

Commentary — From the Margins
Another Installment of
The Port Austin Soap Opera

A minor tragedy struck this city set on the hill, this beacon of light shining for all the world to see. In the early morning hours of January 3rd, Dorm #3 burned. The cause of the fire is under investigation. Bill Buckman reported that one of Norman Edward's sons woke during the night to the smell of smoke, went down the upstairs hall to find sparks coming from the wiring of an east-end room. Thankfully, the son was able to awaken everyone before this minor tragedy became major. Everyone escaped with only cuts and scrapes although Norman Edwards apparently received burns on the top of his head and on a foot.

The prayers of those who have been shunning the Edwards have been for their safety, and safe relocation to suitable housing, not for their forced eviction of Terry Williams from his home as seems to be occurring. I considered offering the Edwards occupancy of my home, from which Arthur Hawkins has ordered me evicted. Hawkins' order to vacate will be contested in court, so my home will be available for a month or more, enough time for the Edwards to find other accommodations. And that offer is hereby publicly made, for how does one communicate with a person who is being shunned? At what point does a person go to an unrepentant disciple and say, "You need help, let me help you"? This is a question with which I have never before wrestled—and it is a difficult question, for the Edwards have in the dining hall at least as adequate accommodations as has Phil Frankford and his family of six school-aged children, whom the Edwards evicted from Dorm #2, and as adequate of accommodations as has Paul Drieman and his wife, whom the Edwards evicted from Dorm #1. The Edwards spent the night following the fire in the dining hall, which has a kitchen. Since their eviction, the facilities that the Driemans occupy doesn't have a kitchen. And the facilities into which Frankford had to move his family had neither a cook stove nor a bath at the time Frankford was forced to vacate Dorm #2 (Phil has since had a complete bathroom built into what was a storage area in a former Little Caesar's building). So the Edwards' lives are not in jeopardy. Nevertheless, when it is in the power of a person to give, a person is under obligation to do so. And it is today in my power to offer the residence addressed 8220 Anchor Drive to the Edwards for immediate but short-term occupancy. Again, I hereby do so.

The larger question, though, remains of how does a person even communicate with an unrepentant disciple when the need for such communication arises? In the case of the Edwards and myself, I know that he or close friends of his routinely read what I post on my website, so through this posting, the offer will be indirectly extended. (I need to tell him that the electronic igniter on the furnace doesn't work; he will have to manually light the furnace whenever he needs to use it—I didn't have the money necessary to replace the igniter.) At what point does a person compromise with principle and extend love? Certainly, principles should

never stand in the way for saving a life, nor preventing physical harm. But what about in a case like this where there is property damage and discomfort? Edwards has, in his unfortunate eviction from Dorm #3, suffered greater loss of personal property than did either Frankford or Drieman, but he isn't without assets or resources. He has a support network which has not encouraged him to repent from his wrongdoing, but has supported him through yet another disfellowing from a congregation in the Body of Christ. Do we who are in the local area and are shunning the Edwards let his out-of-the-area support base take care of the Edwards' needs?

I invite input on how to handle situations similar to this one. Jesus washed the feet of Judas a few hours before Judas betrayed Him—and Jesus knew who would betray Him. I knew on August 20th that Norm intended to betray the other trustees. I raised a little stink, and took flak for doing so. I had hopes that Norm would not follow through on what he intended, but my hopes provoked the ire of those individuals who trusted Norm—and continues to provoke the ire of those who still trust Norm. But out of tough love for Norm, I could not then condone what he intended to do without raising my voice. Nor can I today leave Norm without a place to live. So my dilemma. Again, I invite input.

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