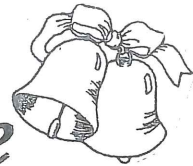


Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty



On Wings of Hope



**Execute
Justice
Not
People**

Volume 27 Issue 4

Oct. - Dec. 2023

THE GIFT THAT IS CHRISTMAS

I think it is reasonable to state that most of us associate Christmas with gifts and that has me wondering what if I were to tell you that Christmas in of itself is a gift? Would you agree with me that it is a universal gift no matter where you are, on death row, the street, the castle or just in an ordinary house? The only question is whether you accept it. Of course that is true of all gifts.

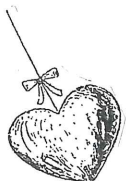
So what does this gift look like? Can I eat it, can I wear it, or what can I do with it? The possibilities are endless once you have accepted it and in accepting it understand the nature of Christmas and the part that you must play.

There are so many lessons in the Christmas story! Joy to all the people! What can I do to contribute to this joy in my corner? You ask me but I am quite sure that you know what you can do. It may be as little as a smile, a willingness to listen or to share whatever you can from the heart. And what you receive in return will be joy, I can promise you!

Then there is "peace on earth", difficult to find in this world and yet another gift Christmas gives us if we will accept it. Yes, a gift for many of us very difficult to accept not only because the world has become so noisy but because many of us have distorted Christmas and think that it is an invitation to rush around frantically buying gifts, writing cards, cooking up a storm. But is that Christmas, is that peace on earth? Yes, it is a time to be with loved ones if one can but let the time be gentle and really present to each other. To be really present to each other, to be in the moment is so much better than anything we can buy and the best gift we can give each other.

For those of us who have lost loved ones this is not an easy time but even for us it will be easier if we accept the gift that is Christmas. I wish all of you the peace, joy and love that are the gift of Christmas!

Esther





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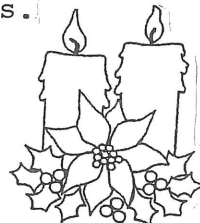
THIS NEWSLETTER WAS WRITTEN, TYPED AND FORMATTED ON DEATH ROW AT HOLMAN PRISON

Happy Holidays,

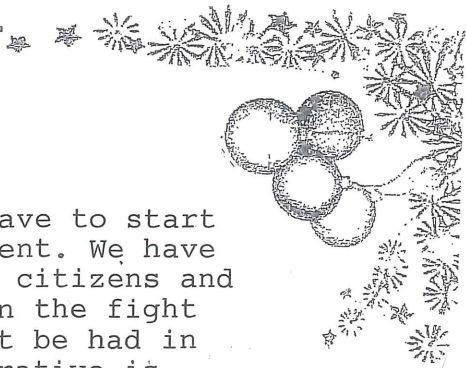
In the midst of all the strife, chaos, confusion, hate, and racism one has to ponder is it even possible to have happy holidays. Can you? Can we? I feel the answer is yes. Yes we can, and yes we will have a very happy holiday season. I feel as I do because I hold onto the true meanings of the holiday season before they all became commercialized. True, the holiday season can be and is different things to different things to different people, but there are certain constants at the root. Things like family, friends, love, laughter, and food. When we wrap ourselves in those roots we're embraced by a peace and joy beyond measure. Don't believe me? Well, as you're celebrating the holiday season, surrounded by family and friends, laughing and eating, give a thought to my words as you take a moment to look around at all the activity going on around you.... And if you catch yourself smiling to yourself about it all, then you know exactly what I'm talking about. Happy Holidays.

We send our love, prayers, and condolences to the McWhorter family for their loss. Please know that Casey was a brother and friend and will be greatly missed. Rest in peace our brother. To our family, friends, and allies in this fight to end state sanctioned murder.... The state of Alabama has

set January 25, 2024 as the murder date for our brother and friend Kenneth Eugene Smith with a new, never before tried, and morally bankrupt method. This has to be stopped. The powers that be in this state will not stop making self-serving and morally inexplicable decisions under the falsehoods of carrying out justice until this state is put under financial and political distress.

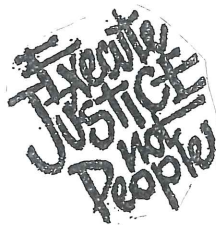


Seasons Greeting's -----

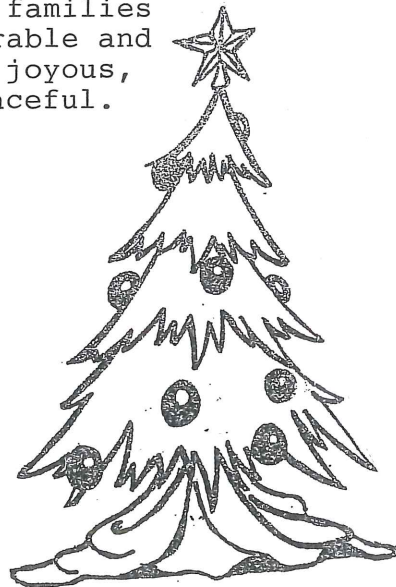


We have to start a get out and vote movement. We have to encourage like-minded citizens and business owners to get in the fight with us. Justice will not be had in this state until the narrative is changed. This state is and always has been rooted in racism and injustice. Two things that will never change until the political vampires that promote and prey on people's hatred for their own self-serving political agendas are no longer able to be the voices of this state. At any Fortune 500 company, when there's no progress within the company or the company keeps getting bad publicity, there's a shake up in the company leadership. They changed the narrative. Despite Alabama being last in everything good but first in everything bad, there's been no shake-up in its management department. It's far past time for a shake-up within the management department in the state of Alabama. Without it, this state will never realize its true potential. The racism and injustice will only continue to blossom in Alabama the Beautiful.

Wishing all of you and your families a very happy, special, memorable and blessed holliday season. Be joyous, be love, be safe, and be peaceful.



Happy Holidays,
In Solidarity,
Anthony Boyd
Chairman of PHADP



End

Systematic Theology from Death Row (Casey McWhorter & Jeff Hood)

Why do we allow our minds to stop? We too often assume that the end is the end. Many assume that death is the end because we dare not imagine any other way. We dare not because we think we are so much more enlightened than everyone else. Heaven and angels sound foolish amid the stark reality of a dead body. Maybe what we're talking about is far more logical than fairy tales. Love is something that we know...even if we can't explain it. You see, we believe in what we feel because we know what we feel. Love exists. But can it die? Logic would force most to say yes. How can a dead body love? Perhaps, love is not wedded to the body. Perhaps, love is so much greater than anything that we could imagine...even death. To the doubters, we invite them to prove us wrong. If one could prove that love is an energy that dies, then we could stop the conversation right now. You can't. There is absolutely no way to prove that love dies...there is too much love that sticks around after death...but you can prove that it lives. Something that exists without death is immortal. Love is immortal.

The end is not the end. There is no stranger theological declaration. It forces us to reconsider everything that seems so obvious. Love always invites us to look beyond prepackaged answers...to a place beyond comprehension. What is...is not what will always be. What will always be is not always what is. Time becomes strange and warped amidst thoughts about endings. We must hold on to what we know. Whether by absence or presence, we know love. We know what we have. We know what we want. We know what we desperately yearn for. Love is the assurance of things hoped for. Can you kill hope? Our consciousness hopes for love at its' very core. Hope never dies. The idea and desire for love...lives. The end is but a beginning.

Meet us at the gates of heaven. Then again, why would there be any gates? Heaven is supposed to be open for all. Maybe a better way to say it is...meet me along the way to where love is taking us.

We work with prisons/jails anywhere in the country. Some places for many years to help build up the libraries. Others for shorter stretches. The big thing for me is that the facilities request the books. We don't send them randomly or without a request and a person to accept them and get them to people.

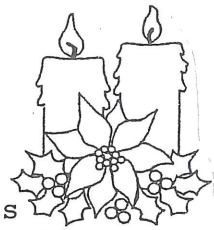
NOW what I want to say is that yesterday I opened Ghosts Over the Boiler for the first time and started to read. This is an absolutely wonderful book!!! There are many aspects to it. The primary one, for me, is that it speaks to the time we're in. People on death row, with all that was/is working against them, have joined together to educate themselves, to find ways to live and work together, to create intensely strong and supportive connections, to express sometimes radically different feelings and viewpoints, to learn ways to both hold their own experiences and opinions without cutting other people off . . . isn't this EXACTLY what we so vitally need in the world today?? In Israel and Gaza. In the Ukraine and Russia. With all of the groups and people, cultures and countries! And this is being done by a group of people who were thrown together with nothing into appalling conditions! The wisdom rolls off the pages! And what continues to grow is HOPE . . . in the face of a death sentence and in a place where many of your closest friends/family are facing the same in a system awash in injustice!

My brain is now at work imagining people who we could get this book to and how we could get a broader audience. Please thank everyone there for the work they are doing to benefit everyone on the planet. It's almost like people (those on death row in Alabama) were selected and tossed into an intensive "think tank" to answer questions and find real solutions to the problems that could well be devastating all the people and beings and the planet itself.

You are all a simply incredible group of individuals who I am extraordinarily grateful to have touched my life.

TOBY LAFFERTY BOOKS INSIDE

Untitled



One of my favorite times of the year as a child . . . was Christmas, and still to this day, for the most part. Everything is put on hold and you get a 2 week break from school, and snow is normally knee high, which means your'e in the house where it's warm. Unless you're like me, we use to go outside and play basketball if the snow hasn't hit yet and get us a game in till the ball wouldn't bounce no more. Then we would go in the house cause me and my brother would be cold, as well. We would warm up but be back out there in another hour with our friends.

Just helping my mother make M&M cookies, eating handfulls of M&M's as she turned her back. We are kids what kid didn't like plain M&M's? She didn't care beacuse she had more than enough for the cookies, plus i wanted my whole 2 racks of cookies. I didn't share mine and she made them for the 4 kids but you know i was greedy. M&M cookies and milk was something serious backthen. And heck, i wouldn't mind some at this moment!!

Darryl

REFLECTIONS

As I sat writing a letter a few days ago (mid-October) I saw my first Christmas commercial of the year. It was an ad for a Christmas Carol CD. Christmas music puts me in a festive mood and I've always loved this time of year. Something about this particular holiday tends to start me reflecting on my life, more than any other time of year. Everyone wishes to be happy at Christmastime and I'm no exception. Sometimes I even attain the joy and peacefulness I seek but then I start reflecting again, and playing the "What if" game and a kind of mental tug of war ensues.

Christmas leads me directly to thoughts of family and I start thinking about the things I'll probably never experience: getting married, having a family, a home and career. Once that starts, my festive mood goes out the window, but not for the self-pitying reasons some might think. As soon as I start feeling sorry for myself, I get angry and disgusted with myself because it was my own life-style and life choices that allowed for the circumstances that landed me on death row. Doing drugs and drinking so much that I would often have to take the "morning after" walk around my car to see if I'd crashed into anything or anyone the night before.

The victims of violent crime, and their surviving families, get to make no choices on whether or not they will be victims. It's like being struck by lightning. It doesn't matter how virtuously they lead their lives, how many right and good choices they make, or how loving and kind hearted they are to their fellow man. They still get no choice, and it's not fair.

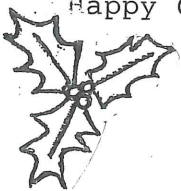
When I think about all the victims of violent crime and their loved ones, who are victims as well, I can't help but be embarrassed for feeling sorry for things that I miss. I feel I have little or no right to pity myself and it shames me that I can't stop it completely.

I hope that murder victim's families everywhere can find a way to cope with their loss and have a happy and love filled holiday season.

It's a little harder for me to get into the holiday spirit while in prison, and like many people who are on the street, it's the best and worst time of year. I'll probably spend Christmas Eve listening to Christmas music, dreaming and pretending that I'm not in prison. Although I'll try not to, I'll probably think about everything I'm missing but the victims are never far from my mind.

May they all find some semblance of normalcy and happiness this Christmas and in the new year. My thoughts, well wishes, and sympathy remain with them. I wish everyone a Merry Christmas, Happy Chanukah, Festive Kwanza, and a Happy New Year!!

Jeff Rieber
(from the archives)





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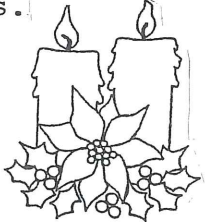
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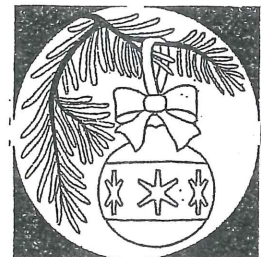
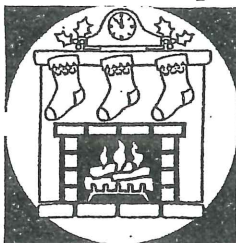
You Do Make A Difference....

For those of you that don't know, "you do make a difference." For instance, those of you who are thinking to yourself, "I'm only one vote, so I don't matter at the polls." You're wrong.... Everybody's vote matters. So, "you make a difference."

The reason for me saying this to you is because I, too, once felt like I didn't matter until the day came when injustice swept me off my feet and I became one of those guys that I used to hear about, "the wrongfully accused, wrongfully convicted, or the guy that the justice system failed."

Now, I understand how important it was for me to join the fight when I was a free man but I also realized that it's never too late. So now I'm all in.... And I hope this short note resonates with you all that read it and I will have made a difference with something as small as this.... Thank you all for your time and Happy Holidays!

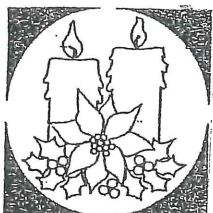
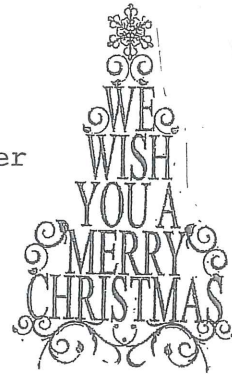
Mario Woodward



Seasons Greeting's -----

A Prayer

Yahweh, my most high,
I know you remember my voice,
But i'm not here for myself,
I'm here for those who forgot,
They had a choice,
To believe,
Or walk away,
To follow,
Or go astray,
They've become so lost,
They're afraid to pray,
The world has lied to them about You,
So they're afraid of what You might say,
Forgiveness and mercy,
To them is decay,
They call revenge justice,
They're the Sodom and Gomorah,
Of the day,
They use Your laws,
To kill,
Never to heal,
They claim it's for closure,
Ain't that a mountain to a mole hill,
They apply their laws,
Based on how they feel,
So I'm asking my most high,
To whom do we appeal,
Their sheltered realities,
Has them blind to what's real,
And since we don't fit into their system,
Then, for us, it's a done deal,
Or so they think,
Because we have You,
I pray You soften their hearts,
And open their eyes,
Because they have You too,
Until they see that,
They'll continue to act as they think You do,
They're playing God,
But You extend mercy and grace,
If You were like them,
We'd all be dead,
Who can say otherwise,
With a straight face?,



"Happy Holiday's & Season's Greetings"

Just a reminder that we all should know what season we are in, or experiencing at this time, both physically and spiritually.

This season, let it be about your faith, family, friends, and focusing on those less fortunate. We all go through seasons. You might be like me right now, and going through a hard season. For others, this might be the best season that you have ever been through.

It is said: to everything, (that includes you and me) there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven. So, it doesn't matter what season you are presently in, know that the Creator of us All does not change nor do His blessings and promises that bring peace, which are always present and available to us.

Although external things will change, our internal state of mind doesn't need to if we are rooted and grounded in the love, mercy, grace and truth of God in Christ Jesus.

Let's stop wishing that we had a different life, someone else's life (smile)! And thank God for the one we have by faith. So, the next time you find yourself going through a difficult season, keep these two thoughts in mind: that it's a sign that you are doing something right in your life and you just need to persevere; or it could be a sign that you are not where you should be spiritually, and you need to make a change.

If this is the season (Holiday) that you are feeling overwhelmed and finding it difficult to deal with, I encourage you to spend some time praying with faith to the Father of us All, with your family, friends, and those less fortunate and watch as your season changes for the better.

As always, I want to acknowledge the readers families, and supporters of (PHADP). Thank you, I love you All! And, may God's presence, peace, power, patience, promise, prosperity, and protection continue to rest, abide, and surround you in this coming New Year of 2024. This is my gift to you!

Earl Pete McGahee Sr.
Z-466 L-24



Happy Holiday's

Crazy to think of this season without remembering family
From good food to good laughs it's all in memory
Go from that to a reality
Hard times, lost time, all the while living a duality
In these shoes walk a mile
Then ask me how I still smile
In these days those memories keep me alive
From those laughs I thrive
Find your reason
To smile and be filled with joy tis Holiday season.

Happy Holiday's
Marcus Williams

This is what happens in a one-party state. There is no accountability for the Republicans in government because there is no credible challenge to their power. Injustice is always present when there is no accountability.

I've been thinking a lot of the history of Alabama. I can't think of a time when Alabama had a viable two-party system. In the days of Jim Crowe it was the Democrats who were really Dixicrats who ran the state. In the early 2000's that shifted to the Republicans who are really still Dixicrats running the state. Very little has changed except for the rhetoric. Unfortunately, very little will change until there is a viable second party.

The Democratic party of Alabama is a mess more concerned with in-fighting for personal power than mounting a credible alternative to those in power. That leaves those who aren't Dixicrats out in the cold.

Forgive my political analysis but it is so frustrating and predictable.

That is one reason our legislature keeps passing laws that are overturned by the courts. The latest example being the legislative maps drawn for the express purpose of gerrymandering so that the Republicans can stay in power. To say that I was shocked by the Supreme Courts decision overturning those maps is an understatement, but I am very pleased that they did.

Our "leaders" are forever telling us what a poor state AL is but somehow there is always enough money to hire outside lawyers to represent the state in the court cases defending these foolish laws that are passed. I would like to know how many millions of dollars this state has paid out to defend the indefensible.

If you will forgive me for a little sermonizing ... One of the most inconsistent things about the death penalty (this is not the only one there are many) especially in a supposedly God-fearing state like AL is that it is a complete denial of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. That should mean something in a state with "leaders" that go on and on about how important God is to them.

The Gospel says that when one comes to faith in Christ their sins are forgiven. Forgiven ... not filed to be used against them later when their case has run its course in the courts. Forgiveness is a once and for all condition. From the moment those sins are forgiven by God they are forgotten by God. We humans cannot forget as easily as God, but we can refuse to hold grudges, carry out punishments and generally impose hatred on the one forgiven based on that for which they have been forgiven. According to the Gospel that for which they have been forgiven is no longer held against them. The death penalty AND life without parole deny the Gospel because they refuse to extend the forgiveness that God requires of us.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ further states that it is possible, indeed desirable, that humans can be born again or redeemed or find new life. It all means the same thing. If that is true (and as one who has had that experience) I fervently believe that it is, then it is possible for a person to become a different person with different habits, different morals and a different value system based on the Gospel. I tell people all the time ... the person we convict is seldom ever the person we execute.

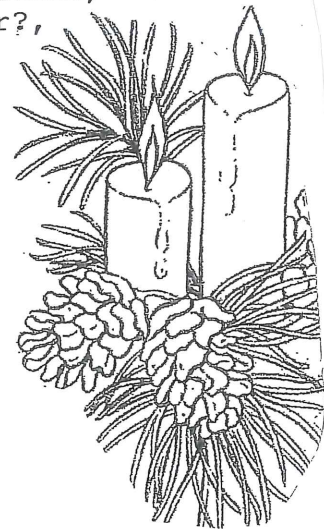
Sorry for the sermon but the hypocrisy of these so-called Christians with venomous hearts who fight tooth and toenail to execute our fellow human beings are very disappointing to me to say the least.

In solidarity and unity ...



Seasons Greeting's

You know people can change,
Which is why You say repent,
They don't care if people change,
Unless it brings cents,
They rest content,
Holding the judged to laws,
They themselves have bent,
Or should I say,
They themselves circumvent,
All while claiming to believe in,
The Son You sent,
Modern day Pharasees and Saducees,
With the same intent,
Because their actions don't reflect Christ,
Yes, that's relevent,
You're judges of the land,
If your standard is an eye for an eye,
Then where in that does Christ stand,
He healed, and forgave, and raised the dead,
You kill, enslave, and lift up revenge instead,
Wouldn't forgiveness bring closure quicker?,
I'm tapping my temple upon my head,
So, Yahweh, I pray,
That You truly intervene,
Bless their actions and words,
So Christ can truly be seen,
Because closure isn't found,
In drugs pumped thru a machine,
I pray You make them examples,
Of what grace truly means,
In Christ Yeshua's name
I pray.... Amen



Tony Barksdale

What Love Gotta Do With IT.

1978, I was 8, my oldest sister Mary was 15 and my youngest sister Tisha was 7. Christmas day our mom had to go to work. My sisters got some rolærskates and I got a truck. We had a vacant parking lot up the street from our house. Unlevel and full of rocks and cracks. Our older sister took us there and came up with a great idea; me and my ohter sister would race for some Now-N-Later candies. The were hotter than the Bee Gees. First of all, her skates were too little and second of all, i couldn't skate. But I love my sisters and Now-N-Laters. As we start racing, I still believe my sister pushed me down because I hit that concrete and all the skin came off my knees. I was crying as my younger sister was jumping around in victory. Our mom came home from work and saw my knees and I told her what happened. She said, "why you let them trick you?" I said, "Mom, i love my sisters." She just shook her head. Now, what love got to do with it? Merry Christmas to you and your family.

Jimmy Davis

Seasons Greeting's ----- Merry Christmas

Christmas Present

I hope this holiday season has been kind to your heart. I recognize that sadness, loss, grief, frustration, and compassion for your fellow man are part of life, but it's what you do with it that matters.

I can only speak for myself, but my worst holiday experiences weren't behind bars, and I can recognize how these bars have brought me closer to God than I ever was on the street. I wouldn't wish this on anyone, but I know some of you reading this are going through much worse. But I have faith that on the other side of every struggle is a victory for those who believe. Not in Santa Claus, but in the redeeming blood of our Savior Jesus Christ.

So I'm leaning on His power to let my sadness, grief, and loss turn my focus to the One who comforts and heals. To turn my frustrations into energy, drive, and motivation to do the will of God. And to express my compassion for my fellow man by serving and sharing the love that Christ pours into me. Here. Now. As a present for myself.

May your hearts, homes, and communities be a reflection of His love throughout the year, but especially in the present.

Happy Holidays
Bart Johnson



**Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty
P.O. Box 1362 Lanett, AL, 36863**

beesther@earthlink.net • www.phadp.org

Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty is an interfaith 501 C 3 organization whose mission is to educate and mobilize communities to act to abolish the death penalty in Alabama. PHADP relies on YOU for support. Suggested donations: \$25/individual, \$40/household, and \$100/congregation, or whatever amount is affordable. Checks should be made out to "PHADP" and sent to the above address. Donations may also be made on line by going to our website and clicking on "donate" on the right hand top corner of the front page.

Seasons Greeting's ----- Merry Christmas

Christmas Present

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