 'powers' will speak and try to cut it. We continue to resist.

The state has a big deficit, and education and health care will both be affected. We have been fighting to get the tax on food removed. A Republican governor proposed to remove the tax and sock it to businesses for a change. It was a miracle of sorts. Praise the Lord who does wondrous things. But, of course, the business interests prevailed and we failed to get sufficient support so we are back to zero. Momentum to remove the food tax has esca-

Grace and Peaces of Mail

lated, however, and there is broad support to drop this tax. Additional funds are needed and we do not have any fair remedies since we have no income tax. We have been pushing for some such tax or some alternative which is fair for a change.

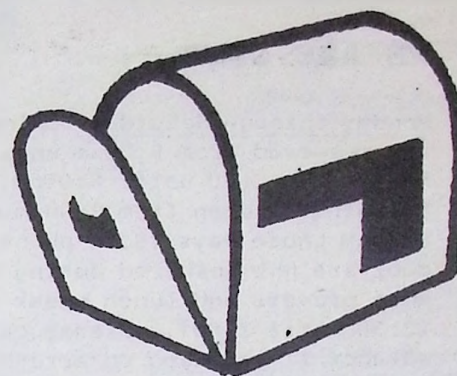
An excursus: The paradox of obligation and freedom continues to strike me as an essential part of the life of faith. I find it so. So we push on, for there is a need to speak for those without voice or to find ways for their voices to be heard. It is wonderful to work out of freedom in Christ, but there is also an obligation when we are connected to people who experience exclusion, injustice, trouble. Nibs Stroupe's sermon pointed to this in Jesus' struggle with the culture of exclusion in which he lived and the call of God to be open to all and to give himself for all—even the Syrian or a widow in Sidon (Luke 4) [*Hospitality*, May 1999, p. 6ff].

Ed's review of *The Street Lawyer* [*Hospitality*, April 1999, p. 4ff] helped me to see that book in a deeper way. Thank you for that.

Moving on: It was good to read the reflections on C.M. in the April issue of *Hospitality* [p. 3]. I remember that C.M. regularly sent me a stack of copies of *Hospitality* to distribute [at Vanderbilt Divinity School] for many years. He took that task very seriously. I had a great love and affection for C.M. We had a special relationship over the years. He was my teacher. We would have catfish together each time I came, and it was a time of sharing and beauty. Then we were cohorts in breaking and entering. I recall getting into a van at 3:00 a.m. with C.M., holding bolt cutters, and slowly driving down to the Imperial Hotel so he could cut the chain in preparation for the next night's occupation and liberation of the hotel for those in need of housing. What a moment it was when we stopped there in the darkness, seeing police cars go by, wondering what would happen next. I remember his week with us in Nashville where he seemed so happy. We looked at an art exhibit at Fisk, and went to Edgehill Church, and a baseball game, and even the Grand Ol Opry. He seemed excited by each event. However, it was upon his return from that week that he fell off the wagon, and eventually left the Open Door. I felt so sad. I felt uneasy in thinking his being here was the occasion for his choice to begin drinking. I offer this to God. There is tragedy in our lives which becomes heavy. But grace abides, and gives us release so we can go on. I give thanks for C.M. and miss him. His struggle is over, and he enters into rest. He was a special servant of God.

I spent two weeks in Nicaragua early in April, getting in touch with the effects of [Hurricane] Mitch, but primarily to study the effects of the debt on this small troubled nation. Health care and educational resources have gone down dramatically. Slavery takes many forms. "The debt is just another way of the wealthy stealing from the poor," one woman said. She is part of the Jubilee 2000-Nicaragua group. I have been writing and speaking about the debt issues for the past month. This, and the SOA [School of Americas], have been on my mind.

I continue to work each Wednesday with the lunch program at the church. The Bible study preceding the lunch, and the lunch itself have become something of an event. People seem to feel affirmed, and honored. We share life together for a moment and it is good. I offer a prayer each time,



which I have come to believe is a special time for me and for the community. It provides a moment of transcendence and perspective amidst all the pain, struggle and sadness on the street.

The Living Room meets each week too, and provides a place of support and holy conversation for about 10 or 12. I am usually amazed at this time of sharing. Out of the conversations, we have been working with women who feel the family shelter is disrespectful and has rules which are not fair. We developed a statement of rights. I am blessed by being there and feel I can be a blessing as well. How to sustain such a project is not yet clear.

Joyce and I are working with Janet Wolf and the Hobson church to develop a house for the homeless related to the congregation. This is the alternative model to my failed effort to develop an Open Door model. Pray for this project.

I keep my finger in Tying Nashville Together, and we now have 41 congregations working together to share in public policy development. The Journey of Hope had a productive two weeks in Tennessee. The tide is turning regarding the death penalty I believe. God works among us. We continue our ministry in Peniel Ridge, too.

I send my greetings and love. I hope you are both well, and alive to the spirit of life within you and among you and around you and under you and over you. Grace, shalom and truth be with you.

Don Beisswenger
Nashville, TN

Dear Friends,

My heart sank this morning when I read Elizabeth's story in the June 1999 *Hospitality* ["You Just Don't Know the Misery of Poverty"]. During my short stay at the Open Door last summer, I became good friends with Stuart, and I am sad that he left the community. My visit to 910 was a significant event in my life, and of all the people I met in Atlanta, Stuart stands out the most. He was new to the community when I arrived and was worn out from life on the street, the drugs, booze, etc. He shared a lot with me, and I with him. Stuart shared a perspective with me that was unique in my experience at the Open Door. Perhaps it was because he was as new as I was; perhaps it was just our shared humanity in the world. I am also sad for the community because it must be hard to see someone leave like that. At the same time I am joyful because of the love you share and the support so many have in the world.

My thoughts and prayers are with you often.

Love

Tom Liddle

WE ARE OPEN. . .

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

* * *

OUR MINISTRY. . .

SOUP KITCHEN: Wednesday-Saturday, 11 am - 12 noon
 SUNDAY BREAKFAST: Sunday morning 7:30 am
 WEEKDAY BREAKFAST: Monday-Friday, 6:45 am
 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: Selected Tuesdays, 7:30-9pm.
 WEEKEND RETREATS: Four times each year (for our household and volunteers/supporters), next retreat is our Advent Retreat December 3 - 5.

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

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

☐ Please ADD to the *Hospitality* mailing list.

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

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

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

Name

Address

City St Zip +

Phone

Open Door Community Worship

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

Please join us!

- September 5 5 p.m. Worship at 910;
Atlanta Labor Council President
Stuart Acuff, preaching
- September 12 5 p.m. Eucharist
5:45 p.m. Stories and Celebration for
Frances Pauley's 94th Birthday
- September 19 5 p.m. Worship at 910;
Ed Loring, preaching
- September 26 5 p.m. Worship at 910

**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.

Sep. 7th 7:30 p.m., Ellen Spears reports on South Africa

Are You Moving?

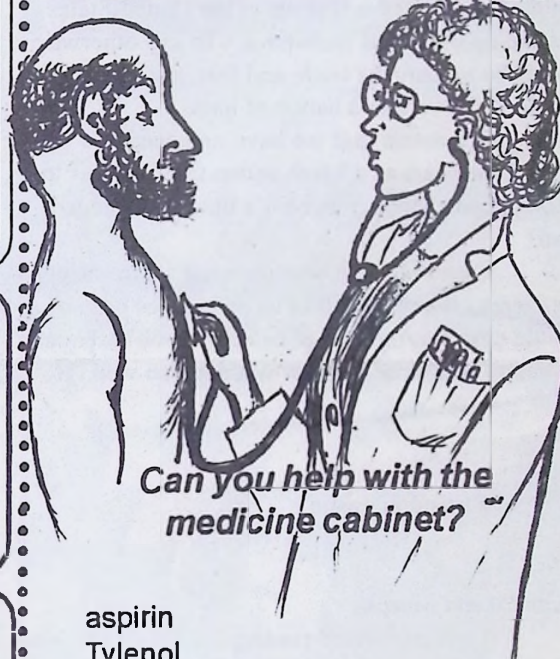
Bulk rate mail is not forwarded by the U.S. Postal Service. Send *Hospitality*, 910 Ponce de Leon Ave., NE, Atlanta, GA, 30306-4212, your new mailing address as soon as you know it. Please enclose the mailing label from your most recent issue.

Thank you!

Volunteer Needs

Soup Kitchen servers & cooks on Fridays
 Shower helpers on Wednesday - Friday
 Hardwick Trip drivers
 Sunday Morning Breakfast servers

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

Medical Clinic Supplies

Can you help with the medicine cabinet?

aspirin
 Tylenol
 decongestants
 non-alcohol based cough syrup
 Band-aids and bandages
 antibiotic cream or ointment
 hydrogen peroxide
 isopropyl alcohol

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
 Small Dining Room/Kitchen Table
 Chests of Drawers
 Vacuum Cleaners
 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!**