

# HOSPITALITY

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Open Door: A Prophetic Discipleship Community Honoring The Black Jesus, Dorothy Day and Martin Luther King Jr.

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November / December 2021

## poetry corner



Julie Lonneman

## Prayer/Oracion

By Francisco X. Alarcón  
Translated by Francisco Aragón

I want a god  
as my accomplice  
who spends nights  
in houses  
of ill repute  
and gets up late  
on Saturdays

a god  
who whistles  
through the streets  
and trembles  
before the lips  
of his lover

a god  
who waits in line  
at the entrance  
of movie houses  
and likes to drink  
café au lait

a god  
who spits  
blood from  
tuberculosis and  
doesn't even have  
enough for bus fare

a god  
knocked  
unconscious  
by the billy club  
of a policeman  
at a demonstration

a god  
who pisses  
out of fear  
before the flaring  
electrodes  
of torture

Prayer/Oracion continued on page 8



Brian Kavanagh

## Elizabeth: Joy Incarnate

By Joyce Hollyday

*This is the fifth in a series of reflections on biblical women, launched in January 2020. It is based on Luke 1:39-56.*

Elizabeth inhabited a culture that valued women primarily for the sons they provided as heirs to their husbands. “Barrenness” (such an oppressive and hurtful word) was viewed as a sign of moral failing. So in her old age, it came as a welcome surprise to Elizabeth and her husband Zechariah when they learned that she would give birth to a son. She gave thanks, declaring that God “took away the disgrace I endured among my people” (Lk. 1:25).

A few months later, Mary received the announcement that she would conceive by the Holy Spirit and bear the Child of God. She was willing, but understandably perplexed and scared. And so she set out “with haste” to see Elizabeth. She sought her elder cousin’s wisdom and comfort, hoping that her situation would feel a little less lonely and overwhelming.

The account of Elizabeth’s welcome is one of my favorite passages in the Bible. Mary, still trembling with the news of what was to be fulfilled in her, ran to the hill country and into her cousin’s arms. Elizabeth, recognizing the miracle before her, exclaimed a blessing and declared that, upon hearing Mary’s greeting, the child in her own womb leaped for

joy! In response, Mary’s beautiful song of hope, known to us as The Magnificat, burst forth:

*My soul magnifies the Holy One,  
and my spirit rejoices in God my savior;  
for you have looked with favor  
on the lowliness of your servant...  
You have scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.  
You have brought down the powerful from their thrones,  
and lifted up the lowly;  
you have filled the hungry with good things,  
and sent the rich away empty.  
— Luke 1:46-47,51-53*

A person could not get much lower in those days than to be a woman in a patriarchal society, a Jew under Roman occupation, and a peasant in a land of plenty — and, just for a little extra humiliation, pregnant outside of marriage. With God’s astounding choice of Mary to be the vessel of Incarnation, a quiet revolution had already begun. Two miraculously pregnant women were the first to understand the radical social upheaval on the horizon, as well as their part in it.

Elizabeth: Joy Incarnate continued on page 7

# Searching For God

## A Review of *Was That You Boss*

By Nibs Stroupe

I love reading. I also enjoy writing, but I am officially a non-fiction writer. I can't even imagine writing fiction, and though I have tried my hand and mind at poetry, it is definitely a grind for me. That's why I am grateful for poets like Mary Oliver, Kevin Young, Natasha Trethewey, Wendell Berry and others. It's also why I was glad to receive Steve Rhodes' recent book of poetry, *Was That You Boss* (Resource Publications, 2021) to review for *Hospitality*.

Steve is a colleague, and he is a longtime friend of the Open Door. This volume came as a pleasant surprise to me. "Pleasant" because these poems are exciting to engage. "Surprise" because I did not know that he is such a good poet — my error, not his. The poems in *Was That You Boss* are his dialogue with God, or at least his search for God. One of the reasons that these poems resonate with me is because they touch my own search for God. His approach in this volume is based on the Pulitzer-nominated Maurice Manning's poetry, and he notes in the Preface that he borrows Manning's idea of "Boss," and he seeks to make it his own.

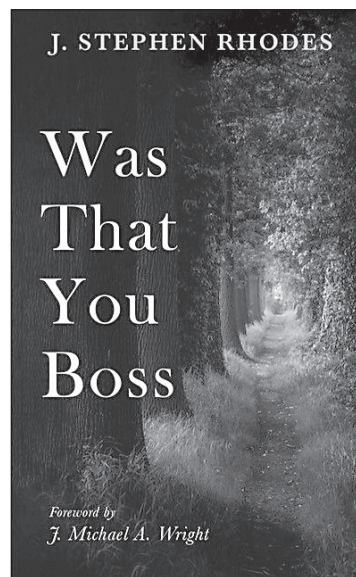
Rhodes assumes the existence and involvement of God, whom he calls "Boss." These poems are based almost entirely on rural and outdoor life, calling forth images similar to those of Mary Oliver and Wendell Berry (like Manning, a fellow Kentuckian). Unlike Oliver and Berry, who tend not to engage God directly in their poetry, Rhodes' poems are a narrative of his searching and hoping and questioning God and God's ways. These poems cover a variety of human feelings and situations, and they are rooted in the basic human dilemma: Why do we exist? What does my life mean? What do our lives mean?

In many ways, reading this volume of poetry is similar to engaging the Psalms, with their wide range of human emotions and attitudes toward God: gratitude, despair, loneliness, anger, love, bewilderment, anxiety. These poems are a gentle engagement with God and with the author's hope to "find" God, or at least to know that he is "found" by God. As autumn begins to show up while I write this review, these

### Was That You Boss

by J. Stephen Rhodes

Resource Publications  
June 13, 2021



poems evoked the feeling of a back porch conversation with God and about God. Using the term "Boss" for God implies that Rhodes feels like God is in charge, but his probing of God and God's ways also imply that something is not quite right. Not an overt quarrel with God, but rather a lover's quarrel, to use a phrase from another fine poet, Robert Frost.

Rhodes begins poem #1 — the poems are numbered, not titled — with a sense of the wonder of life and God's involvement in it:

I went walking in the marsh  
Boss the one with live oaks  
dead pines cypress knees  
I went walking and heard  
A song I couldn't name  
.....maybe Boss maybe  
you were just saying hello

As a good psalmist, he then changes to bewilderment at the continuing testing of him by God in #3

are you against me Boss  
the way the wind won't let me  
open the front door  
.....are you trying to kill us  
Boss each brittle night  
each grim gray day  
are you trying to prove  
how each breath is a bet won  
a wistful guess played out. ...

In #5, he turns to the longing for God to make it easier: "You could have made everything/a lot differently Boss/you could have been louder/maybe prettier Boss." Here he touches on the theme of Jesus in the parables of the search for the pearl of great value. Rhodes speaks for all of us in wishing God would be more apparent to each of us and all of us. He continues on this theme of searching in #28:

you are the wind Boss  
you sift my hand  
I open my fingers  
and you pass through  
.....I'm hoping Boss  
just waiting  
for one leaf to stir  
one branch to bend

In the midst of his searching, he reminds us of the wonder of life in #7:

Boss you are the unbossiest Boss I know  
no go there get down stop start  
shove pull hit Boss. ....  
but I swear it looks like you take a shine  
to every tree you plant every bush  
and flower every single soul of us

He contrasts that sense of wonder with his despair about life in #31: "if I'd felt any lower Boss/I'd have been a salamander." He also acknowledges in #14 the primal longing for meaning, a longing that none of us can avoid:

part of the problem Boss  
Is that  
I am  
are you  
part of the problem.

Rhodes acknowledges what I take to be the primary problem for those of us who believe in God: the problem of theodicy, of trying to balance the power of God with the immense suffering and injustice in the world. Is God not paying attention? Do we have to pray for decades like the Hebrews did in Egypt? In three telling poems, he begins #21 "look out your window Boss," #34 "if it's not too much

**Searching For God** *continued on page 7*

## HOSPITALITY

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**Homegoing**  
*A Celebration of Murphy Davis' Life*  
is available online:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kp0i7-INvv0&feature=youtu.be>

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Please join us on Facebook for the continuing journey of the Open Door Community in Baltimore.  
Thank you. David and Eduard.



Murphy Davis ¡Presente!



# Murphy Davis' Journey Into Solidarity

A Review of *Surely Goodness and Mercy*

By Brian Terrell

*Surely Goodness and Mercy* is a great gift to those of us with the good fortune of knowing Murphy Davis, published as it was almost simultaneously with her death in October 2020, 25 years after doctors diagnosed her with a rare form of cancer and told her that she had 18 months to live. It will also be an inspiration and a resource for those who did not know her.

Betsy and I added her book to our morning scripture reading during Lent this pandemic year, reflecting on

Larry Holben, in his theological reflection of the Catholic Worker, *All the Way to Heaven*, writes of this experience. "By setting ourselves outside the sanctioned presumptions and mythologies of the mainstream culture, such marginalization can free us to see that culture and its self-serving distortions with new clarity. As we view the dominant system through the eyes of its victims and losers, we gain a more accurate critical perspective that in itself can provide necessary spiritual detoxification. Standing with the poor in their banishment from the charmed circle of those whose lives are counted important, whose opinions are taken seriously, we



Gladys Rustay

*Ed Loring, Betsy Keenan, Jerry Zawada OFM, Brian Terrell, Toni Flynn and Murphy Davis at the Open Door Community in 2003.*

Murphy's stories and her suffering along with the parables and passion of the prophets and the Gospels.

Murphy and her husband, Ed Loring, both Presbyterian ministers, were co-founders of the Open Door Community in 1981, serving the homeless in Atlanta and befriending prisoners on Georgia's death row. The Open Door is firmly in the Catholic Worker tradition and, while our paths crossed and we followed Ed and Murphy through the Open Door's newspaper, *Hospitality*, our friendship began in the early years of Murphy's long struggle with her illness.

To be in solidarity with the poor folks they shared their lives with, Murphy and Ed dropped out of the health insurance plan that was a perk of their clerical status. The significance of this step would not become clear to them until the onset of her cancer, when Murphy had to wait hours to be seen at Grady Memorial Hospital with the other "zero card" patients while those with the means to pay were cared for first. Her new reality hit home again when a woman introduced herself to Murphy in the hallway, saying, "I am your social worker." The startling reality of the situation that Murphy faced was that she was with the poor that she came to serve but she was there not as a helper but as one needing help.

can find in our newly discovered helplessness, frustration and even rage, the beginnings of a fresh and more gospel-ready understanding of our world."

Over the next 25 years, Murphy protested the for-profit healthcare system and stood with its victims not only as an advocate, but as a "charity" patient whose own life was sometimes imperiled by substandard care. "I never *wanted* to have cancer," she wrote, "I never desired to be critically ill or to walk the razor's edge between life and death. I would never say that it was a good thing that I have gone through the illness I have faced and survived. But, oh, the miracles of love and goodness that have emerged every step of the way!"

Reading of Murphy's life with the poor in hospitals and clinics caused me to reflect on my own jail experiences. What Murphy learned in Grady Memorial Hospital, some other activists learn in prison. "As we join the poor in jail," Catholic Worker Jim Douglas wrote, "and deepen in our own poverty, continuing to respond in truth to the violence and injustice around us, the power of God will become real."

The Catholic Worker is not a religious order under vows, but when we do claim voluntary poverty as ours it should be done with care and the realization of the unalterable

## Open Door Community Press

*Surely Goodness and Mercy*

*A Journey into Illness and Solidarity*



*Murphy Davis*

Forewords by Jürgen Moltmann and Bryan Stevenson

**Surely Goodness and Mercy**

A Journey into Illness and Solidarity

by **Murphy Davis**



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privilege that comes with being able to make that choice. The Trappist monk Thomas Merton warned, "Poverty means need. To make a vow of poverty and never go without anything, never have to need something without getting it, is to try to mock the Living God."

Without romanticizing or spiritualizing, Murphy tells of the hardships and joys of true solidarity. ✦

*Brian Terrell went to the New York Catholic Worker when he was 19 years old. He lived there from 1975 to 1979, when he and his wife, Betsy Keenan, moved to the Davenport, Iowa, Catholic Worker. In 1986, they settled with their two children at the Strangers and Guests Catholic Worker Farm in Maloy, Iowa. From their life's work on the farm, they teach organic and sustainable farming, weaving and the Benedictine roots of the Catholic Worker movement. Brian spends much of his time witnessing against armaments and warmaking and often finds himself in courtrooms and jails. We are grateful for his ongoing witness.*

# The Need for an Indigenous Peoples Day

By the Reverend Dr. Bradley S. Hauff, Oglala Sioux

Since 1934, Columbus Day has been celebrated throughout the United States. In 1970, Congress designated the second Monday in October as the date. It is a federal holiday as well as one that is recognized in many states and local municipalities. Regions with a large percentage of residents of Italian descent in particular typically hold parades and public gatherings commemorating Christopher Columbus and his voyages to the Western Hemisphere, most notably the one in 1492 that was funded by Spain, during which he is said to have “discovered” America and the Indigenous inhabitants of the “New World.”

Recently the practice of celebrating Columbus Day has undergone scrutiny and opposition by numerous groups, and for good reason. What is Columbus Day about, fundamentally? While it is seen by some as a day to honor Italian Americans and their contributions to our country (which in and of itself is an appropriate and honorable thing to do in my opinion), at its core is a narrative that extols the Doctrine of Discovery and its devastating effects on the Indigenous people of the Western Hemisphere — millions of Indigenous people from hundreds of tribes who had been living in organized societies for at least 30,000 years, according to anthropologists. It is a narrative claiming that none of this existed until it was “discovered” by those who believed they were given the right, by God, to capture and dominate the people and the land. It is a narrative teaching that the humanity of the Indigenous people, which was initially questioned, was ultimately determined by Europeans, only so their human souls could undergo indoctrination into the Christian faith. It is a narrative teaching that these Indigenous people were heathens and that God was an absentee landlord of the Western Hemisphere until 1492.

Replacing Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples Day allows for the acknowledgement of Indigenous people in this country and what happened with us. It allows for truth telling.

While the Doctrine of Discovery shaped the approach of European nations and the Christian Church to Africa and the Western Hemisphere, very few people in America have heard of it, and even fewer can explain what it is. It is hardly ever taught in history courses, particularly in the public schools, and hasn’t been written about widely until recently. I believe there are two reasons for this. First, there is no single document known as “The Doctrine of Discovery” as there is with the Constitution or the Declaration of Independence. The doctrine is comprised of the philosophies expressed in three papal decrees: *Dum Diversas* (Pope Nicholas V, 1452), *Romanus Pontifex* (Pope Nicholas V, 1455) and *Inter Caetera* (Pope Alexander VI, 1493). In *Dum Diversas* and *Romanus Pontifex* the pope gave the monarchs of Portugal and Spain the spiritual authority to capture and control any territories and subjugate any people discovered in Africa as long as the people and lands were not already under the authority of a Christian nation. These decrees undoubtedly influenced the Spanish monarch in commissioning

the voyage of Columbus. In *Inter Caetera*, issued after the Columbus “discovery,” the pope extended this authority to the Western Hemisphere and its Indigenous peoples.

The Doctrine of Discovery is therefore an unholy union between church and state, granting to European nations the divine right to take land and subjugate people, setting the foundations for African slavery and the genocide of Indigenous people. Furthermore, the doctrine spread to England in 1496, when King Henry VII granted to John Cabot and his men the authority to investigate, claim and possess any lands and riches discovered in the New World for the English crown, provided they were not previously claimed by another Christian nation. I believe these stunning revelations are the second reason that the doctrine hasn’t been widely taught. It exposes European nations and the Christian Church as greedy entities motivated by power and wealth rather than the Gospel and human freedom. It looks bad, and it is.

Americans cannot blame Europe and the pope for this; America empowered this colonization process. In the late 1700s, Thomas Jefferson, who referred to Indigenous people in the Declaration of Independence as “merciless Indian sav-

What Columbus Day is about is the narrative of America, one that is rooted in the Columbus discovery and Manifest Destiny mythologies, which go back to the Doctrine of Discovery, which had its origins in the Christian Church. It is a narrative of European dominance, Christian dominance and white supremacy. It justified slavery, land theft and genocide. It continues today as the unacknowledged foundation for systemic racism. It is why many in the United States who are white supremacists also consider themselves to be Christians and don’t see any conflict in it. The Gospel of Christ was brought to the Western Hemisphere along with this narrative, and the two narratives have yet to be successfully separated.

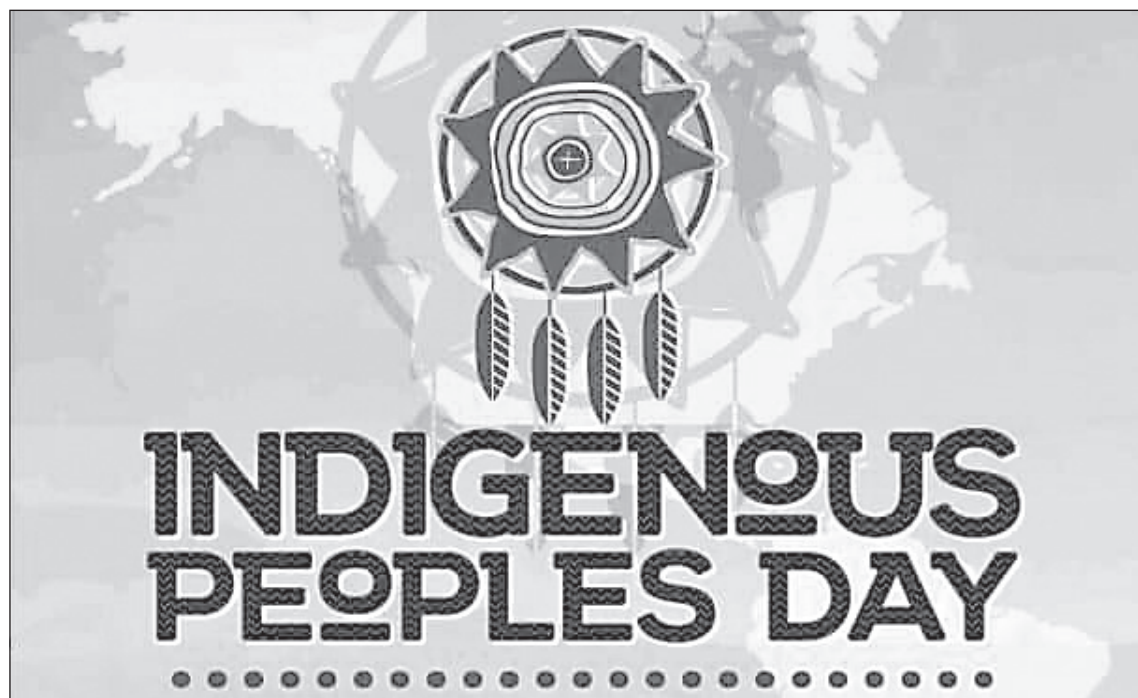
Since the 1980s, as Americans have begun to come to terms with the painful events of our country’s past, there have been calls for the discontinuation of Columbus Day as a national holiday and the replacement of it with Native American Day or Indigenous Peoples Day. As a Native person (Oglala Sioux, Lakota) I prefer the term *Indigenous* as it is a more universal term and does not include the word *America* which many of us associate with colonization.

Americans need to come to terms with their history and how it compares to the mythological narrative. To do this we need to consider and take seriously the interpretations of past events from alternative perspectives. Abandoning the Columbus discovery narrative is central to this. Replacing Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples Day allows for the acknowledgement of Indigenous people in this country and what happened with us. It allows for truth telling. It promotes an honest examination of our past. It dispels myths and exposes the atrocity of white dominance. It tells Indigenous people that we are not relics of the past, that we are very much still here and we are a significant part of the American story. The Church should be a central part of making this transition happen. By doing so the Church will help correct the mistakes of the

past that it created in the first place and liberate the Gospel from narratives based in greed and hate.

The Episcopal Church repudiated the Doctrine of Discovery in 2009, and most mainline Christian denominations have since done so. But there is much more to be done. It has taken us over 400 years to get to this point, and substantive change is still far off. There are many in the United States who love the mythological narrative of America and don’t want it criticized or changed. So this will not be an easy thing to do and we can expect visceral opposition. But it is simply not enough to say that we did something in the past that was wrong. We need to do what we can to make up for it, to the extent that it is possible to do so. Rejecting the Columbus discovery and the day that celebrates it will go a long way in starting this process. It will force our country to stop living a lie. ✠

*The Reverend Dr. Bradley S. Hauff is the Indigenous Missioner for the Episcopal Church, a member of the Presiding Bishop’s staff. He is originally from South Dakota, born in Sioux Falls and raised in Rapid City. He is enrolled with the Oglala Sioux Tribe (Lakota) of Pine Ridge, as were his parents, both of whom were raised in the government and church-operated Indigenous residential schools.*



Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs

ages” who were to be exempt from the basic rights granted by God to humankind, was influenced by the doctrine and found it to be central to the new narrative of America. In 1823, Supreme Court Chief Justice John Marshall ruled in *Johnson v McIntosh* that Indigenous people have no right to their land. In his ruling he cited King Henry VII’s patent to John Cabot as a justification. And while Marshall effectively reversed his decision nearly ten years later in *Worcester v Georgia*, his ruling was ignored by President Andrew Jackson, and the Trail of Tears followed. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the influence of the Doctrine of Discovery became clearly evident in its American interpretation that came to be known as Manifest Destiny, the God-given right for Europeans to seize control of America from its original Indigenous inhabitants. Additionally, the figure of Columbia (a feminine name associated with Columbus) became recognized as the mythological personification of America and was depicted in numerous works of art at the time, such as John Gast’s *American Progress* and the iconic Statue of Liberty.

# I Knew Bob Moses

## Reflection on the Life and Times of Robert Parris Moses

By David Billings

### The Mythical Bob Moses

To me, he was a legend and to many other community organizers it was the same.

He was also an intellectual with a doctorate in philosophy who invented a new way to teach Algebra by using methods he learned as an organizer. Moses came into Mississippi in 1961. He entered quietly, almost unannounced. Mississippi was the most violent place in the United States to do race work. Moses' legend was built on his fearlessness. At the time it was almost certainly a death sentence.

Moses left his secure teaching job at Horace Mann High School in New York City and came down to Mississippi at the request of Amzie Moore, a Greenwood, Mississippi, civil rights activist, to initiate a voter registration campaign. He had met Amzie Moore at the Highlander Center near Knoxville, Tennessee. Moses had never organized a campaign before. At the time he arrived in Greenwood fewer than 10% of African Americans were registered in the entire state. Those who attempted to register faced a gauntlet of obstacles. White voting registrars could use whatever preventive tactics they chose, ranging from the sublime to the ridiculous. The few who dared to run the gauntlet might be asked to repeat verbatim passages from the U.S. Constitution and to then interpret what they meant. Or one might be asked, "How many bubbles are in a bar of soap?"

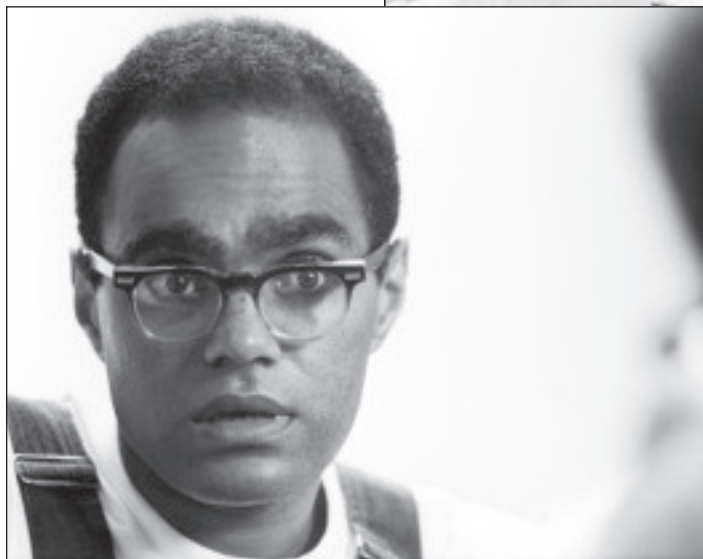
Today, the efforts in Republican-controlled states are modern-day examples designed to restrict Black suffrage. These efforts give renewed recognition to the power of the vote as a weapon of social change. Bob Moses intended to register Black voters as the key strategy in their struggle for full human rights in Mississippi.

Moses also met Ella Baker at Highlander. She tutored him in the basics of organizing and instilled in him a firm belief that people at the community level, most often poor Black people, must be the foundation of any human rights movement that would take place. To Ella Baker this was not just theory. She was also a New Yorker. Under the auspices of the NAACP and with few resources, she would stay in people's homes and dine at their tables, attend their churches and visit their schools. Baker's fearlessness met a compatriot in Bob Moses. Like Ella Baker, he was willing to take such risks. Both were accused of being reckless, even foolhardy.

Moses didn't stay long in the Mississippi Delta. Amzie Moore realized rather quickly after Moses' arrival that the people in the Greenwood area weren't ready to be the foundation upon which a successful voter registration campaign could be initiated. Together they decided that Moses would relocate. But he would not go home.

Instead, he went deeper into Mississippi. Invited by C.C. Bryant, local head of the NAACP in Pike County, he moved to McComb, a town that would soon be called by one report "the church burning capital of the nation." It took nerve, but there were also good reasons to choose McComb.

There were organizers there. Not just C.C. Bryant, an old hand by movement standards, but others who were much younger and eager to bring about real social change. There was Ike Lewis, who had worked with "Mr. C.C." There was Curtis Hayes and Hollis Watkins and a young



Bob Moses 1964 | Steve Schapiro

15-year-old high school student named Brenda Travis. Travis would soon lead one of the nation's first school walkouts in protest of the arrest of her fellow classmates who had dared to "sit-in" at the downtown Greyhound Bus Terminal in McComb, attempting to integrate the restaurant there. Jack



Bob Moses | Bernard Delierre | Clarion Ledger

were skilled union people like Ella Baker and Anne Braden. Moses was a Gandhian, a philosopher, more a mystic in the tradition of Howard Thurman. SNCC was purposed to network the growing number of college students around the South destined to make history in the decade ahead. But all believed in organizing and saw themselves as movement builders willing to face the demons — their own and the nation's white power structure.

McComb was where I was born. It was where my father was born. It was where the Billings family called home. Even as we lived later in Tennessee and still later in Helena, Arkansas, McComb was still home to us. Still today I consider McComb my home. Bob Moses could not have picked a more volatile place to center his voting rights efforts. He could not have picked a place more ready to organize either. When he arrived in Pike County, Moses was not yet a legend. He was not particularly well-known. He would never be as famous as some other noted figures in civil rights. But he was among the first of the "outside agitators." That's how I knew them long before I knew their names. He was on the ground and his take on organizing was just beginning to flower.

### The Organizing Principles of Bob Moses

Moses' reputation would be built on certain guiding principles of organizing. Many organizers would attest to these principles over the years, but few would be able to adhere to them consistently. These principles are still a major force in the movement for human rights.

The principle Moses was perhaps best known for was his ability to *listen*. Moses did not insist on being the center of attention nor did he often take center stage. He did not need to be the one delivering the message or facilitating the process. He believed in the collective wisdom of people and their ability to direct themselves. Moses would sit for hours listening and not say a word. The few times I was in his presence I was struck by this. It is not that he never took what is usually called "the lead," but that he did not seem to feel the need to repeat what had already been said. This was especially true when he was present with those in whose community he was living and working.

He believed in the collective wisdom of people and their ability to direct themselves. Moses would sit for hours listening and not say a word.

Newfield put it this way in writing about what was being called The New Left in 1966: "Bob Moses' move into southwest Mississippi was probably the most creative and heroic single act anyone in the New Left had attempted. Certainly, much of the subsequent history of the New Left has flowed from this existential act of [Moses] disappearing alone into the most violent and desolate section of Mississippi."

Foolhardy or brave, Moses entered alone, but he was not alone. Together with local organizers — revolutionary in their own right — he was soon joined by others from SNCC (the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee) which he had helped found only a year before with veterans of the sit-ins in Greensboro and Durham, North Carolina, and Nashville, Tennessee. All these organizers and visionaries had been trained by Ella Baker, by the Reverend James Lawson at Fisk University and by Anne Braden from Louisville, Kentucky. All were seasoned by their experiences in the burgeoning Civil Rights Movement sweeping the nation.

They were never a monolithic group. There were disagreements among movement leaders over strategy and ideology. Some were grounded in their Christian faith like Martin Luther King Jr., John Lewis and C.T. Vivian. Others

**I Knew Bob Moses** *continued on page 7*

# America's War on Afghanistan

## A Litany of Lament for the Lies of War

By Weldon D. Nisly

*Truth is the first casualty of war.*

### Truth-tellers Across the Ages

With you, I watched the crisis in Afghanistan as the U.S. fled and Kabul fell to the Taliban.

With you, I watched the frantic chaos for Afghans outside Kabul airport seeking to evacuate. With you, I watched, fearful for Afghan women, interpreters and others whose lives are at risk.

And I watched with dismay as American politicians, pundits and people flooded communication channels with condemnation for the humiliating defeat and departure from Afghanistan. Most diatribes are unconscionably blind to the United States' endless war on terror and four decades of warring aggression in Afghanistan. August saw an ignominious end to U.S. occupation. But it is no end to war on terror, which by definition and design is forever war. Drone strikes, sanctions, arming other countries and political threats ensure forever war. It is delusional to believe that continuing military intervention for another year or ten years will achieve a different result.

A popular definition of insanity is: *Doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.* That is the sum and substance of America's no-win no-end wars.

Why do Americans blindly refuse to see what is *hidden in plain sight*? Why do so many U.S. citizens — especially white Christians! — cling to blind belief in American exceptionalism and entitlement and see the U.S. as the supreme military force and moral voice of the world?

### A Litany of 7 Laments for America's War on Afghanistan

A litany of lament can remove blinders and reveal what is *hidden in plain sight*. I offer this litany of lament for the terror and trauma America's endless war inflicts on people of color, people who are poor, people of other faiths, people speaking other languages, people who are innocent. Remember Jesus' promise, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see..." (Matthew 13:16)

**I Lament** that America, in its war on Afghanistan, hailed as the "good war" to defeat terrorism, refuses to see that terrorism cannot be defeated by military might any more than hate can be defeated by vengeance. "Good war" blindness scorns comparisons between the U.S. war on Vietnam and Afghanistan. Now the *Afghanistan Papers*, like the *Pentagon Papers* a half-century ago, document "good war" lies. Will I see that lies of war never build peace?

*Jesus said, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see."*

**I Lament** that we are bombarded with U.S. withdrawal reports that are blind to 20 years of warring occupation and 40 years of military meddling in Afghanistan, a blindness aided and abetted by seeing through embedded U.S. political and military eyes. Will I see through unembedded eyes?

*Jesus said, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see."*

**I Lament** that Afghan women are unseen when they condemn military occupation and oppression as well as when they claim their own humanity and human rights and seek equal education and employment. Will I truly see Afghan women and see what they see?

*Jesus said, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see."*

**I Lament** the U.S.-defined and -driven war on terror occupying Afghanistan for two decades as the dominant warlord in a land dominated by warlords. Do I see that militant warlord patriarchy will never bring peace and democracy, nor foster trust and unity?

*Jesus said, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see."*

"winners" of war are weapons makers and dealers who make a killing sacrificing human life for personal profit. Will I dare to see and imagine the good that could be done by spending trillions of dollars on peace rather than war, human security rather than national security?

*Jesus said, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see."*

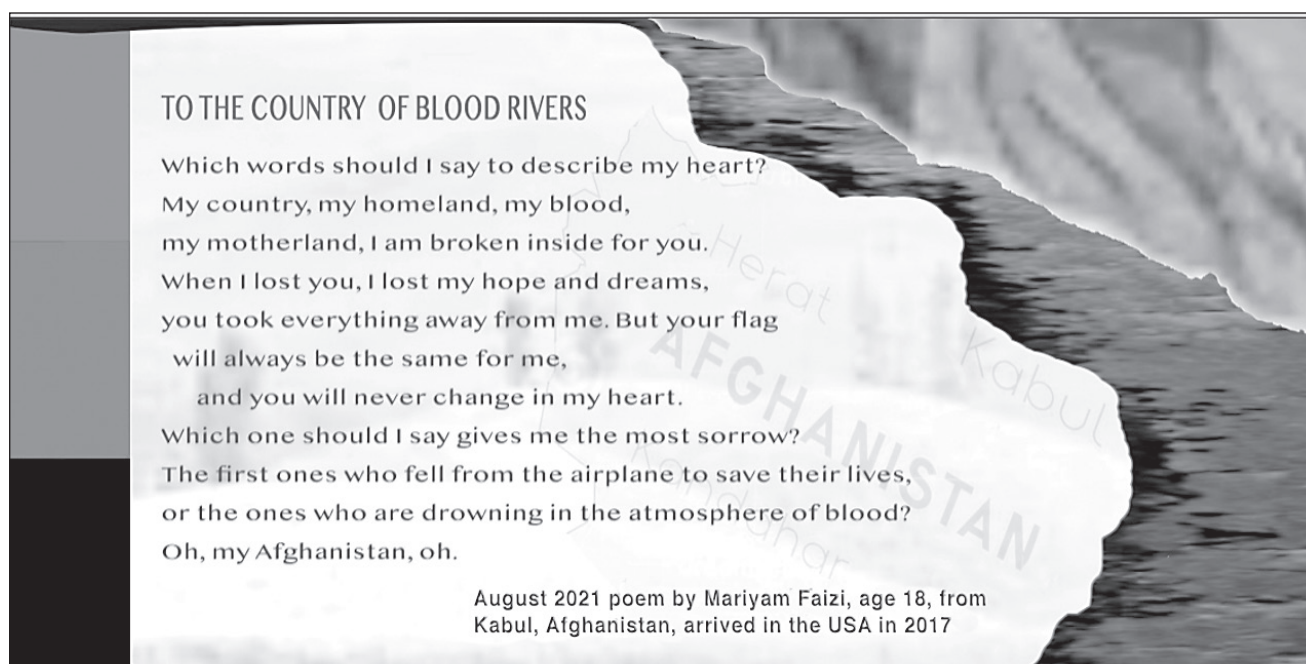
**I Lament** that whistleblowers who tell the truth about the lies of war are persecuted and prosecuted as war criminals while political leaders who spout lies and commit war crimes are heroized and not held accountable. Colleen Rowley, former FBI agent and 9/11 whistleblower, recently said, "When telling the truth to divulge lies of war becomes a crime, you know the criminals are in charge." Will I see and stand with truth-tellers who sacrifice their lives to expose the lies of war?

*Jesus said, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see."*

These seven laments are specific, symbolic and sacred. Each lament calls us to see specific people who wage war targeting specific people who are innocent. Each lament calls us to see vast symbolic details and destruction, costs and consequences of war within and beyond those revealed here.

Each lament sees the sacredness of all God's people and creation with the eyes of our heart.

A poem written this past August by Mariyam Faizi, "To the Country of Blood Rivers," is a powerful closing word of lament for her beloved Afghanistan motherland. Mariyam is from Kabul and now lives in the Seattle area of the United States. She was a participant in the 2020 Stories of Arrival: Refugee & Immigrant Youth Voices Poetry Project. Most of the youth in the project have



Rifka Helton Design

A popular definition of insanity is:  
*Doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.*  
That is the sum and substance of America's no-win no-end wars.

**I Lament** the human cost of war killing millions of indigenous lives and thousands of occupying lives with millions more bearing the trauma of physical, mental, moral injury and endless grief and loss from forever war. The human cost of war includes thousands who are arrested, abducted, imprisoned and tortured, violating human rights and rule of law. War also ravages infrastructure, renders institutions dysfunctional and corrupts political leaders and systems. When will I see every person harmed by war as my neighbor created and loved by God?

*Jesus said, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see."*

**I Lament** the monetary cost of war stealing trillions of dollars from poor taxpayers to pay for the war on Afghanistan and trillions more dollars wasted on the war on terror plus the incalculable cost of destroyed homes and homeland, farms and forests, polluting and exploiting God's creation. The real

fled from war in their home countries around the world. They are encouraged by my peacemaking friend Merna Hecht to create art and poetry that helps us see the trauma of war through their eyes. They are specific, innocent children of war who long for peace. And they are symbolic of countless other children targeted by war around the world. As Mariyam continues to write of her sorrow, will I truly see her and her beloved Afghanistan through her eyes? ✠

*After 40 years of Mennonite Church ministry that included community, pastoral and peace ministries, Weldon Nisly currently devotes himself to Contemplative JustPeace building and work with Christian Peacemaker Teams. He is a Benedictine Oblate. His life is dedicated to the abolition of war. Weldon serves half-time on the CPT Iraqi Kurdistan team and was on the CPT Palestine team in Hebron in September-October 2017 and August-September 2018.*

## Elizabeth: Joy Incarnate *continued from page 1*

I try to imagine what Elizabeth and Mary's days were like during the three months they were together. I picture them sharing secrets, laughing and weeping, dreaming of a future unlike any they had conceived before. They watched their wombs swell, felt their sons growing, probably rubbed each other's aching backs and sore feet at the end of the day. I imagine that Elizabeth encouraged Mary to live with her head held high despite the whispers behind her back, reminding her to be grateful to God in all circumstances, graciously imparting her wisdom and joy.

Elizabeth's neighbors and relatives "rejoiced with her" when she gave birth to her son. She claimed her power when they gathered for his circumcision. They assumed he would be named for his father, but Elizabeth declared, "No; he is to be called John." Stunned, they looked to Zechariah for some indication that perhaps she was mistaken. Rendered unable to speak nine months before — when he doubted the angel Gabriel's announcement that he would have a son in his old age — Zechariah asked for a tablet and wrote, "His name is John" (Lk. 1:60-63). It was a moment of poignant dignity for Zechariah and powerful affirmation for Elizabeth.

John, of course, grew up to be one of a kind — living in the wilderness, wearing camel skins, eating locusts and wild honey, preaching repentance. He minced no words, confronting the oppressive power arrangements of the day, calling political and religious leaders to account. In that, he and Jesus were alike. Throughout their lives, the sons mirrored the mutual respect and love that was first nurtured between their mothers — and emulated the courage they witnessed in these two strong women.

Elizabeth and Mary had an inkling, even when their sons were in the womb, that these two would stir things up. Both sons ultimately died terrible deaths at the hands of the authorities — one beheaded, one crucified. I picture Mary at the foot of the cross, recalling the wondrous days she and Elizabeth spent together when they were pregnant, drawing on that long-ago memory for strength in her grief. Their friendship is a story of tenderness and hope. But most of all, it is a story of joy.

My friend Yvonne Dilling, who worked in a refugee camp in Honduras with women who had fled under gunfire from El Salvador during that country's brutal war, described for me the days leading up to Christmas. Soldiers of the national guard had invaded the camp and murdered a young lay catechist. A starving infant, lovingly fed throughout a long night by his mother with an eyedropper, had lost his struggle for life.

Despite terror and sorrow everywhere, when Christmas Eve came the camp burst into joyful celebration. The women baked sweet cinnamon bread in an adobe oven. The children made figurines for the nativity scene out of clay from the riverbed, adding local touches: pigs, an armadillo, and baby Jesus sleeping in a hammock. They painted beans and kernels of corn in bright colors and strung them into garlands. They made ornaments out of medicine boxes and the tinfoil that wrapped sticks of margarine.

Yvonne, having witnessed so much tragedy, had a hard time celebrating with them. One woman reminded her that every time the refugees were displaced and had to build a new camp, they immediately formed three committees: a construction committee, an education committee, and the *comité de alegría* — the "committee of joy." Celebration was as central, and necessary, to the life of the refugees as digging latrines and teaching their children to read. They could not survive without it.

Given the world's great anguish, despair can easily threaten to take up residence in our hearts. But those who suffer most remind us that it would be tragic for us to lose hope on behalf of people who have not lost theirs. They are teachers of joy. Like Elizabeth, they believe the promises of God. And like the infant John in the womb, they have learned to leap and dance in the presence of God. ✦

*Joyce Hollyday has been a friend of the Open Door Community for almost four decades. She is the author of several books — most recently Pillar of Fire, a historical novel about the inspiring witness of the medieval mystics known as Beguines — and the editor of Murphy Davis' memoir, Surely Goodness and Mercy.*

## I Knew Bob Moses *continued from page 5*

A second principle practiced by Moses was that of *respect*. He was not above the people. He might have been more highly educated in the classical sense of the term, but he did not profess to know more than those who were living with and resisting the unfair and even inhumane conditions he was attempting to address.

Two other principles guided Bob Moses. There was *leadership development*. His father, Gregory H. Moses, and mother, Louise Parris Moses, were community activists in Harlem who exposed him to the political and cultural currents of his day. A young Bob Moses would certainly have known about Harlem-based nation builders among the devotees of Marcus Garvey, and followers of the Honorable Elijah Muhammed, as well as the voting rights efforts of the Revs. Adam Clayton Powell, Sr. and Jr. His parents were working class. His father worked as a janitor and his mother was a homemaker. Both instilled in him an identification with regular people who worked hard to make ends meet and yet were civic-minded and community involved. Moses would take this with him to Mississippi. The last principle was *networking*. He was committed, to quote Jim Dunn, to "building a net that works." These principles: listening, respect, leadership development and networking were adopted by the many who would be influenced by Moses.

Moses would do many other things in his lifetime.

Anytime his name was mentioned or his contributions to civil rights highlighted, my ears perked up. He was a critic of the war in Vietnam and fled to Canada to escape the draft. He emigrated later to Ghana where he studied anti-colonial and African revolutionary history with President Kwame Nkrumah. When he returned from Africa, he would create The Algebra Project to teach students of all ages how to demystify math using objects familiar from everyday life and community practice. The Algebra Project today is used by school systems all over the world. Moses knew such math understanding would be essential for all young people living in the emerging "knowledge epoch."

I salute you, Bob Moses — visionary, revolutionary, extraordinary human being. ✦

*David Billings is a United Methodist minister born in McComb, Mississippi and raised in Helena, Arkansas. He has been a trainer and organizer with The People's Institute for Survival and Beyond since its inception in 1980. Today he facilitates "Undoing Racism/Community Organizing" sessions as a part of that team. He is the author of Deep Denial and has written for many publications and journals. He is also a partner in the United Nations Committee on Human Rights and the Center for the Study of White American Culture.*

## Searching For God *continued from page 2*

trouble/Boss could you just look/over this way" and #19 "what about the liars Boss." As a poet, Rhodes gives no easy answers to these complaints, mainly because there aren't any good answers.

The poet covers much of the breadth of human existence and of engagement with God, including coming to terms with his (and our) mortality, such as #39 with a sense of the coming of the end: "are the vultures facing out or in/ Boss they surround my country/like a winged fence." The 51 poems of *Was That You Boss* are well worth the effort, especially if you have a continuing lover's quarrel with God like I do. Pick it up and find yourself in the continuing search for God and in God's search for you.

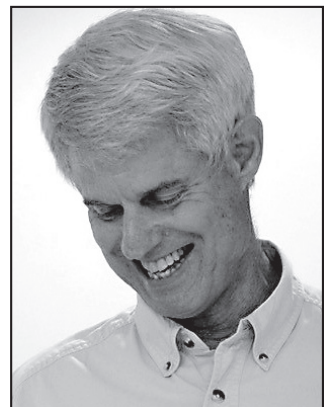
I do have two concerns with *Was That You Boss*. First, while the poet captures many of the aspects of our journey/quarrel with God, I would have wished for a little more fire in engaging God in these poems. The approach here is gentle enough, but in some ways too gentle. I am not a howler at God myself, but I do have some sympathy with those who do, and I would welcome Steve to fire it up a bit more in his next book of poetry.

Second, and more substantial, is discomfort with the word "Boss" for God. I recognize that he is using an image that he received from Maurice Manning's poetry, and in so doing, he starts with a cowhand view of the Boss of the ranch. Given my white, Southern heritage, however, I hear "Boss" as a negative term, a term required of people held not as hired employees, but held in slavery and neo-slavery. It is a term that captures the "Author of Life" part of God but not the "Loving, Searching" part of God. While I have not quite come upon the term that grasps the many virtues and bewildering aspects of God, I do not think that "Boss" is one of them.

I invite you to engage the poems in *Was That You Boss* — it is well worth your time and effort. Such an engagement comes with some risk. These poems will take you down into places in yourself that you often seek to avoid. They will take you out into the spiritual life of the world — the world of rocks and trees and fields and hawks and children locked up in cages. If you are fortunate enough (or blessed enough — and Rhodes leaves that part up to the reader), perhaps you'll gain a glimpse of God, both in yourself and out in the world. That, as they say, would be enough. ✦

*Nibs Stroupe is a longtime friend of the Open Door, retired pastor and author of Deeper Waters: Sermons for a New Vision. He and Catherine Meeks are authors of Passionate for Justice, a book about the life and witness of Ida B. Wells for our time. He writes a weekly blog at www.nibsnotes.blogspot.com. (nibs.stroupe@gmail.com)*

*Steve Rhodes is a Presbyterian minister who has served as a pastor, professor and poet, as well as serving breakfasts at Butler Street with the Open Door. He taught and learned with seminary students in Appalachia as well as in Memphis and the lower Mississippi delta. He is currently Canon Poet for Grace Episcopal Cathedral in Charleston, South Carolina. He loves walking in woods, fields and marshes about as much as he loves anything. His books include: The Time I Didn't Know What To Do Next, What Might Not Be, and They Speak Your Language (for children, and adults who have not grown up too much). (jstephenrhodes.com)*



# Grace and Peaces of Mail

Hey! Rev Ed,

We just came off lockdown again — Covid-19 and a stabbing. The funds were right on time. Thank you very much. I'm doing okay just getting old. I can feel it now. I'll be 56 on the 12<sup>th</sup>. I better start working out. I'm in the kitchen so I stay full, and have my candy and ice cream and chips. Thanks for that. Well, God continue to keep you all, I really, really, really appreciate what you and all the others do for me.

Thank you,

Love,

Ivan

Prisoner



Rita Corbin

Dear Ed,

We're moving to a retirement home with 300 residents in September, so expect we'll hear more stories of dying. Kind of a graduate school on death!

Love,

Ed Crouch

Seattle, Washington

Dear Ed,

I remember my first day with you. Volunteering at Koinonia, Fall 1983, we went on the street. You spoke to folks by name and always had time for a person. We neared a torn-down building where two men were sleeping in the remains of a basement. "Be quiet!" you admonished us, "That's Jesus in there." My life changed in that moment.

Thank you, Ed — you know how I love you.

I miss Murphy, too

Nikki Day

Greenville, South Carolina

## A Baptism!

On August 28, 2021, I had the honor to baptize the precious Magdalena Luisa Rodriguez Kline. I jumped for joy and new life, thrilled by the backyard community at the home of Vicki Kline and Beto Rodriguez. On September 9, 2017, Murphy Davis, my beloved, officiated the marriage of Vicki and Beto. I was supposed to be there but a bike wreck on the way over kept me away. Well, Vicki and Beto got down to business and a beautiful fruit of their love appeared on God's good earth and into a loving family surrounded by supportive friends and family. The Circle of Life dances on and this time I was there to perform the Baptism, and Murphy was not. So lo and behold here she is amongst us. And hope, love, faith and responsibility abound.

— Eduard Loring



ODC | Baltimore

## Prayer/Oracion

continued from page 1

a god  
who hurts  
to the last  
bone and  
bites the air  
in pain

a jobless god  
a striking god  
a hungry god  
a fugitive god  
an exiled god  
an enraged god

a god  
who longs  
from jail  
for a change  
in the order  
of things

I want a  
more godlike  
god

Francisco X. Alarcón, "Prayer," translated by Francisco Aragón, from *From the Other Side of Night/ Del otro lado de la noche*. Copyright 2002 by Francisco X. Alarcón. <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/francisco-x-alarcon>

A prolific writer for adults and children, Francisco X. Alarcón was born in California and grew up in Guadalajara, Mexico. Alarcón returned to the United States to attend California State University at Long Beach, and he earned his MA from Stanford University.

## The Box

Compiled by Eduard Loring

1. In her book, *All About Love*, bell hooks borrows a definition of love from Scott Peck:

Love is "the will to extend one's self for the purpose of nurturing one's own or another's spiritual growth."

2. Brian Spears is a great friend and companion. The ODC lawyer wrote to me on Sept 10, 2021:

"I keep a statement attributed to Cesar Chavez near my desk to remind me: 'It is possible to become discouraged about the injustice we see everywhere. But God did not promise us that the world would be humane and just. He gives us the gift of life and allows us to choose the way we will use our limited time on earth. It is an awesome opportunity!'"

3. Time magazine reported a few years ago a fascinating study that showed how a communal meal makes humans more prone to moral reflection. Perhaps this is what Abigail and Anna were counting on: the nonviolent power of the table. They interrupted violence with disarming hospitality. The meal can be a peacemaker strategy because breaking bread is more powerful than spewing threats or brandishing weapons. So: blessed be the memory of these women who

restrained warriors with welcome! May they inspire us to do the same in a world of too little communion and too much war.

— [www.ChedMyers.org](http://www.ChedMyers.org)

4. "God becomes most present when we are most human." — Henri Nouwen, *Bread for the Journey*, Oct 2.

5. From Ron Tabak who is a leading Anti-Death Penalty lawyer and writes fervently on Death Penalty issues for several publications. A religious Jew, he has prayed for Murphy and me for 25 years in his New York Synagogue. Below is a section from one of our email conversations:

"I am constantly feeling Murphy's presence. I have a photo with her and Mary [Sinclair] above my desk, right next to a picture of Martina Correia [Troy Davis' sister] and a present that Johnny made from prison for my late mother. [Johnny Lee Gates. A major Georgia death penalty case that Ron worked on for years. Johnny is a free man today.] I was organizing some of my papers the other day when I came upon a beautiful note from Murphy a few years ago. And Hannah's Facebook postings are inspiring."